

**A critical investigation of a Future Search Conference as a planned
organisational change initiative within the National Health Training
Network in Namibia**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education
(Education Leadership and Management)

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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15 December 2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank Professor Hennie van der Mescht for being what he is, his transformational leadership skills, his timely and endless love in guiding and helping students.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr Clive Smith, for his timely feedback, guidance and support in this study.

My gratitude goes also to the Ministry of Health and Social Services for sponsoring this study, especially Ms E Bampton, for her outstanding administrative work.

I am also thankful to Ms Judy Cornwell, of the Education Library, for being so helpful. My special appreciation goes to my two colleagues, Pauline and Lily, for their academic and moral support.

I also wish to thank my family friends, Mr E and Mrs A Mutonga, for the total care of my family in my absence. Without you, this study could not have been completed. I owe you greatly.

Lastly, I would like to thank my two lovely children, Catherine and Marc Junior, for their understanding in being left alone, their moral support and encouragement.

DECLARATION

I, Marthina Ndahepa Hausiku, hereby declare that this study is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

Signed.....

Date.....

ABSTRACT

“The world is changing faster than the experts” (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000:xi). Change, according to Meyer & Botha (2000:223), is the movement of people from a current state to a defined, different, improved and desired new state. Change is needed in all organisations because it has direct influence on the organisation’s performance, and the National Health Training Network in Namibia is no exception. The Future Search Conference as a powerful organisation development strategy, can help people transform their capacity for action.

The National Health Training Network (NHTN), like any other institution, has been experiencing some managerial/administrative problems. I, being a member of the NHTN, together with most of the organisation, was faced with the challenge of not knowing what to do. Learning about approaches that might help organisations to develop, concepts such as organisation development in general and Future Search in particular, I developed an interest especially in the Future Search Conference.

My interest was based on successful developmental stories of Future Search Conferences in organisations across the world. I decided to introduce the Future Search Conference to our organisation, which I thought might be a remedy for our problems at a later stage. The aim of the study was to investigate participants' experiences and the perception of the Future Search Conference as an approach to organisational change, through interviews.

The study found that Future Search was a new concept/approach to the NHTN as well as to the whole Ministry, and it is different from the traditional strategic planning. The difference is seen in the way Future Search involves all stakeholders in issues of concern, while strategic planning involves only managers.

The responses revealed the willingness of participants to implement the Future Search Conference in their organisation. Data also revealed, however, that it was not clear how

ready the managers were to carry out this task, as they are the gatekeepers. Participants suggested a separate Future Search Conference with managers, to sensitise them to the approach, so that they can see whether it addresses the values and goals of the organisation and can be implemented for developmental purposes.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

FSC	Future Search Conference
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
NHTC	National Health Training Centre
NHTN	National Health Training Network
OD	Organisation Development
RHTC	Regional Health Training Centre

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly .

(King, as quoted in Weisbord & Janoff, 2000)

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1.1 Context of the study

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) in Namibia regards training as one of the most important tools for health and social development. Since independence in 1990, the MOHSS has initiated programs for further education, upgrading, in-service training and re-orientation of existing and new personnel. The National Health Training Centre (NHTC) and Regional Health Training Centres (RHTC) were established in 1993 to cater for the program (NHTC:6).

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In 1994, the Namibian Cabinet, on the recommendations of the MOHSS, resolved to limit the training of enrolled auxiliary categories of 'nurse' (the lowest level of nurses in Namibia) to that of 'enrolled nurse' (middle level of nurses) (van Dyk, 1996:121).

Existing enrolled auxiliary nurses would retain their status, but were free to apply for training as enrolled nurses. The new enrolled nurse would follow a comprehensive program of training that included the care and delivery of normal midwifery and community health services (Van Dyk, 1996:121).

The new comprehensive program was introduced in 1996. The NHTC and the RHTCs developed into what is today known as the National Training Network. The Network was expected to implement this program. The NHTC, being the main centre, is responsible for the overall management of the RHTCs situated in Oshakati, Onandjokwe, Rundu, Otjiwarongo and Keetmanshoop.

It is clear that the challenge of enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of health and social services through education, training, consultancy and networking becomes more acute due to the shift in the curriculum environment. Schmuck & Runkel (1988:viii) noted that a shift in the educational curriculum requires change in management. This situation for the NHTC and RHTCs means a new way of doing things, which requires change in management, for which many of our staff members heading the centers are ill-prepared. French, Bell, & Zawacki (1994:82) stated that planned change, which is organisational change in general and Future Search Conference in particular, makes organisations more responsive to environmental shifts.

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My interest was to investigate the experience and perception of members of the network of the FSC as an approach to organisational change. I anticipate that my findings could be used by the NHTN to implement Future Search as an approach to organisational change for developmental purposes. If it works well for the training network, it might be extended to other parts of the Ministry of Health and Social Services for the same reason.

1.2 Goal

The goal of this study is to investigate participants' experiences and perceptions of the Future Search Conference as an approach to organisational change.

1.3 Methodology

My research is located within the interpretive paradigm as I was interested in understanding the perception and experiences of members of the NHTN of the Future Search Conference as an approach to organisational change. According to Janse van Rensburg (2001:16), the interpretive paradigm involves developing a deep understanding of situation, person and community.

I used a case study as the method of my research. Anderson (1998:152) stated that the case study is an approach that deals with contemporary events in their natural context. I chose

the NHTN, based on the fact that I am from the same organisation and, as far as I could establish from the research information, nothing has been researched or written about Future Search in Namibia before.

I applied standardised, open-ended interviews, as well as observation, as data-collecting techniques. The standardised open-ended interviews are believed to be important in minimizing variation in the questions posed to interviewees (Patton, 1990:280). Patton further said that standardised open-ended interviews also reduce the possibility of bias that comes from having different interviews for different people, including the problem of obtaining more comprehensive data from certain persons while getting less systematic information from others. Observation was used as a supplement to interviews. Anderson (1998:155) stated that it is important for a researcher to use multiple data sources for comprehensive purposes.

I interviewed five participants, two from managerial positions, two ordinary lecturers and one chief clerk. Candidates for interviews were selected based on the interest they had shown during the Future Search Conference and on the experience they had had of the organisation. All interviews were tape-recorded.

I analysed the data manually. Cantrell (1993:97) stated that: "Analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is to be learned and deciding what you tell others". I first transcribed the interviews. Transcripts were read over and over to increase my understanding of what was going on. Words and phrases were underlined and later grouped together to discern some themes.

Written permission from the Permanent Secretary of Health and Social Services (Appendix 3) and informed consent from participants were obtained before the research, for ethical reasons. Participants were also informed that I would use pseudonyms for their names and that the information would only be used for educational and organisational purposes.

1.4 Outline of my thesis

In Chapter Two I present an overview of literature relevant to my study. I give a brief description of change, Organisational Development (OD) as an approach to bring about change and Future Search as a tool for organisational development.

In Chapter Three I discuss the methodology I employed in my research. I also give a brief discussion on sampling, data gathering, data analysis, ethical consideration and limitations of my methodology.

In Chapter Four I present my data analysis and discussion.

In Chapter Five I summarise the main findings and focus on the potential value of my study, as well as its limitations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

In our view, productive change is unlikely to occur unless a significant part of the faculty acknowledges a discrepancy between an ideal and actual state of affairs before an OD design is stated.

(Schmuck & Runkel, 1994).

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2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give a brief discussion of organisational change, the subject of my study, and describe OD as an approach to bring about change. I also discuss some core concepts and theories used in OD: learning organisations, systems theory and readiness, and lastly discuss the FSC as a tool for organisational development. I look specifically at the FSC's origin, its importance to educational organisations and its use around the world.

2.2 Organisational change

“The world is changing faster than the experts” (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000:xi). Change is referred to by French & Bell (1995:3) as: “The new state of things is different from the old state of things”. Eales-White defined it as: “The process of making something different or becoming something different” (as cited in Meyer & Botha, 2000:223). Meyer & Botha (2000:223) summarised it as the movement of people from a current state to a defined, different, improved and desired new state. Change is needed in all organisations because it has a direct influence on the organisation's performance, and the NHTN in Namibia is no exception.

Hanson (as cited in Smith, 2003:1) identified three types of change, namely: spontaneous, evolutionary and planned change. Spontaneous change is sudden, dramatic and unanticipated and can be shocking, emotional and very painful e.g. the death of a school principal in a car accident. Evolutionary change is the change that takes place

while one is rarely aware that it is happening. One can only notice this change when looking back over a number of years. An example of such change: 15 years ago you hardly ever saw a black woman in Namibia driving a car; today, three-quarters of black working women are driving cars themselves. This change happens along with the development of the country. It is neither a planned action nor a policy requirement. Planned change, according to Smith (2003:2), is the change that is: “Consciously thought about and systematically implemented”. Developing a new curriculum is an example of planned change.

The NHTN, the target site of my study in Namibia, did review its curriculum after independence, to suit the cadre it was training. Schmuck & Runkel (1988:1) noted that a shift in the educational curriculum requires change in management, in order to survive and prosper. In the case of the NHTN, not much of the management change has taken place to enable its members to cope with the curriculum change. French et al. (2000:1) believed that planned change makes organisations more responsive to environmental shifts (in this case, a curriculum shift).

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Chin & Benne (as cited in Smith, 2003:2) described three types of planned change strategies: empirical-rational, normative-re-educative (also known as cultural) and power-coercive. Empirical-rational change is an expert-driven process that can be initiated both externally and internally. The assumption here is that people think and act rationally according to their interests and they change when they realise the benefit of change. Power-coercive change occurs when those with less power (subordinates) comply with the demands of those with more power (authority). An example of power-coercive change is when managers plan for the organisations and subordinates have to carry out or implement those plans without their involvement in the planning. In normative-re-educative or cultural change, members behave or are bound together by group norms. Change takes place when a group of people realise that the existing norms are not working properly anymore and have to be replaced with new ones (Smith, 2003:3).

Normative change can only take place when members of an organisation realise or feel the need for change and initiate the change by inviting a process expert or by using an internal facilitator, if available, to facilitate the process of change. Lewin's model of change (cited in French & Bell, 1999:74) also suggested that change is a three-stage process. The first stage he refers to as 'unfreezing'. In this stage, an individual or an organisation believes that they have a problem which is not good for them and which they would like to change. The second stage is 'moving'. In this stage, the person tries to change the behaviour that is not desired e.g. a teacher who is always absent from school which leads to the poor performance of students. The last stage is 'refreezing' the behaviour at a new level. In this case, the teacher who has been absent from school is present every day. This is new behaviour, in which the person needs to establish a field of forces to support it. It is clear that Lewin's model of change is a normative change, because a person realised that something was wrong and it needed to change. A person planned for the change.

French & Bell (1995:3) claimed that change can present itself in different faces. It can be large or small. An example of large change can be the development of a curriculum for a new identified cadre in an organisation that needs training. A small change can include connecting an e-mail line to your school. Change can also be fast or slow. Closing down a school because of a rebel attack is an example of fast change, while rewriting a curriculum for a four-year registered nurse diploma course gives an example of slow change, because it takes a long time before it is implemented. Change can also affect many elements of the organisation, or only a few.

Change is brought about by many factors or demands, both from outside and within the organisation. Factors outside the organisation include government agencies, competitors, new technologies, customers, market forces, broader society and more competent staff in place. Demands within the organisation will be something like a need to produce competent staff for the outside environment, (in the case of the NHTN, to produce a

greater number of competent nurses for both government, private clinics and hospitals in Namibia), obsolete products or services, a new strategic direction, declining profitability or an increasingly diverse work force (French & Bell, 1995:3). Whether demands for change come from outside or within the organisation or whether change presents itself in different forms, it is necessary for organisations and their members to understand change and planned change, in particular organisational development, which is a strategy for organisation change.

2.3 Organisation development

OD in organisations like schools, colleges, hospitals and others is a coherent, systematically planned, sustained effort at system self-study and improvement, focussing explicitly on change in formal and informal procedures, processes, norms or structures, and using behavioural science concepts. “The goals of OD include improving both the quality of life of individuals as well as organisational functioning and performance with a direct or indirect focus on educational issues” (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:5).

2.3.1 History of organisation development

OD was developed and used in industrial areas and governmental organisations since the mid-1950s. It was introduced to the educational world in the 1980s (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:9). Since then it has been used widely in North and South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and elsewhere (French & Bell 1999:50).

The early development of OD was partially a reaction against ‘scientific management’. This management school believed that the work of humans, after analysis by time-and-motion studies, can be made as machine-like as possible (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:9). Management theories of organisational development came out of the research experiments conducted by Kurt Lewin in intergroup relations (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:10). This was done to achieve changes in behaviour (French & Bell, 1999:32).

2.3.2 Values, assumptions and beliefs in organisation development

OD is based on values, assumptions and beliefs that shape its goals and methods and distinguish it from other improvement strategies (French & Bell, 1999:62). Most of the beliefs were formulated at the initial stage of OD but they continue to grow, as the field itself is still growing. French & Bell defined belief as a proposition about how the world works that an individual believes in and accepts as true. Values are referred to as beliefs about what is desirable or 'good' (e.g. good health) and what is undesirable or 'bad' (e.g. stealing). Buckley (as cited in Meyer & Botha, 2000:321) defined values as abstract, collective representations of what people believe to be just, good and worthwhile to pursue.

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French & Bell (1999:620) wrote that OD values tend to be humanistic, optimistic and democratic. For humanistic values, OD practitioners believe that each individual is important and should be respected as a whole person. People have to be treated with respect and dignity and it is assumed that everyone has intrinsic worth. All people are to be looked at as having the potential for growth and development. Under optimistic values, OD practitioners believe that people are basically good. People use their rationality and goodwill to make progress possible and desirable in human affairs. According to French & Bell (1999:62) democratic values incorporate: "Sanctity of the individual, the right of people to be free from arbitrary misuse of power, fair and equitable treatment for all, and justice through the rule of law and due process".

According to research, OD values and their supporting assumptions appear to be valid. The sources of their validity, as stipulated by French & Bell include:

Hawthorne studies, the human relation movement, the clash between fascism and democracy in World War II, increasing awareness of the dysfunctions of bureaucracies, research on the effects of different leadership styles, greater understanding of individual motivation and group dynamics and the like.

(French & Bell, 1999:62)

French & Bell continued to define assumptions as things we believe in and which are regarded as valuable and obviously correct. Assumptions are taken for granted and very rarely are they questioned or examined. Values, beliefs and assumptions, being all cognitive facts, thus give structure and stability to people in their attempts to understand the world they live in (French & Bell, 1999:62). These values and assumptions are believed to be a result of the collective beliefs of an era or spirit of the time and do not necessarily come from an individual or society.

The underlying assumptions of OD theories, according to Schmuck & Runkel (1994:7) include the following:

- OD consultants believe that members of organisations are themselves experts and have the potential to solve problems in their own organisations. The only thing they lack is the skill to diagnose their situations properly. That is why the OD practitioner believes that if members are given the necessary knowledge and skill to make a diagnosis of their problems, they will be able to solve their problems.
- The OD consultant assumes that work-related groups of people in an organisation have the power to determine the behaviour of individuals or groups of people in an organisation.
- OD consultants believe that organisational culture and processes play a big role in bringing about organisational change and development.

2.3.3 Importance of organisation development in educational organisations

There are many reasons for carrying out OD interventions in different organisations. Schmuck & Runkel (1994:14) identified the following points which are considered to be important to educational organisations:

- OD can enable educational organisations to develop the capacity which will help them solve their own problems rather than depending on outsiders.
- They believe that members of the organisation, in this case a school, are experts

themselves and will be able to influence each other through OD interventions.

- OD methods enable staff to solve problems more efficiently than they can presently.
- OD also gives staff member's feelings of competence, solidarity, pride and ownership, as it requires each member's involvement, which can lead to human need satisfaction.
- OD aims at improving the interpersonal and group procedures used by administrators, instructors and students to reach their educational objectives.
- It focuses on the '*how*' and not on the '*what*' of the individuals and groups.

All these efforts can be best achieved by using the comprehensive OD interventions fitting the situation at hand. One of these interventions is the Future Search Conference (French & Bell, 1999:190).

OD draws on theory, research and practice from a number of disciplines, including social psychology, general systems theory, community development, adult education, family group theory, anthropology, philosophy, counselling, psychiatry, general management, social work, human resources management, large conference management and other fields (French & Bell, 1999:328).

2.4 Key theories of Organisational Development

Out of the several concepts, theories and assumptions that underlie OD, I am going to discuss systems theory, learning organisation and readiness.

2.4.1 Systems theory

Fagen (as cited in French & Bell, 1995:89) defined a system as: “A set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes”. Hanna (as cited in French & Bell, 1995:89) said: “A system is an arrangement of interrelated parts”. Owens (1981:61) stated: “Systems theory can be thought of as a human body that has different parts to form a system. When one part (e.g. the heart) is affected, the whole body will experience the effects”.

Systems theory is one of the foundations of organisational development which forms the knowledge base upon which OD is constructed. It looks at organisations as open systems and helps members of organisations to understand the dynamics of organisations and organisational change (French & Bell, 1995:89). According to French & Bell (1995:93), an open system does not operate in isolation, but is open to its environment and helps members of an organisation to understand the way in which their own departments or sections relate to other parts of the whole organisation and to its functioning.

In education, open systems theory shows the relationship between the organisation and its external environment e.g. parents and authorities (Bush, 1995:34). According to Robbins (1990:10), organisations are input-output transformation systems that depend on their environment (both external and internal) for survival. An example of input-output in an organisation like the NHTN will be students we receive from the community to be trained as nurses, and output will be what we put back into the community, the competent qualified nurses. For an organisation to survive, it has to attend to the needs of its environment.

It is therefore important to know that if any part (department or section) of a system (organisation) is changed, the effects are likely to be felt by the whole system. This is one of the reasons why the target of my study is the whole NHTN system and not one of

the training centres only. OD practitioners use systems theory in creating learning organisations because open systems thinking is a requirement for creating learning organisations.

2.4.2 Learning organisation

Learning has become part of life for world-class organisations. Meyer & Botha (2000:254) said that, in today's life, organisations that are at the forefront of institutionalising whatever they learn from the environment are the ones that will survive and prosper and they can be referred to as 'learning organisations'.

Learning organisations, according to Senge, (as cited in Gultig, Ndhlovu & Bertram, 2002:33) are those organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the desired results and learn how to learn together. Schools, according to Moloai et al. (2002:), might have a stable internal environment, but operate within a fast-changing and turbulent external environment. Consequently, in order to respond proactively to the pressure of the external environment, schools are now urged to learn fast in order to deal effectively with these pressures. From the definition one can say that learning is no longer an individual activity or experience, but has become a team and organisation process. Therefore the learning organisation has a desire, courage and capacity to reflect on itself and to adapt readily to rapidly changing environmental demands (Smith, 2003:12).

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Senge identified five disciplines that need to be mastered in order to create a learning organisation, namely: personal mastery, mental model, building a shared vision, team learning and systems thinking (Smith, 2003:12). These disciplines offer help in dealing with dilemmas and the pressure of education today (Gultig et al., 2002:34). The disciplines can also help people to continually clarify and deepen personal vision, focus on their energy in developing patience and try to see reality objectively (Gultig et al., 2002:34).

2.4.2.1 Personal mastery

This refers to a special level of proficiency and not gaining dominance over people. It involves the capacity of people to produce results and master the principles underlying the way in which you produce results (Senge et al., 2000:60). Learning, in either individuals or organisations, takes place when the skill required to bring about change, is mastered and by constantly realising the things or results that matter deeply to them. Personal mastery is a significant feature or characteristic of the Future Search because Future Search encourages sharing of ideas rather than some people being dominated by others.

2.4.2.2 Mental model

Mental models consist of assumptions, pictures or images that have an influence on how we understand the world and how we take action (Gultig et al., 2002:34). These models are the ones that are responsible, for example, when two people observe the same event but describe it differently. Mental models are so powerful that they can either enhance or limit people's ability to change. Therefore, if learning has to take place it needs to be focussed on developing awareness of attitudes and perceptions of individuals themselves and those of others around them (Senge et al., 2000:7). The FSC provides an opportunity to people to share their different views and understandings of the world.

2.4.2.3 Building shared vision

A genuine shared vision can help people to excel and learn because they are motivated to do so and not because they are told to (Gultig et al., 2002:35). Senge et al. (2000:7) said that: "People with common purpose can learn to nourish a sense of commitment in a group or organisation by developing shared images of the future they seek to create and the principles and guiding practices by which they hope to get there". An organisation that wants to learn and continue learning throughout its life needs common shared vision

processes (Gultig et al., 2002:35). Shared vision is one of Future Search's steps. In Future Search, people envisioned their preferred future and worked towards it for the purpose of change.

2.4.2.4 Team learning

Team learning refers to group interaction through dialogue and skilful discussion in order to achieve the common goals of the organisation. Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations. Unless teams can learn, the organisations cannot learn (Gultig et al., 2002:36). Teams or group work is a core issue in Future Search. OD practitioners believe that group work helps people to discover common ground through dialogue.

2.4.2.5 Systems thinking

System thinking is the fifth discipline in which people learn to better understand interdependency and change. System thinking helps members of an organisation to deal with the demands that shape the consequences of their action effectively. It is a powerful tool or practice for finding the leverage needed to get the most constructive change in an organisation (Senge 1994, Senge et al., 2000:8). Systems thinking, according to Senge, is like seeing things as a whole rather than in parts, because one cannot change one part of an organisation without influencing other parts (French & Bell, 1995:93). The FSC is activity and process-based, encouraging learning from and with each other. It is based on the belief that members or an organisation with crucial interdependencies work together on matters of mutual concern which can help in making a diagnosis that might identify the need for change and development (French & Bell, 1999:190).

Senge (cited in Gultig et al., 2002:38) also pointed out that systems thinking integrates the other disciplines and melts them into a coherent body of theoretical practice in any 'system' or organisation. System thinking enhances each of the other disciplines, and keeps on reminding us that: "The whole can exceed the sum of its parts" (Gultig et al.,

2002:38). Integration of the five disciplines and the involvement of the whole system or organisation are needed for learning to take place.

2.4.3 Readiness

According to Smith (2003:18), the readiness to participate in an organisational change refers to many things, such as: desire and willingness of members to change, capability of the organisation to change, belief of members that they can make a difference and confidence of members in embarking on the process of change. An organisation is ready for OD if the staff members or the manager acknowledge the discrepancy between the ideal and actual state of affairs. They then indicate to the facilitator that they have a problem that needs to be solved or that they are doing well but would like to improve.

Another sign of readiness for change can be when members of an organisation have feelings of cohesiveness, feelings of solidarity, loyalty to one another and value and protect their membership in a group as well as identifying themselves with others as group members. They are also said to be ready for change if they take on new behaviours that are commonly perceived by all as helping them to improve their situation (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:57).

Smith (2003:19) claimed that Lewin saw motivation and human need satisfaction as the interaction of a specific person in a specific situation that includes other people. When people are motivated or their needs are satisfied, they can be ready for any activity.

Another state of readiness for action is the theory of psychic tension, developed by Lewin, caused by an external stimulus, such as a desire (vision), a goal or unfinished activity or task (Smith, 2003:19). SDF, (survey data feedback) a process of collecting data from an organisation and giving feedback for action planning, was also seen by Smith (2003:19) as a key 'readiness raising' intervention.

According to Smith's experience, an introductory workshop on, "What is OD and how

does it work?” can also raise levels of readiness by inculcating a sense of ‘we can do this’ and ‘let’s try it’.

However, sometimes people are not ready for change because of different reasons such as members having a vested interest in things remaining as they are (Smith, 2003:8). Another case is where the group believes that they have no power to change their circumstances. What will be will be. They are helpless victims of circumstances (p. 18).

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In Weisbord’s view (1987:262), no person, even an expert, can make another person change. He further said: “We change as we have face-to-face contact with others and get new information. We change when we listen to and respond in new ways, listen to our own inner voices, hearing ourselves say things we never said before. We change when we can think out loud together with others whose actions affect us” (Weisbord, 1987:263).

2.5 Future Search Conference

The FSC is a powerful OD strategy. According to the Future Search Network (2003), it is a planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action. It was seen by Weisbord & Janoff (2000:xvii) as a building block of theory and practice for a house that will never be finished. It enables organisations and communities to learn more about themselves from every angle.

2.5.1 Origin

Weisbord (1987:282) said that the concept of Future Search comes from the late futurist Edward Lindaman, who believed that, “The future was created by our present ways of confronting events, trends and developments in the environment”. He also acknowledged that it is an extension of Lewin’s insight that: “You steer a ship by feedback from outside, not by how the rudder, engines or crew are behaving” (Weisbord, 1987:282).

The experience of two social scientists, Trist (an Englishman) and Emery (an Australian),

in conceptualising and running conferences for European managers is another contribution to the evolution of FSCs (French & Bell, 1999:191). The meeting design comes from the theories and principles tested in many cultures for the past 50 years.

Future Search's principles (or conditions) for success are outlined by Weisbord & Janoff (2000:5) as follows:

- **'Whole system' in the room:** This includes inviting a significant cross-section of all parties who will benefit from the outcome.
- **Global context, local action:** Involves getting everyone talking about the same world before going to a specific area.
- **Common ground and future focus, not problems and conflicts:** Is seen as important to put common grounds and future front and centre and use, problems and conflicts as information and not as action items.
- **Self-managed small groups:** Encourage self-management and responsibility for action throughout the process of the FSC and after.
- **Full attendance:** Keep part-time participants to a limited number to prevent problems during 'action plan time' (in other words do not allow participants to walk in and out and miss some of the proceedings).
- **Healthy meeting conditions:** The conference room should have enough air and windows. There should be healthy snacks and meals as well as adequate breaks.
- **Three-day event** (i.e. 'sleep twice'): People need enough time, referred to as 'soak time', to take in what happens during the process of Future Search.
- **Public responsibility for follow-up:** Before people leave, ask for volunteers who will take the next steps.

2.5.2 Role of Future Search

Future Search brings together 60 to 80 people from all walks of life into the same room to have conversations e.g. experts, those with authority and those with resources. People discover common ground through dialogue.

In a FSC, members of an organisation are led through mapping the past on a national, personal and organisational basis. They then focus on the present without blaming each other, envision their preferred future and design steps towards its accomplishment. The conference is activity- and process-based, encouraging learning from and with each other. It is based on the belief that members of an organisation with crucial interdependencies working together on matters of mutual concern can help in making a diagnosis that might identify the need for change and development (French & Bell, 1999:190).

Weisbord & Janoff (2000:ix), for example, said that: “Many of us, especially in today’s life, fill jobs where we can’t use the brains we were born with, or we live in communities where we feel helpless to influence public policy”. This is not that we don’t have the ability to do so, but we are not given the opportunity to contribute to whatever situation is at hand. In a FSC, people have the chance to use the brains they were born with to positively contribute to their development. They also have a chance to take down the walls and assume more control of their future. People also discover resources in themselves and others that they didn’t know were in existence (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000:x).

Future Search helps people to move together towards greater hope, reality, mutual support, creative ideas and shared responsibility (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000:viii). It is believed by Weisbord & Janoff (2000:4) that when people explore common ground with others, they release creative energy, leading to projects none of them can do alone. Lippitt & Lindaman (as cited by French & Bell, 1999:191) found that people plan present actions by working backwards from what is really desired; they develop energy, enthusiasm, optimism and high commitment.

It also helps people to share the picture of reality that no-one had before they came to the conference. People discover new freedom to make things happen because the right people are in the room (Future Search Network preparation 2001-2003).

2.5.3 Importance of Future Search to educational organisations

According to the information from the Future Search Network (2001-2003), Future Search can help educational organisations in various ways:

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- To create a framework in which powerful and free discussions can take place among people who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to talk together.
- The central belief in Future Search is that the more diverse the group the more successful the meeting/conference will be (e.g. a mixture of junior and senior members, students, administrators and a leader of the community is possible).
- Future Search (a high participation approach) involves people acting together on issues of importance to them, no matter how these people differ on opinion, role, status, gender, culture or ethnic background.
- Not surprisingly, this approach cuts down on resistance to change. It enables every stakeholder to air their views when dealing with complex issues (Network 2001-2003).

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2.5.4 Use of Future Search

Future Search, according to the Future Search Network (2003), has been used with success around the world in sectors like business, community, congregation (religion), general education, higher education, environment, healthcare and human resources. It was introduced recently to South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape. According to Sabinet's data base on current and completed research, it was found that three students so far have carried out FSCs in South Africa: one from Rhodes University, in the Education Department, for the period of 1999–2000, another from the University of the Western Cape, in the Department of Christianity and Society in 1998–1999 and the most recent one from the University of South Africa, in the Department of Fundamental Pedagogics.

Information collected from Sabinet and Future Search Networks does not reveal any FSC carried out in Namibia. Based on the above information and the interest I had developed in Future Search as a tool for organisational development, I decided to introduce the FSC

as a tool or an approach to organisational development in the National Health Training Network System, in which I am currently working, to find out what people's perceptions and experiences of the approach would be.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I described organisational change and organisational development as an approach that brings about change by looking at what it is, its values and its importance to educational organisations. I went on to discuss core concepts and theories that underlie OD, namely systems theory, learning organisation and readiness for change. Lastly, I discussed the FSC as a tool for organisational development in terms of origin, the role it plays and where it has been implemented around the world.

In the next chapter I discuss the paradigmatic location, data collection and analysis, ethical consideration and limitations of my study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

If an innovation like OD is to continue in a school or college for some years, it must be made a more or less routine part of the organisations' operation.

(Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:).

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3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the research paradigm and method appropriate to my research. I also discuss how the research was initiated and then discuss the selection of sample, data collection and analysis. Lastly I discuss the ethical issues and the limitations of my methodology.

My research goal is to investigate participants' experience and perceptions of the FSC as an approach to organisational change. My research was selected based on my own experience and interest in the FSC, which might be used in my organisation as an approach for organisational change. Habermas (as cited in Janse van Rensburg, 2001:17) called this a practical knowledge interest, in reference to the assumption that if people understand their own situation better, they would be able to take practical actions within it.

3.2 Paradigmatic location of my research

Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999:6) identified three main research paradigms or perspectives: positivist, constructionist and interpretive. They believed that: "Paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methods". Ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can

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be known about it. Epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known. Methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he/she believes can be known.

3.2.1 Positivism

Positivist researchers believe that reality is ‘out there’ in a known world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:13). To understand this reality, one must try to explain it. Positivists believe that research should be empirical, meaning that researchers should concern themselves with facts they can observe (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:8).

Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999:6) were of the opinion that a researcher can select a positivist approach if what is to be studied consists of a stable and unchanging external reality (e.g. economics, laws, cognitive mechanisms, the law of gravity) which is an objective stand towards that reality. According to Holbrook (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000:18), positivism is an approach which demands that nothing must be regarded as real which cannot be found by empirical science and rational methods; that means ‘objectivity’. In other words, positivists perceive their findings to be absolutely true and which can be generalised to similar situations (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:12). As my research assumes multiple realities, it is not located in this paradigm.

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3.2.2 Constructivism

Constructivists aim at showing how versions of the social world are produced in discourse, and demonstrate how these constructions of reality make certain actions possible and others unthinkable (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:6). They also believe that: “All of human reality is socially constructed” (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:19).

Reality in this paradigm is constructed in the human mind and viewed in a holistic and divergent sense. Events are understood within social and economic contexts with emphasis on ideological critique and praxis (Cantrell, 1993:83). My work is not located

within this paradigm because of its focus on emancipation and the critique of ideologies, while my interest is on understanding participants' experiences and perceptions of the FSC.

3.2.3 Interpretivism

The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen et al., 2000:36). Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999:6) were also of the opinion that interpretivists aim at explaining the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action. Researchers who operate in this paradigm rely on first-hand accounts, try to describe what they see in rich detail and present their 'findings' in engaging and sometimes evocative language.

Janse van Rensburg (2001:16-17) also states that interpretivist researchers are therefore interested in the meaning that people make out of phenomena. She further states that the approach believes in developing a deeper understanding of a situation, person or community. My research is located within this paradigm, as my interest is on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the FSC as an approach to organisational change.

However, it is important to note that the interpretive and constructivist paradigms do overlap each other, but also have different assumptions about the nature of reality that is to be understood.

Social constructivists, like their interpretive counterparts, are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meanings. Interpretivism focuses on the subjective understanding and experiences of individuals or groups, while social constructivist researchers want to show how much understanding and experiences are derived from larger discourses. Interpretive approaches treat people as though they were the origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Social constructivist approaches treat people as though their thoughts, feelings and experiences were the products of systems of meaning that exist at a

social rather than individual level.

3.3 Research method: case study

A case study, according to Anderson (1998:152), is an approach that deals with contemporary events in their natural context. Cohen et al., (2000:181) also stated that: “It is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. It is a study of an instance in action”. Bassegy (2000:23) also supports the idea that: “Case studies allow generalisation either about an instance or from an instance to a class”.

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However, this study does not search for general rules, but searches for contextual experience and perceptions of participants on the FSC as an approach to organisational change.

Yin (2003:2) states that the case study method allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations and the maturation of industries. This study aims at retaining the real life experiences and perceptions of participants in a FSC.

3.4 Sampling

I used purposeful sampling in my study. Cohen & Manion (1994:89) wrote that in purposeful sampling, the researcher selects the case on the basis of her/his needs. I chose the NHTN based on the fact that I am from the same organisation and know that the organisation is experiencing some managerial problems at the moment. If there is any benefit that can come from the FSC, then it should start with my own organisation.

I selected five participants for interviews. These candidates were selected based on the interest they had shown during the FSC and on the experience they had of the

organisation.

3.5 Data gathering

I collected my data by using two techniques, namely interviews and observations.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviews were the main data collection technique in my study. Patton (1990:278) claimed that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on a person's mind, to access the perspective of the person being interviewed and to find out from them things that we cannot directly observe.

Qualitative interviewing, according to Rubin & Rubin (as cited in Arksey & Knight, 1999:32), is a way of uncovering and exploring the meaning that underpins people's lives, routines, behaviour, feelings etc. Interviews also articulate participants' tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings (Arksey & Knight, 1999:32).

For my data collection, I applied standardised open-ended interviews. Patton (1990:280) stated that this kind of interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same wording.

Flexibility in probing when using this method is more or less limited and depends on the nature of the interview and the skills of interviewers (Patton, 1990:280). However, my experience was that the fact that the questions themselves were open-ended allowed for in-depth probing (Cohen & Manion, 1994:). The only limitation was my inexperience at interviewing people, looking back; I believe I could have done better.

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Patton (1990:280) further stated that standardised open-ended interviews are important to minimize variation in the questions posed to interviewees. This reduces the possibility of

bias that comes from having different interviews for different people, including the problem of obtaining more comprehensive data from certain persons while getting less systematic information from others. In my study I tried to counteract the bias by asking the same questions of all participants. Although I did not follow the exact sequence of the questions (because the sequence was led by the way participants gave their answers), I asked the questions in such a way that they meant the same thing to all participants.

I selected five participants for interviews. These candidates were selected based on the interest they had shown during the FSC and on the experience they had of the organisation. In total, I interviewed five participants, one chief clerk, two members from managerial positions and two tutors. After the conference I interviewed two participants a day as it could have been difficult for me to get hold of them after the management meeting, due to distance. The other two were interviewed over the weekend (four days post-conference). The last one was interviewed three weeks later because by the time I had finished with the others, she was already back at her duty station, which was Rundu (north-east Namibia). After the first two interviews, I immediately transcribed one and sent it to my supervisor to see whether I was on the right track. The feedback helped me with in-depth probing on some issues with the rest of the interviewees. All interviews were tape-recorded.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation was used as a supplement to interviews. I enriched my data by using a combination of these two techniques (interviews and observations). According to Anderson (1998:155), it is important for a researcher to use multiple data sources e.g. documentation, evaluating file data, direct observation, participant observation, site visits and physical artefacts, for comprehensive purpose. However, in my study, I only applied interviews and observations as using too many techniques could have resulted in too much data for a half thesis.

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3.6 Data analysis

Patton (1990:372) pointed out that there are no absolute rules of analysing data except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals, given the purpose of the study. Cantrell (1993:97) stated that: “Analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is to be learned and deciding what you tell others”.

In my case, I first transcribed the interviews. Then I started reading the transcripts over and over again until the data became familiar to me and I could have a mind map regarding what was going on. I went on to underline words or phrases that sounded important. Later, I grouped all phrases or words that belonged together and gave them a name or came up with themes. These themes form the basis of my discussions in the next chapter.

3.7 Ethical considerations

My position of being a member of the same organisation could be considered as threatening, especially to the managers, as they might have thought that I wanted to expose the organisation’s weak points to the outside world. With this in mind, I assured the participants that the information would only be used for educational and organisational purposes. I also informed them about the purpose of the research, which is a requirement for my study to enable me to get a Master’s degree, and the potential benefits of the organisation that might come as a result of this research.

Anderson (1998:18) also pointed out that the most important principle for ethical acceptability is that of informed consent. The participants should be informed about the purpose of the study and how they could possibly benefit from it. I carried out my research with written permission from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. I also obtained informed consent from the participants to be part of my research, not forgetting to give them the freedom to withdraw from the research at

any time, if they so wished.

Before each participant was interviewed, I made sure that they wanted to be interviewed by asking them whether it was okay to start with the interview. At the end of each interview I played the tape for each participant to listen to, for feedback purposes (member-checking).

3.8 Limitations of my methodology

Taylor & Bogdan (1998:91) were of the opinion that a limitation of using interviews lies in the fact that people can say and do different things in different situations. In an interview, one cannot be sure that what a person says during the interview is what a person really believes or will do or say in another situation.

According to Taylor & Bogdan (1998:109): “Interviews are prone to some degree of fabrication, deception, exaggeration and distortion. People may ‘lie a bit’ or ‘cheat a bit’. In other words, people may hide important facts about themselves e.g. exaggerate their successes and hide their failures. The issue of truth in qualitative research is a complicated one. I personally was more interested in perspectives rather than in the truth *per se*.”

Being a member of the same organisation, I had some preconceptions about the organisation that might have given way to bias in the collection of data. However, this was counteracted by the fact that my study was not to find out anything from the organisation as such, but to investigate participants’ experiences and perceptions of the Future Search as an approach to organisation change.

My interviewing skills as a researcher might also have had an effect on data collected and how it was analysed and interpreted.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the interpretive approach as the research paradigm I chose for my study. I also discussed the research method, data collection tool and analysis used in this research. I talked about how the sample was selected and pointed out some ethical issues I considered in carrying out research, and the limitations of my methodology.

In the next chapter, I present my data analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER 4

Data analysis and discussion

Think of organisation data as a wave, moving through space, developing more and more potential explanations. If this wave meets up with one observer, it will collapse into one interpretation. All other potentialities are lost by that act of observation. An organisation swimming in many interpretations can discuss, combine, and build on them. The outcome has to be a much richer sense of what needs to be done. The more participants we engage in this participative universe, the wiser we become.

(Wheatley, 1999).

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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the themes that emerged from data analysis. I use thick description and a narrative method to communicate the whole picture of how members of the NHTN system experienced the FSC as a tool for organisational development. Emerson (as cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998:49) wrote: “Thick descriptions present in close detail the context and meanings of events and scenes that are relevant to those involved in them”. I use direct quotes from the respondents throughout the chapter to ensure that the respondents’ voices are respected. I use pseudonyms for my respondents, for the sake of confidentiality and anonymity.

In this chapter, I am going to draw mostly on one source of literature, Weisbord, as he is the key practitioner, thinker and writer of the FSC. Future Search is a new approach and does not have many researchers working on it.

From our discussions and interviews with participants, the following themes emerged. The reader might find some similarity of data throughout the discussion because the data is interlinked.

4.2 'It was a new approach to me'

Participants perceived the FSC as something new to the NHTN as an organisation as well as to the MOHSS in Namibia in general. This feeling came out clearly from the participants during the interview sessions. When asked how they experienced the conference, participants responded as follows:

Mrs Pemba: "For the most of the staff members it was for the first time that they are hearing the words 'Future Search Conference'.

Mr Paul: "Actually, it was a surprise for me because it was a new approach to me; I never even attended that Future whatever you have mentioned today before. To me that approach was so fantastic. As I am also a researcher, I know that it was a good approach".

Mrs Ngula: "The Strategic Planning concept is the one I am well acquainted with while Future Search is a new concept for me. The concept seems to be pretty new to me and I never heard it before."

All responses indicated that Future Search was a new approach and was different from Strategic Planning.

Future Search, being a new approach, was well received and enjoyed, especially by members of the NHTN who managed to attend the conference. What struck me most was the fact that people were so interested in the term 'Future Search' and wanted to know more about what it meant even before the conference took place. This experience boils down to what Weisbord & Janoff experienced and described in their book introducing Future Search: "When the term 'Future Search' appeared in productive workplaces (Weisbord, 1987:), so many people sparked to it that we decided to retain it" (2000:1).

A member from the MOHSS head office approached me during the conference to find out

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about the FSC. She said: “I saw two proposals at our office talking about the Future Search Conference and I wanted to attend the one that is taking place in Windhoek to find out what it is but could not manage to do so because I am attending another Ministerial meeting”. The term ‘Future Search’ might have made a big impact on them and participants saw some light in this conference as they might have been experiencing some problems in the organisation. One member said during one activity of the conference that: “I am sorry to be here (in this organisation) because I don’t know where we are heading to”.

4.3 Comparing Future Search with Strategic Planning

Participants showed interest and a willingness to participate in the FSC because they wanted to find out what Future Search was all about. It also came out clearly from the interviews that participants found the approach very enjoyable. Phrases like ‘it was fantastic’, ‘it is a nice tool’, ‘it is a wonderful approach’, ‘it is a good tool’, ‘it was enjoyable’ etc. come up time and again in their interview responses.

4.3.1 ‘We are not managers to attend that meeting’

An incident I can recall in my study was when I was distributing invitation letters to people to attend the conference; one member said to me: “But Mrs Hausiku, we are not managers to attend that meeting”. I had to explain and convince her that although it was a management meeting wherein I had a session, I wanted everybody to attend. Interviews revealed the same opinion.

Participants in my study claimed that the FSC was different from other meetings such as management meetings at the NHTN or any other Ministerial or organisational meetings like Strategic Planning meetings. Mrs Pemba said the following: “I think that in Future Search, it’s really a good approach because it can include all the people in the organisation, all the stakeholders at different levels. In strategic planning, it is only supervisors who are told by the system to come up with decisions ... and then they may not really include all the needs

of subordinates”.

The involvement of stakeholders enhances implementation of plans, while in traditional approaches it might be difficult, as decisions are only taken by managers and others have to implement them. Some traditional methods to which people are accustomed include the ‘expert’ and ‘in-service’ approaches.

The expert approach, according to Smith (2003:7), is where an expert is sent to an organisation, assuming that he/she has the knowledge to solve or to bring about change in that organisation. Usually these experts only prescribe a remedy, without making a diagnosis, and depart. This is a typically one-directional, top-down and a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. In most cases, organisations are left behind without knowing which way to go or what to do with the remedy prescribed. In this case, members of the organisation usually push the remedy aside and continue with their routine approaches, or they try out the remedy, which in most cases does not work because it does not address their felt needs.

The in-service approach is where a small group of people or an individual is taken out from their duty station to attend a workshop elsewhere. The facilitator of the workshop does not have any contact with the organisation. This group or individual is expected to come back and give feedback to others with the intention of influencing them or bringing about change. This, according to Smith (2003:7), is the typical staff development or in-service training approach. This approach also does not bring about change in an organisation.

Research carried out by Weisbord (1987:101) showed clearly that individuals or even a small group have virtually no chance of influencing prevailing organisation norms and practices; inspired though they might be from the experience, within a few weeks or months they will be squeezed back into the mould of the prevailing norms.

Mr Paul: “Because in the past like what we are usually doing, just managers are called to meetings to make decisions, but in the Future Search Conference, we call all parties”.

Traditionally, members of the NHTN who are not managers don't attend management meetings. Since the FSC was scheduled at the same time as a management meeting, it was a bit difficult to get the staff members who were not managers to attend the conference, as they were aware that it was a management meeting week.

Mrs Bingo: "Future Search involves everyone while Strategic Planning involves only managers, which means that some of the useful ideas might be left out because it is not everybody, not all the stakeholders, who are involved in the strategic planning. Future Search is more consultative rather than being only managers' ideas in Strategic Planning".

This is in line with what Weisbord & Janoff (2000:11) stated: "There are many advantages to having a diverse group to get a shared picture of reality that no participant had when they came through the door".

Participants in my study felt that the FSC was different from a traditional strategic planning meeting, which they were used to. Future Search involves all the stakeholders. The data revealed that Future Search enabled people to claim ownership of whatever is decided and it facilitated implementation of plans made together.

I saw, for example, the power of involvement in members who were naturally quiet. These members usually would say something in the management meeting if they were asked to do so by the chairperson of the day. But in Future Search, they were actively participating in the discussion and putting their points forward. This can be ascribed to the feeling of freedom Future Search gave to people that this is his/her own situation, and that they were the best people to deal with it.

In this regard, Weisbord & Janoff (2000:xii) experienced the same atmosphere during their workshops, as they wrote: "Many people discover a new freedom to make things happen".

Future Search was also seen to be in a position of giving a clear picture of what is going on

in the organisation and where the organisation was going. This picture was obtained during the 'envisioning of the preferred future' activity. Strategic planning concentrates more on what is happening presently through an activity known as 'swot' analysis, and does not envision the preferred future. In other words Future Search is more mobile, while Strategic Planning is more static.

In agreement with the above statement, participants said the following:

Mrs Ngula: "In Future Search, you get a clear picture of where the organisation is and where the organisation is going to".

Mrs Pemba: "You can't just operate for the future without knowing where you come from".

This brings us to the importance of visioning. According to Gultig et al. (2002:35): "A genuine shared vision can help people to excel and learn because they are motivated to do so and not because they are told to". Senge et al. (2000:) were also of the opinion that: "People with common purpose can learn to nourish a sense of commitment in a group or organisation by developing shared images of the future they seek to create and the principles and guiding practices by which they hope to get there".

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The other difference between Future Search and Strategic Planning is seen in the fact that Future Search involves all stakeholders on different levels, therefore it provides opportunities for members of an organisation to learn from each other, as different people with different skills and ideas are present, while learning in Strategic Planning becomes a bit narrow, as members of the organisation only receive feedback on plans made by their managers. This situation, in most cases, does not include the needs of all members; as they were not present during the decision-making and were involved in Future Search.

In support of these ideas, Mrs Bingo stated: "Since Future Search involves all

stakeholders, managers and implementers and different cadres, so it creates a learning opportunity for everybody. The plan, or everything that is discussed, we are able to implement because that is what we have decided on ourselves”.

Learning, as it is referred to in Mrs Bingo’s statement above, has become part of life for world-class organisations. Meyer & Botha (2000:254) said that: “In today’s life, organisations that are at the forefront of institutionalising whatever they learn from the environment are the ones that will survive and prosper and they can be referred to as ‘learning organisations’”.

Participants also felt that Future Search provides an opportunity for people to learn something they did not know before they came to the conference. Mrs Ngula, for example, said: “If you listen to the views of others, it gives you a lot of information”. Weisbord & Janoff (2000:11) also stated that: “A Future Search deliberately offers participants a new, unfamiliar, but learnable, way of working”.

It was clear from the interviews that, in Future Search, people take ownership of the situation where they decide together and carry out the tasks together, unlike in Strategic Planning, where managers have to decide and the rest of the staff have to implement those plans.

Mrs Pemba confirmed this: “It really makes the situation your own; you feel that it is internalised and then you will be able to do it better because it is not forced onto you”. This is also in line with what was asserted by Weisbord & Janoff (2000:4): “When we explore common ground with others, we release creative energy, leading to projects none of us can do alone.” And: “People simultaneously discover mutual values, innovative ideas, commitment, and support.”

Weisbord & Janoff (2000:9) asserted that: “Whatever people do or say during the Future Search Conference — their words, their behaviour, their wishes and their reactions — belongs to them. As facilitators we don’t judge the information as good or bad, complete or

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sketchy, useful or futile”. This makes people relax and have a feeling of ownership.

In contrast, Mrs Swartbooi (who is in a managerial position) could not see any difference between a FSC and a strategic planning meeting, and she had this to say: “Really, for me, I don’t see the difference. It is perhaps just a different approach that you (the researcher) are using”. Weisbord & Janoff (2000:9) acknowledged that: “People will not suddenly give up authority or dependency needs because they spent a few days as peers”.

The case of Mrs Swartbooi, who could not find any difference between the FSC and Strategic Planning, was perhaps one of the few cases referred to by Schmuck & Runkel (1994: 10) who cannot accept anything new without careful examination. OD practitioners believe that giving people enough opportunities to assimilate new information is important if they are to take informed decisions.

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4.3.2 ‘The fact that all stakeholders are involved gives more chance of implementing plans made together’

Participants in my study had the perception that the Future Search’s high participation of stakeholders can enhance the decision-making, and make people committed to implement what they have planned. The chance of implementing plans in Strategic Planning is constrained by the fact that not all stakeholders are involved in the decision-making.

Mrs Bingo stated: “During this Future Search conference, when people are planning together, I think it will be easy for implementation to take place, since they are the ones who planned the activities. ... unlike when it is done by someone else ... and you just have to implement”.

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In both Future Search and Strategic Planning, people do participate in issues of their own concern. The difference is that the level of participation in Future Search is higher than in Strategic Planning. In Future Search, it is expected that all stakeholders are involved, which gives more chance of sharing ideas, while in Strategic Planning only managers or

their representatives are involved. Schmuck & Runkel (1994:87) stated that participation in OD programmes is not restricted to elites or the top managers; it extends broadly through the organisations. Increased participation and empowerment has always been the central goal and fundamental value of the field. French & Bell (1999:88) also pointed out that OD intervention such as the FSC is deliberately designed to increase involvement and participation, and say that the rule of thumb to be followed by managers and members of an organisation is to:

- Involve all those who are part of the problem or part of the solution.
- Direct leaders to push decision-making lower in the organisation.
- Treat those closest to the problem as the relevant experts, and give more power to more people.

Mrs Ngula: “Participation was so good. We were all not coming from the same area which was participating, but if you listen to the views of other participants, it gives you a lot of information”.

Participation, according to French & Bell (1995:94), is one of the most important foundations of OD. Increased participation and empowerment have always been central goals and prominent values of OD. Empowerment means to give someone power. According to French & Bell (1995:94), this is done by giving an individual the authority to participate, to make decisions, to contribute their ideas, to exert influence and to be responsible. It is clear from the interviews that participants experienced empowerment of each other by sharing information especially during group work, where people learned from each other and were given the freedom to be their own experts. Mrs Swartbooi also said that: “Especially the fact that all stakeholders are involved, it gives more chance of implementing plans made together for improvement of their situation”.

One example of commitment leading to implementation of plans that came out of the conference is that at the beginning, participants came up with norms to be adhered to

during the whole conference. One of these norms was punctuality. They decided that if anyone arrived late he/she would pay one Namibian dollar (equal to one rand) per minute. It sounded unrealistic to me but I did not intervene, as Weisbord & Janoff (2000:46) said that one of the tips of running an effective FSC is that: “Facilitators stay out of the way when people are working productively and become active when there is conflict or avoidance of tasks”. This type of action is sometimes not possible with Strategic Planning, where subordinates are not involved right from the beginning.

It was amazing to see participants really adhering to this norm and those who arrived late freely calculated the minutes they were late and eagerly paid the money to me (to buy sweets for everyone the next day), without being asked. When I approached the one who paid the highest about how she was feeling giving such an amount, she said: “I don’t really feel bad; I only feel guilty and I have to pay because that is what we have earlier decided on. I cannot change it now”. This was really a good practical example of implementing plans made together.

This brings us to what French & Bell (1999:190) stated: “If you get all the people with crucial interdependencies together to work on matters of mutual concern, good things can happen”. It was really interesting to see how much people can commit themselves towards something that they have decided on. Participants felt that they were more committed to plans made together during the FSC than when they had to implement plans in Strategic Planning.

The same feeling came up during the interviews, when Mrs Bingo said: “Plans or everything that is discussed are able to be implemented because that is what we have decided on ourselves”.

However, participants acknowledged that keeping in mind how important participation is, one still has to be careful in mixing the entire cadre in one meeting or conference, as this might lead to some people not being open to the discussion (in the case of subordinates) when teamed with their supervisors. Mrs Bingo had this to say: “Mainly my feeling is that

maybe there were some discussions about what the managers are doing and people were not free to discuss it openly because nobody, I don't think anybody, would welcome being pinpointed that it is who said that this manager is like that and the other one is like this".

French & Bell (1999: 284) stated that: "Power is inherent in any social relationship in which one person is dependent on another". Subordinates still feel that some people in the organisation, especially the managers, have got more power than they do, and you cannot blame them for fear of being labelled a bad person and deprived of benefits of the organisation, or fear of losing their job.

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Participants in my study also felt that it was not only subordinates who felt uncomfortable when mixed with supervisors. It was felt that managers also feel uncomfortable, because they might fear that their subordinates might expose their weaknesses to the whole meeting. Mrs Bingo: "I think it will be good if maybe before the conference, the managers should be addressed separately from the whole group so that they are made aware of what will happen and so that they are also sensitised on the importance of the Future Search conference". Weisbord & Janoff (2000:46) stated that one of the tips for Future Search to be effective is that: "Top managers and/or community leaders must be involved". French & Bell (1999:272) also said that for OD efforts to continue and to avoid the loss of what has been invested in an OD effort, the board of directors and top management teams must understand and support the OD process and be prepared to select replacement executives who can carry the process forward. In support of this Mrs Pemba stated: "It is really very important that if you are introducing something like this, the catch is to start with the managers, and then once they understand, they will like the approach and then you take it further from that".

Although participants welcomed the idea of involvement of stakeholders in the FSC, they still acknowledged the power distance between themselves and their managers. This is in line with Hofstede's description of power distance (as cited in Jaeger, 1986:179): "That power in organisations and institutions is accepted by society (in this case, members of the organisation) as unequally distributed". As much as they

wanted all stakeholders to be involved, they still believed that managers should first be approached separately, before everyone is involved. Although power is accepted as being unequally distributed, Jaeger (1986:182) warns that a low or medium power distance is needed for members of organisations at different levels to be able to interact openly in order for problems to be resolved. Hofstede (1997:36) also pointed out that among the values that characterise the power distance dimension are beliefs that inequality should be minimised, managers should treat workers as equal and subordinates should be consulted.

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Another thing that happened during the group discussions (that leads to one being careful when mixing different groups together) is that when I was walking from group to group to see how far each was with a specific task, one group was always discussing something but stopped when I was near. I asked them why they were always falling silent when I was next to them, they said: “No, we are trying to think and discuss the issue on the table”. But I had a feeling that there was something they were discussing that they did not want me to hear. Probably they were discussing issues about their managers, as I was informed by one member during a tea break.

4.3.3 ‘The most interesting part is that we have done this in groups’

Mrs Bingo: “The most interesting part was that we have done this in groups and then we could get different views from people. Although we are all from the same organisation, different views were coming out, so what one person could not stipulate could come out from the others. So through this exercise one is getting or generating a whole lot of information”.

Literature also seems to complement what Mrs Pemba has said; Schmuck & Runkel (1994:57) discovered: “Individual motive satisfaction”, as they wrote that “People need affiliation experiencing feelings of friendliness, warmth, and influence -- exercising some control over their lives and interactions with others”.

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According to Weisbord & Janoff (2000:xii), there are many advantages of having a diverse group to plan and act together on a common future, not the least of which is the shared picture of reality, which no participant had when they came through the door. In my study, when asked how it was working in groups, one participant said this: “The use of group work to me is really important because you learn from each other by sharing and perhaps also you know each other better which will help you to work and support each other better” (Mrs Swartbooi).

Ngcongco (1995:25) also asserts that teamwork helps the group members to give each other support, and joint energy enhances success faster than individual energy. Team work can positively contribute to the success of an organisation. Mr Paul stated: “Working in groups will make you know how to analyse things you will know how to critique ... and how to support each other and you share ideas”. Mrs Bingo: “I can say that people were participating actively and they gave different views from different individuals, so we were able to learn from each other”.

Weisbord & Janoff (2000:4), on this note, confirmed that the FSC enables organisations and communities to learn more about themselves from every angle. Bringing the ‘whole system’ into the room makes feasible a shared encounter with aspects of reality. They also believe that when people explore common ground with others, they release creative energy, leading to projects none of them can do alone. People simultaneously discover mutual values, innovative ideas, commitment and support. Rarely in life do people encounter these key conditions for action all at once. Schmuck & Runkel (1994:88) also pointed out that according to the research done on group dynamics, most people desire increased involvement and participation. Participation and involvement energise greater performance, produce better solutions to problems and greatly enhance acceptance of decisions.

In summary, the interviews revealed that group work helps people know and appreciate each other and places them in a position of knowing how to approach each other on different issues involving the organisation. The act of sharing ideas will make people feel

as though they are on the same level of information about their organisation, and enables them to deal with certain issues together. The more diverse the groups in Future Search are, the better the discussions and ideas are than in Strategic Planning, where the groups are limited to managers.

Weisbord (1987:297) claimed that, for willing members, grouping offers learning that simply can't be got any other way. The exchange of perceptions of self and other unites groups in a powerful way. People learn to accept themselves, to trust one another and resolve their differences. In such team meetings, well-motivated groups routinely learn how to manage with less frustration and higher output.

4.3.4 'It was not as if they were really at a conference'

Mrs Pemba: "The Future Search conference, it is something that is done in a relaxed environment. The atmosphere on its own can invite people to be open-minded". She went on to say that: "The environment or the atmosphere was very much relaxed, people were laughing; it was not as if they were really in a conference, it was just like something informal, where people you know do something informal. But the contribution I think it was wonderful and people participated fully".

A conducive atmosphere plays a big role in facilitating tasks to be carried out or learning taking place, in order, in turn, for change to take place. The FSC offers a homely atmosphere that enables the participants to feel at ease and carry out their tasks comfortably. In traditional Strategic Planning, people are used to meetings that focus on trying to solve problems and manage conflicts that in most cases make the situation stiff and not conducive for learning to take place. In the FSC, members of the NHTN system experienced a different atmosphere that gave them the freedom to air their views, to participate fully and to feel part of the group and the whole system at large.

This situation can be ascribed to what Weisbord & Janoff (2000:12) believed: that key principles of Future Search are widely applicable to the day-to-day management of both

organisations and community. In other words, if situations at work are made to feel homely, people will be free to express themselves and contribute to whatever activity is at hand positively, due to the fact that everyone feels important. In support of the above statement, Mrs Ngula had this to say: “We were participating freely; everybody was open to say what he or she was feeling. We also had enough chance to think and write before presenting our ideas”.

An open climate or atmosphere, according to Hoy & Miskel (1996:142), allows acts of leadership to emerge easily and appropriately as they are needed. This is believed to influence the behaviour of people in the organisation.

4.4 ‘I think it will help the organisation to improve’

Mrs Pemba: “Yes, it is an appropriate tool, because it helps you to know what the problem is ... If you are aware of what are your weaknesses, where you can improve on. It makes you as a person to improve in your own capacity as well as the organisation”.

In general, the approach was perceived to be appropriate to be used as a tool for an organisational development. In their responses, participants indicated that Future Search plays a big role in an organisation. Part of its identified role, as experienced by the participants during the conference, is helping people to look at their own work for self-criticism. It also gives people more chance of implementing plans made together. When one is able to criticise oneself, one is also able to change easily, if any change is needed or required.

Mrs. Swartbooi stated: “Yes, I think it will help the organisation to improve, especially the fact that all stakeholders are involved, it gives more chance of implementing plans made together for improvement of their situation”.

However, the question was: “How ready were managers to initiate the implementation or institutionalisation of the Future Search approach in their organisation?” From the conference, it was clear that participants were willing or ready to participate in the FSC. Readiness to participate in any OD program refers to desire or willingness to take part. Participants were even requesting more conferences. French & Bell (1999:26) pointed out that most OD programs that fail do so because top managers were ambivalent, lost their commitment or became distracted with other duties.

Mr Paul, for example, said: “It is a good approach. Seriously, don’t just finish your study and get your qualification, then you forget us. Come and teach us and come and plough what you have observed there into us”.

However, this does not guarantee that participants (and especially the managers) were ready to implement or to institutionalise Future Search in their organisations. The fact that managers were not willing to spend two and half days on Future Search can mean that they were not ready to accept the new approach. On this note, the following came out from the interviews. Mrs. Swartbooi: “Now that we are functioning within the overall organisation, I foresee that it might be a problem as the organisation is already having a tool that they are using in planning. Perhaps the problem will just come where you are really having stipulated format that you have to follow in doing all your planning ... and now you are coming with a new approach”. Weisbord & Janoff (2000:4) comforted people with this type of thinking by arguing that Future Search however is not a substitute for any rational planning procedures. Rather, it provides an umbrella for building commitments. The forum allows people to work through the dynamic issues that stand in the way of implementing anything such as dreams and schemes, systems and projects, vision and values.

The other challenge that came up from the interviews is some factors that were identified as possibly hindering the running of an effective FSC. These factors were identified as

resources, such as time, materials, finances and human factors.

4.5 ‘We need enough time for this process’

Mr Paul: “I don’t want really to say that it is a challenge but let me say that maybe we need to have enough time for this process”.

Mrs. Pemba: “The Future Search conference is time-consuming as it is done in a working environment. If you are allocated a short period of time then you won’t do it thoroughly as one has planned. You can have a wonderful plan but if the time is not enough you might not do or reach your objectives”.

This brings us back to the experience of Weisbord & Janoff, when time was reduced in one of their FSCs. They said:

When we were struggling to do the whole conference in two days we had to identify common themes and make action plans on the afternoon of Day 2. We found that people were overloaded and tired at a critical juncture. More, they had not had a chance to revisit their scepticism, uncertainty and reluctance to act, which became masked by the euphoria of ideal futures. Action planning came at an awkward time, when folks needed to reflect on what they were agreeing to. Moreover, we make more solid commitments when we are fresh and re-charged.

Weisbord & Janoff (2000:46)

The time factor was also a concern for me. I have noticed that when you carry out the FSC, you really need enough time for preparation and for carrying out the process. My experience is that it was very tough to squeeze the programme into one day after I had prepared it for two and a half to three days. Due to the busy schedule of the management meeting, managers could not give me more than one day to carry out the FSC. I agree with Weisbord & Janoff (2000:101) that people need enough time to assimilate the information they have produced before they come to an action plan. Participants in my study did not have enough time to revisit the ideas before the action plan was made.

Weisbord & Janoff (2000:101) noted that in one of their FSCs, people become very tired

when time was insufficient; it was different with the participants in my study. Having the program squeezed down to one day, I did not notice that people were tired. At the end of the conference, they were still full of energy and wanted to go on with other activities of their own management meeting. The only thing that I noticed is that they were overloaded and were working under pressure. I could see that, for example, some of the activities were rushed, so that we could finish the process in one day. At the end, these activities were not given the time they deserved.

One could say that participants were too excited and wanted to find out what Future Search entailed, and they forgot that they were working under extreme pressure. All they were concentrating on was to know what the next step was. On the other hand, it can be argued that participants were not tired, because they did not go through the process as thoroughly as they should have done, due to the limited time allocated to the activities.

4.6 Resources

4.6.1 Materials

Lack of materials was also identified as one of the factors that could hinder the effective running of a FSC.

Mr Paul: “I foresee even the resources, because if you call people you have to make sure that you have to provide them with something ... resources like pens, marker pens, and all those”.

Materials or logistics in Future Search are very important. Things like workbooks, papers to use for invitation letters, flipchart pads for the participants to write on, name tags, different-coloured marker pens, masking tape, scissors, glue, stickers etc. are needed during the whole process.

4.6.2 Finance

Finance could be the most important factor of all. Mrs. Bingo: “This time when we participated, we were attending the Training Network management meeting. Say for instance it was just planned for the Future Search conference, then the researcher could have a problem in getting the participants as there could be problems with finance paying for their meals, accommodation and S & T allowances”.

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To have everything that is needed in a FSC, one really needs finance. Weisbord & Janoff (2000:118) confirm that in the simplest event, meals and breaks are seen as a requirement for an effective FSC. They believe that even if people go home at night, meals are important and for off-site, accommodation for two nights for everybody is also important. All these needs will require financing.

Food, according to Weisbord & Janoff (2000:55), is important for optimum work. Light lunches and nutritious snacks are needed to keep up people’s energy, which will also require financing.

4.6.3 Human resources

Mr Paul: “Another challenge I can foresee is to have an experienced person to conduct or to facilitate this approach”.

Participants felt that Future Search could be implemented in their organisation but that it needed experienced people to facilitate the process. Participants were informed that Rhodes University had experts in this field and those who had experience in facilitating Future Search could help in carrying out the conferences, so that all individual training centres would be able to implement the approach to the benefit of their unique development.

4.7 Conclusion

This study has explored the perceptions and experiences of members of the NHTN of the FSC as an approach to organisational development in comparison with the traditional

strategic planning. The data revealed that participants found it to be a new approach and different from Strategic Planning.

It is clear from the findings that participants felt that it is an appropriate tool for organisational development. Participants were willing or ready to implement Future Search in their organisation. However, the responses also indicated that it was not clear whether the managers were ready to implement Future Search. Therefore, participants suggested that a separate FSC with managers was needed before everyone was involved.

In the next chapter, I summarise the main findings and put forward recommendations for practice as well as for future research. Lastly, I discuss the limitations of my study.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Future Search is an approach that aims at bringing about change. However, in my study, it was not used to bring about immediate change. Instead, it was used as an introductory conference for members of an organisation so that they could later give their views about the approach as a tool for organisational development. The focus of the study was mainly on the perceptions and experiences of five members of the NHTN of the FSC as an approach for organisational development.

In this chapter, I summarise the main findings that emerged from the discussion in Chapter 4. I also present the recommendation for practice and possible further research and put forward the limitations of my study.

5.2 Summary of main findings

The findings reveal that the FSC is new to the NHTN organisation and to the MOHSS in Namibia. Future Search, a new approach in Namibia, was however well received and enjoyed by members of the NHTN system who managed to attend the whole conference.

Furthermore, the data revealed that Future Search is different from traditional approaches like strategic planning meetings on many counts. One way in which it differs from Strategic Planning is the way it involves its participants. In Future Search, all stakeholders are allowed to participate in order to be able to get a number of different ideas, skills and resources. By contrast, in Strategic Planning, only managers make decisions, and subordinates have to implement the plans.

Further revelations from the interviews point out clearly that the chances of implementing

plans are higher in Future Search than in any traditional approaches. The fact that people are involved right from the beginning in issues of their own concern ensures that the plans are likely to be implemented. People in this case claim ownership of the situation and are ready to act using the different skills and knowledge from different individuals involved.

Another difference is seen in the type of logistic it needs. The nature of the FSC requires more logistical supplies like flipcharts, pads, workbooks, name tags, different-coloured marker pens, masking tape, scissors, glue, stickers; more supplies are needed than in any traditional meeting. The data assert that to carry out a FSC, one needs a stable financial structure/budget.

Data reveal that participants appreciated the use of team work. Participants felt that the use of team work promotes the sharing of ideas and information that can lead to organisational development. Although they were from the same organisation, different individuals had different ideas that could be used to bring about change for developmental purposes.

Atmosphere or climate is another factor that came out of the data. Data reveal that people are used to meetings that focus on trying to solve problems and manage conflicts. This atmosphere is, in most cases, not conducive to people because of members in traditional meetings pointing fingers at each other. The findings clearly indicate that participants found or experienced a different atmosphere in Future Search which gave them the freedom to air their views, to participate fully and to feel part of the group and the whole system at large. Respondents refer to the atmosphere in Future Search as 'friendly' and 'homely'. This atmosphere is assumed to promote healthy discussion, which can lead to the implementation of plans and development of the organisation.

Leadership was identified as an important factor in carrying out Future Search. The respondents stated that if Future Search was to be implemented or institutionalised,

leaders and managers needed separate meetings before they participated with all stakeholders in FSC.

It is also evident from the data that participants felt that since top managers did not attend the introductory FSC, there was a need for a follow-up conference in which all stakeholders would participate, in order for plans to be implemented. Participants felt that plans made during this conference could not be implemented, as the gatekeepers were not present.

5.3 Potential value of my study

The focus of my study was to investigate participants' experiences and perceptions of the FSC as an approach to organisational change. Being a member of the NHTN, and being aware of the problems prevailing in the organisation, I developed an interest in the FSC which, I thought, might be used as an approach for organisational change.

I hope that the findings of this study can be used by the NHTN to implement the approach in order to see what results it will produce. My wish is that if it works well for the NHTN, it might be extended to other parts of the whole MOHSS, for organisational development purposes.

5.4 Recommendations for practice

- Carrying out a FSC for research purposes with limited time and in the absence of top managers was not an ideal situation. Therefore, I recommend that a FSC be carried out with the managers first, then with the entire body of stakeholders.
- The NHTN should implement the FSC approach and see how it works.
- I also recommend that the results be published by the NHTN, individual RHTC's newsletters and in the Government Gazette, for raising awareness of the approach.
- The Ministry should make use of its own resources in facilitating this new approach in any section of the Ministry.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Search

Since Future Search is a new approach in Namibia, I recommend that future Namibian researchers conduct similar studies in other organisations to contribute to the development of our organisations.

5.6 Limitations of my study

One limitation was that I was unable to obtain funds from my sponsors for the Future Search Conference. They had not anticipated expenses beyond my tuition fees.

Time was another limitation. I would have preferred to have conducted the Conference over two to three days but I was granted only one day. Participants did not get enough time to go through the activities properly.

Finding literature on Future Search as a subject was difficult and was limited to one source.

5.7 Conclusion

This study has explored the perceptions and experiences of members of the NHTN of the FSC as an approach for organisational development. The data reveal that there are signs of willingness from the participants to implement the FSC in their organisation. Data also revealed the concern of participants about the extent of managers' readiness in implementing the approach.

It is clear from the respondents that there is a need among the participants to acquire more knowledge, skills and guidance for carrying out FSCs.

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APPENDIX 1

Application of FSC within the NHTN, July 2004.

STEP ONE

Welcome: Participants' expectations
Introduction: Objectives of the workshop

STEP TWO

Title: Mapping the past

Outcomes: At the end of the session, the participants will be able to describe the collective history in terms of the country, the organisation and their own lives and the bonds and ties between them, all through a discussion of the emergent themes.

Time: About two hours or much more, depending on the organisation community and participants, and time periods used for the activity.

Methods Used: Individual work (written or oral) followed by group discussions and plenary.

Preparation Required: A set of flip charts of each of the three following areas (nine in all):

Myself: 1992, 1997, 2003

The organisation: 1992, 1997, 2003

The country: 1992, 1997, 2003

The time frame can be adjusted to fit whatever three times are most suitable for the organisation.

For written activity: flip charts, papers, pens and pre-stick

For an oral activity: a scribe to record inputs

Steps

1. The facilitator introduces the activity by explaining that in order to be able to plan well and to work together well for the future, we need to come to a clear understanding of the past - our own histories as well as the history of the organisation within the context of the history of our country.
2. The facilitator asks each person to think alone for about five minutes, about:
 - i. What they were doing in each of the three times?
 - ii. What was happening in the organisation during these times?
 - iii. What was happening in the country during these times?
3. Each person then takes a pen and writes down their contributions on the appropriate pieces of paper on the walls – people may start anywhere they wish and write whatever they wish as long as they keep within the time frames and the subject lines. If this is done as an oral activity, then the facilitator asks each person to think silently for two minutes about what they (Myself) were doing and thinking in the first time frame and this is written down by the scribe. The same process is followed for each time frame until 'Myself' is completed. The process is followed for 'The organisation' and then for 'The country'.
4. When this is finished and everyone has had a turn to participate, the facilitator asks for comments on the process of writing this history and additions, making sure that everyone who wishes to gets a turn to speak.
5. The facilitator then asks the participants to get into groups to look at themes and patterns emerging from the activities:
 - i. Myself
 - ii. The organisation
 - iii. The Country
6. These groups then report back to the plenary on their findings: each pair of groups takes turns to report back one point at a time, so that all groups have an equal turn to report. A scribe writes down the comments from the group.
7. The whole group then notes the directions or trends that have emerged, especially with regards to change and values.

8. All findings are noted forward into the next activities.

Watch points:

1. Ensure that participants are quite sure of the purpose of the workshop and that all questions about participation, mandate, purpose and roles etc. are answered
2. Make sure that the following norms are adapted by the group (Weisbord 1989:288):
 - i. This is not a problem-solving conference. It is an exercise in learning, awareness, understanding and mutual support
 - ii. Every idea and comment is valid. Every contribution is written down as close to the speakers' words as possible.
 - iii. It is a task-focused meeting. Every task has an outcome and all outcomes are recorded and discussed.
 - iv. We stick to time: groups are responsible for finishing the task on time.
 - v. The facilitators manage the time and structure the tasks.
3. This activity gets everyone participating and quickly experiencing success (Weisbord 1989:289). No-one can fail, and a common sense of history can be built up as well as sensitivity to the viewpoints of others. The facilitating team needs to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of individual participants, e.g. ability to write, to write quickly, to write in a second language etc. It may be useful to ensure that everyone feels free enough to write or speak in the language of their own choice (group norm that needs to be discussed).
4. The activity can also be done in pairs, e.g. one scribe for every two people which can be helpful when there are people who are illiterate within the organisation community.
5. There may be a need to counsel people as this can be quite an emotional activity.
6. The group may propose that the outcomes of the activities be written up as a history of the organisation and community. If this is proposed, a task team could be set up

Comment [M31]: REFERENCE!!!

to do this for the group, and further research could be done on interesting points, as necessary.

STEP THREE

Title: Mapping the present environment of the organisation from outside

Outcomes: At the end of this activity, the participants will be able to clearly describe a common understanding of the events, trends and developments outside the organisation shaping the present for the organisation right now.

Time: About one hour, depending on the participants.

Method used: Small group work.

Preparation required: Papers for groups to write on (one paper per idea, therefore each group needs several slips of paper) and a scribe to record all outcomes.

Steps

1. The facilitator links the activity to the previous one – developing further the ‘map’ of the organisation by looking at what is happening in the present outside the organisation which affects the organisation:
 - i. . within the country
 - ii. . within the community
 - iii. . within the MOHSS
 - iv. . economically, socially, politically etc.
2. Each group makes a list of all the factors outside the organisation which affects the organisation.

3. The groups then prioritise these factors and write the five main ones onto pieces of paper (one factor per paper) and stick them up onto the wall, sorting them into categories as they do so.
4. A volunteer then reads all the points out loud to the whole group and the group is asked to add or ask for clarity on any points.
5. The whole group then analyses these points, looks for important trends and themes which affect the organisation and cannot be ignored.
6. These points are taken forward for the next steps.

STEP FOUR

Title: Mapping the present from the inside

Outcomes: At the end of this activity, the participants will be able to describe a common understanding of the events and trends inside the organisation which people feel proud of and value, and which people feel sorry about and do not value.

Time: About two hours depending on the group.

Methods used: Small pieces of paper for writing the 'proudest' and 'sorriest' on voting stickers: three per participant.

Steps

1. In the group, people are asked to think alone first for about five minutes about things they feel proud about in the organisation, and things they felt sorry about events, things going on right now in the organisation, etc.
2. Each person in their small group then takes turns to give their 'prouds' to the group (one at a time) until all the 'prouds' in the group are written down. The participants in the small groups make sure that all is clear to each of them and all 'prouds' are written down.

3. Each person takes turns to give one 'sorry' at a time to the group until all are written down by the group's scribe. The participants in the small group then ensure that all 'sorries' are clear and understood by all in the group.
4. All of these are then written up clearly on small pieces of papers and stuck onto the wall for everyone in the plenary to read. Questions are asked for clarity and information.
5. The participants in the plenary group then prioritise the 'proudest prouds' and 'sorriest sorries' by voting for each category.
6. The votes are then added up and the priority lists are made for display. The group then discusses the 'prouds' and 'sorries'.
7. The facilitator asks everyone to keep this information for the next activities.

Watch points

1. These activities bring people's values to the surface, and thus can be quite lively.
2. The list of 'prouds' leads to a shared appreciation of present strengths, needs and hopes (Weisbord 1987:291).
3. The list of all 'sorries' results in a mutual owning up to mistakes and shortcomings and can help to build commitment to do something about them. The facilitator needs to be careful that no individual is blamed and that the session does not therefore end in a conflict about blame.
4. This activity can lead to a productive dialogue across all levels of all people, and the sharing of a great deal of information across the group. The facilitators need to ensure that group norms are adhered to all the time and that everyone listens respectfully and talks respectfully to each other.
5. The activity, together with the Norms and Values activity (of step one) can lead to the development of a co-owned Code of Conduct for all role players in the organisation community and the facilitators need to elect a task team to carry this further during plans of action (Step Six) if necessary. It is also very important in defining the future for the participants and for the organisation.

STEP FIVE

Title: Envisioning the preferred future

Outcomes: At the end of this activity participants will be able to explain their own vision for the future of the organisation and the shared vision for the organisation.

Time: About two hours, depending on the group.

Methods used: Small groups and plenary presentations.

Preparation required: Flip charts, pens, crayons etc.

Steps:

1. The facilitator states the aim of this activity and tasks everyone to work together to develop a practical, attainable (do-able) vision for the way the organisation should be and what it should do in the near future.
2. New small groups are formed by using a 'warm up' activity e.g. a singing game, or by asking people to form their own small groups as they wish, or their steering committee can make small groups.
3. The participants in the groups are asked first to imagine the most desirable, attainable future for the organisation five years from now (do this alone in silence for five minutes).
4. The groups are then asked to work together to produce a vision of what they would like in the organisation, using whatever creative method they wish to portray this (dance and song, poetry, drawing etc.).
5. All these visions are presented to the plenary group.
6. The plenary then synthesises the main points of the visions and agrees upon a vision

for the organisation which can be achieved. This is then written down/discussed so that the whole group is clear about the vision.

Watch points:

1. The groups should feel very enthusiastic about doing this activity, and very creative. The facilitator's job is to ensure this.

STEP SIX

Title: Making plans of action

Outcomes: At the end of this session, the participants will have made a clear and attainable plan of action to achieve the vision for the organisation:

1. For themselves
2. For their own role in the organisation (as a sector e.g. students, parents, teachers, management team, governing body etc.)
3. For the organisation itself as a whole

Time: About two hours, depending on the group.

Methods used: Small groups, leading to plenary discussions.

Preparation required: Paper and pens.

Steps:

1. The facilitator introduces this last step of the conference by explaining that all participants now have a common understanding of the history, environment and vision for the organisation upon which to base 'do-able' plans of action to achieve the

new vision for the organisation.

2. The participants get into groups according to role e.g. students, teachers, governing body, organisation management team etc. (not more than six in a group).
3. Each participant first makes a plan of action for her- or himself (this is done silently), in order to achieve the vision of the organisation (this is like a personal mission statement).
4. Participants are invited to read their personal mission statements to the plenary if they wish (volunteers only).
5. The groups then make a plan of action for their own sector, in small steps which can be easily achieved, with the steps described, the person(s) responsible, the date and the proposed outcomes.
6. The groups then state these plans in the plenary and discussion is held on each one, as required. All must agree that the plans lead towards the enabling of the vision.
7. The groups then discuss and propose any other plans of action for the organisation (about issues which need to be tackled by the organisation's governing body, the organisations management team or other bodies).
8. These are then stated in the plenary, and discussed as necessary in the light of the vision.
9. The facilitator then calls for task teams to be set up to carry these proposals forward (one task team per set of proposals as required), and the following are agreed upon:
 1. task
 2. task team convener
 3. secretary
 4. members of the team
 5. days for progress report-back
 6. date for completion of task
7. A date is set for the next plenary report-back session of the group as a whole.
8. The facilitator then calls for reflections on the conference from everyone, after discussion in small groups. Every group is given time to report back via their

speaker.

9. Thanks are given to all participants and providers of all services for the conference.
10. The facilitator teams then convene to discuss progress and to ensure that the process is carried forward through a good system of communication, and planning and preparation.

Watch points:

1. Make sure that people plan the task by first breaking it down into smaller steps which are more easily achieved than a whole task.
2. Ensure that all steps are given a convener, a completion date, a reporter and someone to report to.
3. Ensure that dates are clear and understood by all and that a back-up support system is in place for accountability purposes, so that teams do not lose heart and give up.
4. Ensure that regular reporting is done to the main bodies of the organisation.
5. Many plans of action fall down in the implementation stage. It is very important to develop a follow-up process to make sure that all the hours put into planning are not wasted and the credibility of the process (and therefore the participants and governing/management team) is not damaged.

Weisbord (as cited in Irvine, 1999:104-116) and adapted for use for the Application of the FSC with the NHTN, July 2004.

APPENDIX 2

Letter of permission to the Head of the National Health Training Centre

Rhodes University
Grahamstown
South Africa
22 February 2004

Ms Sam Elizabeth
Head of the National Health Training Centre
Windhoek
Namibia

Dear Madam

I would like to request your permission to conduct a three-day organisation development (OD) workshop in our Training Network System. The OD workshop would partly fulfill the requirement for my Master's degree course in Leadership, Education and Management. I have chosen to focus my study on OD to gain a clearer understanding of it.

Using the 'future search' participatory approach, data will be collected and handled anonymously and confidentially. The collected data will not be used for any purpose other than educational and transformational management, with the permission of the participants.

My target group for the workshop will be the nurse tutors and clerks of the training network system. My task will be mainly to collect data, analyse it and give feedback to the participants for validation.

The work schedule will be forwarded to you one month before the initial date of the workshop for amendments (if any).

It will be appreciated if the workshop could be granted a space in the Training Network Management Meeting, around the end of June or any date in July 2004.

Your response will be highly appreciated.

Yours truly
Marthina Hausiku

APPENDIX 3

Letter of permission to the Ministry of Health & Social Services

Rhodes University
Grahamstown
South Africa
17 May 2004

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health and Social Services
Windhoek
Namibia

Dear Sir

Re: A request to conduct research

My name is Marthina Hausiku and I have been working as a nurse tutor at Rundu Regional Health Training Centre since 1997. I am currently doing my Master's degree at Rhodes University in South Africa in the field of Education Leadership and Management, funded by the Ministry of Health on a full-time basis. In partial fulfillment of the degree, I need to submit a research thesis which will be focussed on Organisation Development.

I would like to request your permission to conduct a three-day Organisation Development (OD) workshop in our Training Network System at the National Health Training Centre. OD is a self-study and management tool used by all members of an organisation for self-assessment and development of their organisation.

The head of the NHTC was informed of the request and she advised me to forward it to your office for your approval. I would greatly appreciate it if I could have a response at your earliest convenience because I planned to carry out my research in July 2004.

You will also find enclosed a letter from my supervisor, Dr Clive Smith, which provides further information as well as my research proposal.

My contact details are: e-mail g04h1895@campus.ru.ac.za, fax no. (046) 622-8028 and tel. no. 0027-722726229.

Yours faithfully

Marthina Hausiku