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**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**An investigation of interpersonal relationships between  
management and lecturers in a College of Education in  
Namibia**

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

Submitted by

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December 2006

## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my beloved brother, the late

Patrick Shivolo Katangolo

## **ABSTRACT**

Relationships are regarded as an important aspect of any organization's life. The purpose of this study was to investigate staff perceptions and experiences of interpersonal relationships between management and lecturers in a Namibian College of Education.

I conducted a case study at the College where I teach. Two methods were used to collect data. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with two management members, two senior lecturers and two lecturers. Secondly, observation where practical aspects of interpersonal relationships in the College were observed. I used the interpretational data analysis technique to analyse my data. Themes and patterns were identified in the data, coded and sorted into categories.

The study revealed staff unhappiness about the current situation in the College as far as communication is concerned. The College's hierarchical structure was described as top-down. As such, it does not allow for face to face communication. There is an absence of any social cohesion or sense of community. Relationships at a College level are characterized by personal conflict and difference. However, the study revealed a satisfaction with communication and relationships at a departmental level.

Five key features of interpersonal communication that are lacking in the College and that contribute to the unhealthy relationships in the College were identified. These are trust, respect, openness, feedback and the sharing of ideas and knowledge. Due to their absence, the College is divided into cliques. A strong desire for the establishment of interpersonal norms of openness, respect, honesty and trust was expressed.

Participants expressed the need to establish an organization structure that allows for interaction with others in the College, flatter structures, teamwork and a collaborative culture. The study also emphasized participative democracy in building relationships. Participation in decision making is seen as satisfying the personal need to experience a sense of influence and achievement. There is evidence of a desire for distributed leadership where the College staff as a group of professionals lead the College collectively and collaboratively. There is a strong desire for a College where people are liked, valued, accepted by others and recognized for their efforts.

Finally, Organization Development is recommended as an approach to enhance College staff relationships.

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Angelina Popyeni Amushigamo, hereby declare that this study is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for a degree or examination in any university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by references.

Signed:-----

January 2007

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. 1 Overview**

I became interested in researching interpersonal relationships in a Namibian Teacher's Training College where I was working at the time I enrolled for a Master's Degree in Leadership and Management at Rhodes University. My enthusiasm for this subject was stimulated even more once I had conducted my first assignment into the way in which Namibia's previous educational system was managed as compared with the shift that came about after Namibia's independence.

While I was searching for information regarding my assignment, I established that one of the priority training needs, that of human relationships between management and staff, had already been identified by the College. I could, however, find no information available regarding such relationships, thus I needed to establish what perceptions management and staff at this College might have in this regard.

### **1.2 Research context**

Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, management of the Namibian Educational System placed emphasis on the importance of a hierarchical authority structure. At that time the head of a College was referred to as "the Principal" and "the Concept Teacher" was the term used to refer to lecturers. It

was only after the country's independence that the titles "Rector" and "Lecturers" were introduced.

Relationships between the management of the day and the teaching staff were not easy. From personal experience in the workplace, I know that the "Principal" was regarded as a "boss" who gave orders and teachers were mere implementers of his autocratic decisions and commands. It was a bureaucratic management model where subordinates had to comply with authority.

As a previous researcher reported:

... practices based on bureaucratic and personal authority are variations of a strategy that emphasizes, *follow me*. Follow me because of my position in the school and the system of bureaucratic roles, rules, and expectations I represent.

(Sergiovanni, 1996:82)

This dictatorial system fostered impersonal relationships between staff and those in managerial positions.

Bush (2003:44) argued that "this neutrality is designed to minimize the impact of individuality on decision-making". It was against this background that the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) embarked upon an

... experiment with new patterns of authority and responsibility ... creative thinking about strategies to ensure broad participation and responsibility. It is essential that the entire education community learn to be tolerant of some ambiguities in relationships.

(MEC, 1993:159)

Since its independence, Namibia's management of National Education has shifted to a collaborative and participatory system, where stakeholders interact and exchange ideas. It is a system where negotiation, interaction and active engagement with others is significant in the management of leading Colleges in the country, the aim being to ensure that Colleges are managed and led along

democratic principles which encourage mutual respect between the Head and the Lecturers.

One researcher argued that “democracy pre-supposes that social inequalities are radically reduced through a fair redistribution of power” (Amukugo 1998:2), to create and maintain peace and harmony amongst staff in a college. This means that a College should no longer be run as a “one man show”. Today, the involvement of all stakeholders (management and all levels of staff) is crucial for the effective running of a College. Success can not be anticipated unless healthy interpersonal relationships exist between management and staff.

Stewart (1990:214) asserted that “managers are now often dependent upon a more complex set of relationships”. Fullan (2001:51) pointed out that “in the past, if you asked someone in a successful enterprise what caused the success, the answer was, ‘it’s the people’. But that is only partially true: it is actually the relationships that make the difference”.

It was argued that organizations “can no longer keep up the pretence that relationships do not affect performance, either academic or professional”. Armstrong (2001:5) stressed that for an organization to be successful it is imperative for managers

... to create a climate in which productive and harmonious relationships can be maintained through partnership between management and employees and where teamwork can flourish.

(Hall & Hall, 1988:1)

Management depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships. This is in line with Terry, Duignan and Bhindi (1997, as cited in Tsui Yee Yeung, n.d.), that “leaders in this new century have to be more sensitive and caring in their attitudes and relationships with followers ...” The concept of interpersonal relationships is explored further in Chapter Two below.

Research conducted for this thesis has been worthwhile because the outcome contributes to a general understanding of the nature of interpersonal relationships in Namibian educational organizations. The research could well prove helpful in the capacity building of school principals throughout Namibia, and elsewhere, in so far as it applies to their interpersonal relationships with staff under their direction. It may well be of value to others in management and leadership positions in other organizations who may wish to better their interpersonal relationships with the staff who report to them, for the ultimate benefit of the organizations in which they work.

### **1.3 Research goal**

As mentioned previously, my research interest focused on staff perceptions and their experiences of interpersonal relationships which existed at the time of the research between the Rector and Lecturers at a Namibian Teachers' Training College. I describe and analyze the participants' perceptions of relationships at the College and those issues which they regarded as affecting interpersonal relationships amongst the staff at that particular College. I also examine the role of organizational structures and processes in relationships, together with the type of relationships which the participants in this research wished to experience at the College, and how such relationships may be cultivated.

### **1.4 Research approach**

My research is located within the interpretive paradigm, which enables researchers "to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life" (de Vos, *et al.*, 2002:79), so as to relate experiences as they were told to me by the participants, themselves.

I elected to use the case study method, as it would allow me to study "real world

situations as they unfold naturally” (Patton, 1990:40). The case study method gave me greater insight into the complexities of interpersonal relationships in the College being researched, where I was (and still am) a Lecturer.

Using semi-structured interviews and observations to collect data, I interviewed two management members, two senior lecturers and two lecturers. These participants have all worked at the College for at least five years, some for over ten years. All have academic leadership responsibilities. Besides attending formal occasions such as meetings, I conducted mostly informal observations of the College staff’s day to day interactions.

I then analyzed the transcripts of both the recorded interviews and my observation notes, using the interpretational data analysis technique discussed by Winegardener (as cited in Mungunda, 2003), which “examines case study data in order to find themes and patterns that will be coded and sorted in different categories” (Mungunda, 2003:3). Working with the data, I sought emerging themes, which now form the basis of this written account. I edited certain portions of the recorded interviews to improve on language and make them more readable.

The fact that, at the time of my research I taught at the College and knew the environment very well, may have placed some bias on my research. However, so as to minimize any possibility of my personal views unduly influencing my research, I did as suggested, and

... allow(ed) the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the case under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be.

(Patton, 1990:44)

I further “produce descriptive data in the participant’s own spoken words” (de Vos, *et al.*, 2002:79). The participants were allowed to speak for themselves.

Prior to my interviews with the participants, I entered into a written agreement with each one of them. The agreements stated the purpose of my research and requested consent for the interview to be recorded and for the resulting information to be used in this thesis. The agreements also assured the participants that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities.

## **1.5 A route map of the chapters**

This thesis consists of six chapters.

In Chapter Two, an overview of the literature is presented, so as to provide better understanding of the concept of interpersonal relationships.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology which I used in this study. It begins with conceptualizing the research paradigm, followed by my research paradigm and the reason for my research being located within the interpretive paradigm. I go on to discuss why I selected the case study method for my research, then I discuss the research process which I followed. Discussion includes reasons for the selection of my case study and the interviewees, how the data were collected and analyzed, ethical issues and the quality of the research. I then present possible limitations of my research.

In Chapter Four I present the main findings as to how participants perceived and experienced interpersonal relationships at the College at the time of my research. These findings are presented in seven themes that emerged from the data, which are: communication, teamwork, recognition, collegiality, openness, college atmosphere and democracy. This chapter is presented in such a way that participants' viewpoints are heard. I also provide a summary at the end of each theme.

Chapter Five discusses and interprets the main findings in the light of relevant literature.

Chapter Six is the conclusion, where I summarize the main findings regarding participants' perceptions of interpersonal relationships within the College. The potential value of this study is discussed and recommendations are made. Finally, limitations of the whole study are considered.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

There is a lot of pain in human systems that doesn't [*sic*] not have to be there. There is a lot of hope, aliveness and joy ready to flower when members of the system can learn how to nourish these positive qualities.

(Liebernman & Hardie, as cited in Whitaker, 1993:45)

Contemporary scholars argue that an organization's effectiveness depends on such organization's interpersonal relationships amongst its members. Some researchers found:

... the existence of trust, a sense of mutual responsibility and personal worth in its members forms the bedrock of a committed and enthusiastic workforce. To gain or maintain a competitive edge, organizations need to be vigilant about the state of their relationships.

(Schluter & Lee, 1993)

In this new millenium, there is a call for leaders to be more sensitive and caring in their attitudes and relationships with those working under them. In order to do this, it was necessary for me to study literature pertaining to management and staff relationships in organizations. The following key relationship issues emerged from my studies: interpersonal, intergroup and intragroup, cross-cultural, leadership and staff and strategies to facilitate such relationships in organizations.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide a brief, historical overview of how relationships in organizations have been regarded in the past. Firstly, I consider the status of scientific approaches to management and leadership; then I consider human relationship approaches, culminating in discussion on recent literature about relationships in organizations. This discussion includes issues

such as information relationships in organizations, authenticity in such relationships and social capital investment. Participation in networks, collegiality in the workplace, emotional intelligence and interpersonal intelligence are also considered.

In the second section of this chapter, I concentrate on leadership and relationships and this leads to the third section, where strategies to facilitate the improvement of relationships in organizations are discussed.

## **2.2 Historical overview of relationships in organizations**

### **2.2.1 Scientific school of thought**

This school of thought in management characterized the period 1900 to 1930 in Namibia. This was the era of Taylor, the main initiator and father of the scientific school of thought, his philosophy at that time being to use people effectively in industrial organizations so as to improve productivity. There was

.. little appreciation of the key role that people play. People were simply regarded as units of production, as a pair of hands or legs to be recruited. (Cameron & Pearce, 1995:144)

and people were required to perform their duties to the satisfaction of an organization's leadership. People were regarded as small parts which "could be programmed to be efficient machines" (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:9), the belief of the time being that it would increase productivity. The main reasoning then was that "the more people were paid, the harder they worked" (Cheminais, *et al.*, 1998:154). That school of thought totally ignored the human elements in the equation.

During the 1920's, the Hawthorne studies demonstrated that employee productivity was affected not only by the way people were rewarded but also by certain social factors. Hawthorne researchers, Mayo and Roethlisberger, discovered that "work conditions such as group relationships, leadership styles and support from management strongly affected employees' feelings, emotions and sentiments" (as cited Carrel, *et al.*, 1996:9).

The Hawthorne studies stimulated research into the informal side of organizations. Certain scholars, such as Morrison (2004:114-115), believed that informal social relations extended significant and rewarding benefits to individuals, which formally-defined organizational relationships could not offer. These scholars believed that informal relationships in organizations result in increased communication, co-operation, respect and trust amongst members of an organization and that this, in turn, influences both management and staff's attitudes and behaviours towards one another, resulting in a friendlier working environment, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity in an organization, since its members work in a relaxed atmosphere and everybody is committed to the group norms which they set for themselves.

However, although espoused, beliefs such as trust and respect for the individual, the legitimacy of feelings, open communication, participation, contribution by each person in an organization, co-operation, appropriate use of power and authentic interpersonal relations were rarely implemented in most organizations. This could be attributed to the authoritarian and autocratic management practices of the time, as well as the dysfunction of bureaucratic management.

Argyris pointed out that

... a lack of interpersonal competence in executives (say, headships) leads to an increase in conformity, mistrust, and dependence among ... work group members. These kinds of responses ... increase defensive interpersonal norms, and increase organizational rigidity all of which tend to reduce organizational performance.

(as cited in Khetarpal & Srivastava, 2000:74)

### 2.2.2 Human relations school of thought

Prompted by an increasing awareness of, and interest in, the human side of life in an organization, during the 1930's and 1940's there was a shift away from the formal scientific school of thought to what became known as "human relations"-thinking in organizations. The focus shifted more and more in the direction of better management of people.

During the 1950's, Schmuck and Runkel, organizational development (OD) practitioners, were amongst those who critiqued authoritarian and autocratic management practices. They advocated humanistic values and a search for better ways to run organizations by developing the people through appropriate human approaches and establishing good working relationships. They pointed out that "OD honours people's feelings when they are relevant to their work", since these feelings could "become one - only - of the interpersonal conditions affecting the course of action people choose" (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:10).

Furthermore, in OD, collaborative efforts among an organization's members are valued and there is an attempt "to create more democratic social structures and more humanized interpersonal relationships" which are characterized by values such as "authenticity in interpersonal relations, collaborative, democratic conception of freedom and control, participation and interpersonal respect..." (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:14).

The human relationship movement evolved in reaction to scientific management's view of humans as machines and its dehumanizing behaviours. Mary Parker Follet was one of the first to consider the human element and was one of the pioneers who emphasized that managers must develop, and maintain, dynamic and harmonious relationships in the workplace (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:12). As

Lambert, *et al.*, (1995:16) pointed out, Follet's work in the human relations movement in organizations led to democratic ways for people to relate to one another in the workplace. Follet's work further advocated open, authentic, collegiality and trusting relationships, where members of an organization work together as good friends and are committed to their work. It was pointed out that:

... the concern for the total person is a natural part of the working relationship, which tends to be informal and emphasizes the whole person and not just the individual's work role.

(Hoy & Miskel, 1996:131)

This means that members of an organization depend on one another and need to work as a team and, for this reason, it is vital that people are encouraged to develop and establish good interpersonal relationship in the workplace. As Duck (as cited in Atkinson, n.d.) pointed out, "our greatest moments of joy and sorrow are founded in relationships", while Adler and Rodman (as cited in Atkinson, n.d.) emphasized that "life without friends would be empty".

Sound human relationships are, however, not guaranteed. Discontentment, reflecting a conflict of interests, is inevitable in the workplace. As Hoy and Miskel (1996:15) put it, organizations are "often not one big family". Where there are people, there will always be conflict, which may sometimes mar relationships in workplace. However, when such conflicts arise they

... are not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibilities, but view it as a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for enrichment of all concerned..

(Follet, as cited in Hoy & Miskel, 1996:12)

Also, as Whitaker (1993:37) has pointed out, "it is often our relationships with others that cause our most difficult and emotionally painful moments". Therefore, success in an organization requires its management not only to be aware of this human fallibility but also to assist the workforce to develop their "qualities, skills

and knowledge in order to manage” their “relationships effectively and sensitively”. Good relationships need to be fostered and nurtured; they not “just happen”.

## **2.3 Current research on relationships in organizations**

Scholars have referred to certain key concepts in relationships, *inter alia*, human need, satisfaction, authenticity, social capital, collegiality, reciprocity, trusting relationships and emotional intelligence.

### **2.3.1 Human need satisfaction**

Schmuck and Runkel (1994:26) pointed out that organizations “must not disregard the satisfaction of human motives”. It is argued that a strong organization is the one that is populated by members who are satisfied with their “lives together”. McClelland (as cited in Robbins & Decenzo, 2003:284) argued that people in an organization have compelling desires, one of which is a need “to be liked and accepted by others”, that is, the need for affiliation. According to this need, “individuals with high need affiliation strive for friendships,” and they “prefer co-operative situations rather than competitive ones”. People also “desire relationships involving a high degree of mutual understanding”.

Other researchers reported that

... people with a high need for affiliation focus their behavior on establishing and maintaining good relationships with other people that are based on mutual respect and caring. They always try to work with others by helping the group achieve harmony and good relationships.

(Bagraim, *et al.*, 2003:58)

To ignore the satisfaction of human needs in an organization is to discourage management and staff from taking their work seriously. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:26) argued that “individuals act when they can maximize their chances of enjoying friendship”. Group effectiveness relates directly to improved interpersonal relationships and the meeting of human needs in any organization.

### **2.3.2 Authenticity**

Argyris (n.d.) claimed that interpersonal relationships are influenced through authentic relationships and that, for this reason, organizations need authentic leaders, whom people can respect and trust; people who are sensitive to others' feelings, aspirations and needs. According to Nijs, to be authentic is “to be honest with yourself and others and choosing how you relate to others...”

Authenticity calls for management and staff to be sincere and genuine in their interactions with others. He stated:

... being real and being all that you can be is essential to relationships, and that positive attitudes and the desire to be exactly who you are, are at the heart of a fruitful relationship.

(Nijs, 2006:47)

Other researchers believed that:

... authentic leadership is a counterbalance to the often cynical and dehumanizing behaviors of managers, which can debilitate, coerce and frustrate people inside and outside the organization.

(Starratt, as cited in Bhindi & Duignan, 1997:120)

In addition, authentic relationships in organizations:

... encourage and support ways of thinking and doing that are ethical and people-centred since authenticity can help restore human, ethical and spiritual dimensions to organizational relationships and make organizations better places in which to work, not only in terms of productivity but also in terms of the quality of life of constituents. In addition, authenticity is based on personal integrity and credibility,

trusting relationships, therefore leaders earn their allegiance through authentic actions and interactions in trusting relationships.

(Bhindi & Duignan, 1997:119)

As Lewin and Regime (as cited in Fullan, 2001:53) pointed out that it is time for leaders to pay much attention as to how they treat people in their organizations. People have an innate need to be treated with dignity and respect. Elman (2005) pointed out that “people live ... more productive lives when they are actively involved in social networks”. In other words, the creation and maintenance of social capital in the workplace is a vital investment towards an organization’s well being.

### **2.3.3 Social capital**

Haslam, *et al.*, (2003) believed that “researchers are increasingly emphasizing the dangers of a failure to recognize and harness an organization’s social capital”.

According to these researchers, social capital is:

... those resources inherent in the network of alliances and relationships within a workforce that contribute to, amongst other things, an organization’s reputation, its members’ loyalty and commitment”.

Organizations need to establish mutual bonds because with established systems and direction among different organizations, they can “can accomplish things that isolated individuals could never achieve, because together, we’re better” (Elman, 2005). Robbins (as cited in Bagraim, *et al.*, 2003:96) pointed out that “the goal of the team should be synergy, in other words, the sum of the individual efforts in the team is greater than the sum of the individual inputs”.

In teamwork, individuals support one another and their united efforts are likely to lead to greater success when they co-operate and work together, rather like a family with strong ties. Smith (1995:94) regarded such teamwork as “a manifestation of Ubuntu, the African character for communalism and concern for harmony in relations”.

Furthermore, the creation of social capital is associated with improved interpersonal relationships and intergroup behaviors in a mixed group organization. In terms of Allport's Contact Hypothesis and Miller and Brewer's Social Interaction Theory (as cited in Smith, 1995:26) "attitudes and behaviour toward outgroups, such as members of another race or cultural group, will become more positive with increased interpersonal interaction". Such "contact must foster a mutually interdependent relationship, that is, co-operation in the attainment of a common goal, and must favor group equality and egalitarian intergroup association" (Smith, 1995:27).

Scholars claim that by creating social capital in an organization, individuals will "act in ways that serve to advance group interests", and see them "striving to make their ingroup better". It further leads to "organizational citizenship, willingness to contribute to collective goals and group productivity" (Haslam, *et al.*, 2003).

Lee (1999) added that social capital in organizations was "the process between people which establishes norms and social trust, and facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" of members of an organization. Social capital provides the basis on which organizational relationships and, ultimately, organizations are built. Elements such as participation in networks, reciprocity and trusting relationships are vital in establishing good social capital.

### 2.3.2.1 Participation in networks

As discussed earlier, members of an organization need to interact positively with one another for their success and well being in an organization. Lee (1999) pointed out that social capital “depends on a propensity for sociability, on people forming lateral, voluntary and equal associations that produce a more or dense interlocking network of relationships”. Individuals acting in isolation can not establish social capital; there has to be reciprocity amongst staff members of an organization..

### 2.3.2.2 Reciprocity

Morrison (2004) stated that reciprocity is important in work relationships since this enhances the lives of organizational members. As another researcher put it:

... where social capital is high, individuals do things for others in the general expectation that the service will one day be returned. They care for one another's interests.

(Lee,1999:n.p.)

Lambert, *et al.*, (1995:34) stated that the concept of reciprocity refers to the ability

.. to move outside oneself, to differentiate one's perceptions from those of another, to practice empathy, to move out of the self and observe responses and thoughts of another - all are prerequisites to reciprocity.

These researchers went on to state that “we need to be able to engage in processes of meaning-making as we live and work together in educational communities if capacities for reciprocity are to be develop”, since, as Paulo Freire (as cited in Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:34) argued, “knowledge is built up in the relations between human beings”.

Other researchers commented that this:

... attributes meaning to relationships when she explains that individuals generate information in their interactions with each other,

information that becomes a feedback spiral enriching and creating additional information, since reciprocity is a spiral experience.

(Wheatley, as cited in Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:34)

Members of an organization need to interact with each other in a trusting atmosphere.

### **2.3.2.3 Trusting relationships**

Moye, Henkin and Egley (2005:260) pointed out that “trust is a fundamental element in well-functioning organizations”. Trust allows organization members to “be willing to accept and commit to their organizational goals and discussions”. It is believed that in organizations where trust prevails, its staff members “will act in mutually supportive ways” (Lee, 1999).

Yet another researcher commented:

Trusting relationships among an organisation’s members facilitates co-operation, reduces the need to monitor one another’s behavior, bonds members around the belief that others won’t (*sic*) take advantage of them.

(Robbins, 2003:267)

and that an organization’s members are “motivated and competent to sustain relationships”. (McGregor, as cited in Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:127)

In the next section, collegiality in organizations is discussed.

### **2.3.3 Collegiality**

The contemporary school of thought emphasizes the importance of collegial relationships in organizations. Bush (2003:76) pointed out those organizations which take a collegial approach in managing their workforce understand the importance of high quality human relationships. Leaders in such organizations

employ interpersonal leadership styles which emphasize the necessity for collaboration and interpersonal relationships amongst its workforce.

Bush (2003) further pointed out that "collegiality is based on democratic principles in organizations"; for example, "it emphasizes a complex interactive process and participative process that values people and the contributions they make to the effectiveness of the organization". Furthermore, when taking a collegial approach in leading an organization, one believes that harmonious relationships in organizations are built on "shared values and common interests" (Bush, 2003: n.p.), and, consequently, this results in bonding people in an organization together.

The Christian disciple, Paul, used a metaphor to show how people in an organization can be regarded. He stated that:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function ... we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others.

(The Holy Bible, NIV, II Romans, 12:4-5, p. 189)

Paul emphasized the importance of building relationships in organizations that "do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that bonds you together". Given this analogy, no organization can function properly if its parts do not work in harmony with one another.

West-Burnham (as cited in Bush, 2003:79) believed that interpersonal intelligence is another important concept in organizational relationships.

#### **2.3.4 Interpersonal intelligence**

A great deal of time in organizations "is taken up in an intensity of relationships rather than only emphasizing the completion of the task. This requires a high level of personal and interpersonal skills" of all members in the organization, and "a

collaborative approach to relationships" (Johnston & Pickersgill, as cited in Bush, 2003:79-80), where all members strive for healthy relationships in their organizations. Other scholars, such as West-Burnham (as cited in Bush, 2003) referred to this as "interpersonal intelligence", whilst yet others, including Masson (1999), Abraham (1999), Kobe, *et al.*, (2001) and Ohrberg *et al.*, (2005), used the concept of "emotional intelligence".

Werner (as cited in Schultz, *et al.*, 2003:44) pointed out that organizations have now realized that emotional intelligence "is a crucial aspect of performance, successful leadership and effective relationships". He argued further that emotional intelligence is more than the "mere managing one's own emotions and the emotions of others in such a manner that it creates a path to goal attainment".

Ohrberg (2005) agreed. He stated that emotional intelligence plays an integral part in any organization's life, and individuals can use it as a "positive means in managing organizations". Emotional intelligence manifests itself "in harmonious relationships" (Abraham, 1999) in organizations. Goleman (as cited in Bagraim, *et al.*, 2003:44) stated that it requires the ability to "empathize" and it "involves sensitivity towards others, as also the "ability to handle relationships constructively".

West-Burnham (as cited in Bush, 2003:79) stated that it is impossible to conceptualize any organization that does not have interpersonal intelligence as a key component. According to West-Burnham, interpersonal intelligence is "the authentic range of intuitive behaviors derived from sophisticated self-awareness, which facilitates effective engagement with others" in organizations. It has a positive effect on the organizational outcomes of the workforce's cohesion, performance and commitment if used as a tool to guide "one's thinking and actions" (Abraham, 1999:n.p.), to enhance relationships in organizations. According to Goleman (as cited in Masson, 1999:n.p.), emotional intelligence includes "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills".

One should be able to read and respond to the moods and emotions of others as well as to one's own feelings and emotions, since personal emotions can interfere with organizational relationships. Emotional intelligence is the ability to "be aware of one's own emotions", so as to react appropriately in all situations. It is the ability to "shake off" negative feelings and "bounce back" from setbacks. Emotional intelligence fosters self control, tolerance and constructive anger management.

Masson (1999:n.p.) pointed out that "you have to be a personal leader of yourself. If you can't lead yourself, you can't lead others". Other researchers explained it this way:

... without emotional intelligence, a person can have outstanding training, a highly analytical mind, a long-term vision, and an endless supply of terrific ideas but still not make a great leader.  
(Robbins & Decenzo, 2003:329)

Kobe, *et al.* (2001:n.p.) felt that emotional intelligence was "the most essential contributor to an individual's ..." success, since "outstanding leaders possess a high degree of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, as cited in Masson, 1999).

In the following section, leadership and relationships are discussed.

### **2.3.5 Leadership and relationships**

It has been argued that:

... relationship development is the most critical success element for any leadership. Leaders who develop powerful and productive relationships are more likely to inspire greater productivity and overall employee performance. Leaders who excel at building relationships realize improvement in performance and productivity.  
(Nijs, 2006:47)

In contrast, where leaders are purely task oriented, they ignore matters not directly related to the work in hand. There is no sensitivity or tolerance for

individuality amongst the workforce under task oriented leaders. Interest focuses on the accomplishment of the task and the leader is "insensitive to the emotional needs" of the organization's members (Khetarpal & Srivastava, 2000:74).

Sergiovanni (1996:50) related this to the metaphor of "*gesellschaft*", where members of an organization strive for achievement and he pointed out that, in "*gesellschaft*", relationships are competitive. This means, the relationship between the leader and staff members is a reward, since the staff members have been loyal to authority.

In these types of relationships, individuals make a decision to relate to one another so as to attain some goal or benefit. Without a benefit, there would be no relationship and, once the benefit is lost, the relationship ends (Sergiovanni, 1996:49). This is similar to a calculated relationship, "*Etzioni*", where an organization's members "weigh the benefits and limitations of belonging to the organization" (Bagraim, *et al.*, 2003:145).

Another researcher used the metaphor of "*gemeinschaft*" to refer to leadership which includes a focus on relationships. According to this researcher, leaders who operate from "*gemeinschaft*", strive to develop relationships which have moral overtones amongst organization members. Such leaders

... understand the importance of providing members with security sense and meaning, and recognize that the ties that bind us together come from sharing with others a common commitment to a set of ideas and ideals.

(Sergiovanni, 1996:50) .

This ties in with Lambert, *et al.*'s (1995:28) theory of constructivist leadership, which held that leadership emerges when organization members work together and collectively, as a community, since "being in relationships and in social settings provide(s) opportunities for a large range of needs to be satisfied" (Whitaker, 1993:93).

It also ties in well with Weisbord's (1987:295) search conference, which is a collaborative inquiry that promotes productive workplaces by using more of each person's reality. This search conference unites people who need to, yet rarely do, interact with one another, in a new kind of relationship, to open up opportunities for members of an organization to become a community.

Other researchers believed that:

... searching together gave organizations more dependable anchor points for their own planning. It tied everybody to reality through taking joint snapshots, and became the basis for a more truthful movie based on mutual interest.

(Lindaman & Lippitt, as cited in Weisbord, 1987:284)

Sergiovanni (1996:46) argued that

Communities are socially organized around relationships and the felt interdependencies that nurture them. Instead of being tied together and tied to purposes by bartering arrangements, this social structure bonds people together in special ways and binds them to concepts, images and values that comprise a shared idea structure.

Douglas McGregor (as cited in Whitaker, 1993:30) highlighted two assumptions that leaders held about people in organizations: Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X presents an essentially negative view of people, while Theory Y offers a positive view of people and, as a result, views people in organizations differently from Theory X.

For example, in an organizational culture where a leader operates from a Theory X perspective, such a leader adopts interpersonal behaviour towards staff which is characterized by persuasion, reward or punishment, instruction and command.

People are treated as immature human beings. As one researcher put it:

Human relationships in this assumption are most effectively motivated by carefully defined direction, authority, and control that emphasize rational behavior and achievement of the objective.

(Argyris, n.d.)

Operating from the Theory X point of view, organizational members work in an environment which is threatening and interpersonal relationships are not good. "Poor, shallow, and mistrustful relationships" exist in such an organization (Argyris:n.d.). Such relationships do not care about other people's feelings, leading to people becoming disappointed and frustrated. In this researcher's view at the time, it could "lead to a decrease in organizational success" (Argyris: n.d.), since "people may become scepticism [*sic*]" (Whitaker, 1993:33).

On the other hand, if Theory Y's assumptions about people were followed in an organization, Argyris (n.d.) claimed that trusting, authentic relationships would develop among people. This researcher suggested that "there will be an increase in interpersonal competence, intergroup cooperation, flexibility" and went on to say that this assumption

... treats each human being as a person with a complex set of needs, all of which are important in her/his work and in her/his life . . . and provides opportunities for people in organizations to influence the way in which they relate to work, the organization, and the environment.

(Argyris, n.d.)

The Path-Goal theory offers another way of looking at leadership and relationships. According to Robbins, (2003:325) the term "Path-Goal" is derived from the belief that effective leaders clarify the path to help their followers to get from where they are to the achievement of their goals and to make the journey along the path easier by reducing roadblocks which they might face.

Robbins further argued that employee performance and satisfaction are likely to be positively influenced when a leader compensates for things lacking in either the employee or the work environment. In other words, the onus is on a leader to assist followers in attaining their goals and to provide the necessary direction and support so as to ensure that their goals are compatible with the overall objectives of the group and the organization. Healthy relationships are at the heart of attaining this.

Leadership in any organization plays a vital role in spearheading healthy relationships throughout such organization for achieving its organizational goals. However, Blank (as cited in Tsui Yee Yeung, n.d.) pointed out that leaders do not exist without followers. Interaction is central in the leader-follower relationship. Leaders and followers are necessary participants in establishing relationships; they cannot be separated from one another.

## **2.5 Organization culture**

Lambert pointed out that personal and professional experiences require an interactive professional culture if adults are to engage with one another in the process of growth and development. Organizations need to operate as communities, so as to construct meaning together and improve interpersonal relationships, and this is where social relations play a vital role. Social relationships should be embedded in the organizational culture of an organization. As an example, Whitaker (1993:97) pointed out that “a fully collaborative culture enables the expression of strong and common commitment of staff, collective responsibility and a special sense of pride in the institution”.

Thus, the encouragement of members of an organization to collectively participate in organizational issues “fosters individual growth and ownership and creates a greater responsibility and interdependency” (Whitaker, 1993:97). This attitude builds relationships of mutual trust which lead to people having confidence in one another.

In addition, the creation of an environment where individuals are appreciated, valued and respected and where there is strong sense of connectedness, will provide a significantly healthy relationship for an entire organization. An organizational culture which is characterized by values such as “teamwork, cooperation, egalitarianism” (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:131) will encourage sound interpersonal relationships among its members.

Greenfield (1984:147-150) pointed out that social relationships should be understood as the application of will or as submission to it. One could say it is “a give and take” approach. Organizational life is a matter of compromising with others if healthy relationships are to be realized. It works in two ways, since organizations are made up of people and their operations must include healthy workplace relationships if the organizations are to succeed.

Some scholars have claimed that relationships in organizations also depend on the organizational climate. Hoy and Miskel (1996:141) felt that an organizational climate influences members’ behaviours, attitudes, and also the way in which members of an organization relate, or fail to relate, to one another. Cohen (as cited in Smith, 2003:289) argued that the “organization climate is the key that holds the organization’s social organization together”.

The following section focuses on relationships in open, closed and an intimate climates.

### **2.5.1 Relationships in an open climate**

In an open climate, an organization’s members act in good faith towards one another. Organizational members are important to one another and, together, work well. Distinctive features of relationships in an open climate are co-operation and respect amongst the organization’s members, as well as the fostering of harmonious relationships.

### **2.5.2 Relationships in a closed climate**

In contrast to an open climate, a closed climate is least genuine. Inauthenticity pervades the atmosphere of such an organization’s relationships, fostering

frustration and apathy throughout the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). In such a climate, members of an organization experience virtually no work satisfaction and they do not function as a group, nor do they socialize (van der Westhuizen, 1996:163), and non-collegial relationships exist. Relationships become far too competitive and those who achieve more are better valued by the organization (Sergiovanni, 1994: n.p.).

### **2.5.3 Relationships in an intimate climate**

In an intimate climate, relationships are characterized by a great deal of socialization between organizational members (van der Westhuizen, 1996). Management and staff members know one another well; they become good friends, regularly socialize together and provide strong support for one another (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:144). The intimate climate in an organization can not be underestimated. It is a causal factor in work satisfaction (van der Westhuizen, 1996:163) and, directly, it affects productivity levels.

Discussion will now focus on how organizations can improve their relationships.

## **2.6 Organization strategies to enhance relationships**

### **2.6.1 Participation**

Schmuck and Runkel (1994:281) argued that “the amount of participation by organization members is determined in part by the leadership style” of an organization. Unless a leader is willing and able to unit his/her efforts with others, interpersonal relationships are destined to fail.

For the enhancement of organizational relationships, participation and mutual trust between leaders and other members of an organization is “a critical factor”. An organization’s members must feel that the leader is there to help them

become more effective by “initiating trusting relationships through trustworthy behaviors” (Moye, *et al.*, 2005:272). This means drawing from each and every member’s capabilities and skills, thereby giving the group a sense of being “valued for all their capacities and qualities” (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:297).

By encouraging an organization's members to come together and, as a team, be involved in the organisation’s activities, each individual is permitted to be him/her self, thus bringing out the best in each person. Such a system creates a feeling of others’ centredness and co-operation since “people are connected together and the opportunities for conversations and meaning- making become self-evident” (Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:35).

Scholars have also talked about relational proximity as a strategy to improve interpersonal relationships in organizations.

### **2.6.2 Relational proximity**

Schluter and Lee (1993) stated that there are five indicators which can be used in relational proximity. These are: directness, continuity, multi-plexity, parity and commonality.

### **2.6.3 Directness**

With directness, management and staff make an audit on the amount of face-to-face contact they have with one another; that is, how often they meet and interact with one another. This is in line with Social Interaction Theory (Smith, 2003:26).

### **2.6.4 Continuity**

Organizational members look at the length of contact time they have with each other.

### **2.6.5 Multi-plexity**

Members of an organization do an audit on different contexts which contribute to their interpersonal relationships with their colleagues in that organization, that is, they indicate where and when they see or meet with one another.

### **2.6.6 Parity**

Members of an organization look at the extent of mutual respect amongst themselves, that is, to what extent they respect each other and on what basis.

### **2.6.7 Commonality**

Do organizational members find a common sense of purpose or are there common values which exist amongst them? Do they have similar interests? Do they cultivate their interests together? The answers to these questions define whether commonality exists, or whether it is non-existent.

### **2.6.8 Modelling trusting relationships**

Leaders may improve relationships in their organizations by “modelling trusting relationships and decreasing dependence on control measures”; for example, the close monitoring of the quality of each staff member’s work. With regular interaction between leaders and the workforce, members of an organization will feel empowered and valued. In Culbert and McDonough’s words, “individuals are not going to internalize a system in an organization that is not personally and professionally empowering to them” (as cited in Moye, *et al.*, 2005:264).

Furthermore, leaders in organizations are able to make a shift from formal relationships to easier, more personal, informal relationships and show “confidence in the intent and competence”(Moye, *et al.*, 2005) of their workforce. This should indicate to members of such an organization that their leader has confidence in them and that he or she encourages an individual work initiative.

Armstrong (2001:5) stated that for an organization to be successful, it is imperative for managers to create a climate in which productive and harmonious relationships can be maintained through partnership between management and employees, and where team work can flourish. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:276) pointed out educators who have access to their leaders in a larger organization “feel better about their jobs and their departments and are more willing to display their capabilities to others”.

### **2.6.9 Organization structure**

Relationships “reveal themselves in governance structures in organizations” (Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:34). They “are the visible manifestation of meaning-making” and “their absence contributes to fragmentation and prevents self-organizing systems from forming and being sustained” (Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:57). As an example, one would find several different departments in an organization operating in isolation and never becoming involved, or interacting, with other departments. As such, “the workings’ in the organization would “remain fragmented, lacking the linkages that are essential to integrated thinking...” Lambert, *et al.*, 1995:57).

Integrated structures are essential to connecting relationships in organizations; for example, a communalism structure (Smith, 2003:94) provides opportunity for people to “operate more on personal acquaintance and trust than on formal principles, job description and rules” (Schein, as cited in Smith, 2003:95).

This is in line with Likert's link-pin structures (as cited in Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:143). Link-pin structures are "unique structures to promote an accurate flow of information within an organization". As an example, an organization can create teams to act as link-pins with all members in the organization and "thereby increase the effectiveness of communication" throughout the organization and, thus, gain improved relationships between its management and workforce.

In the next discussion, there follows another example of how organizations can improve their relationships, through using action research.

### **2.6.10 Action research**

Lambert, *et al.*, (1995:57) argued action research as one of the strategies to improve relationships in organizations. Action research "is a data-based change method that replicates the steps involved in the classic scientific method of enquiry" (French & Bell, as cited in Smith, 2003:21). It is concerned with social life in organizations.

This participative method takes account of people's feelings, attitudes and perceptions. It requires the involvement of all members of the organization; for example, management and staff could begin by collecting data on interpersonal relationships in their organization, analyse it, provide feedback and "arrive together at a mutually acceptable action plan" to achieve the desired relationship (Smith, 2003:22).

Another way of improving relationships in an organization is through the development of its workforce's interpersonal communication skills.

### 2.6.11 Interpersonal communication

One researcher put it this way:

Human beings are born dependent. In order for a baby to survive and thrive, it needs the constant support of other humans. Yet, as we grow, we do not gradually become independent of others; rather, we become interdependent. In the course of our lives we form many give-and-take relationships, building a healthy interdependent community. We are at our cores, social creatures. Affiliation is the strength that allows us to join with others to create something stronger, more adaptive, and more creative than any individual: the group. To achieve this interdependence, interpersonal communication is central to the work of an organization. (Perry, 2002: n.p.)

It is through interpersonal communication that members of management and staff are able to establish the internal emotional tone of an organization, to ascertain how comfortable members feel with one another and with the organization, all of which set the organizational communication climate (Kreps, as cited in Hunt, *et al.*, 2000:120). According to Kreps, a communication climate “develops out of the behaviors and policies of organization administrators and the specific communication behaviors of organization members”.

A friendly communication climate in an organization encourages members to communicate with colleagues in an open, relaxed and convivial manner, since good interpersonal relationships depend upon open communication. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:275) argued that regular meetings between management and staff members provide a forum for broader involvement and a communicative link between members of the organization.

Total organization becomes better integrated when information goes directly from its source to where it is needed. From increased interaction, everyone stands to gain with enhanced interpersonal relationships and improved production in the workplace.

Argyle (as cited in Hargie, *et al.*, 2000:26) argued that co-operation, whether at work or in social relationships, could not occur without interpersonal communication and social interaction. Hargie, *et al.*, stated that communication plays a vital role in the successful implementation of decisions and organizational objectives and goals. They said:

It is now widely recognized that as an organization becomes more complex greater demands are made on the interpersonal skills of its members. Interpersonal communication is thus central to contemporary organizational life, especially to the role of the manager. Furthermore, enriched interpersonal skills have a very large contribution to make in improving organizational relationships.

(1994:24)

Communication is not important only from the functional point of view of getting a message across. It is also central to the development and maintenance of positive working relationships, harmony and trust (Kreps, in Hunt *et al.*, 2001).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

From the aforementioned literature, which emphasizes that sound interpersonal relationships are essential components of a healthy, well-run organization, the importance of good interpersonal relationships in an organization have been identified. Leadership plays a key role in facilitating sound relationships in all organisations.

The following chapter discusses the research methodology used in the research for this thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter has six sections. Section 3.1 explains a research paradigm. Section 3.2 identifies the paradigm in which research for this thesis is located, and also discusses the main features, strengths and weaknesses of this paradigm. Section 3.3 describes and defends the research method which was chosen. Section 3.4 provides discussion on the research process, while Section 3.5 relates to issues which arise when research is conducted in one's own place of employment. Lastly, in Section 3.6, a critique is provided on the research conducted.

The research goal was kept in mind throughout the research, to ensure that focus was never compromised. This goal was to investigate management members' and lecturers' experience and perceptions of their relationships at a Namibian Teacher Training College.

#### 3.2 Research paradigm

According to Patton (1990:37) a paradigm is a "worldview, ... a general perspective and a way of breaking down the complexity of real life ...". It is a framework of beliefs, values and methods within which a researcher works for research to take place. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998:22) put it, "All research is guided by some theoretical orientations". It is that theoretical framework, the

assumptions and world view which a researcher holds, that direct his or her research.

A paradigm is made up of a researcher's philosophy, ontology, epistemology and methodology. Patton (1990:39) said that "paradigms are important theoretical constructs for illuminating fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality".

In its simplest terms, a paradigm

... is nothing more than a perspective taken toward data, another analytic stance that helps to systematically gather and order data in such a way that structure and process are integrated.

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998:128)

According to Connole (1998:13) researchers "no longer speak of human behaviour but rather of human action, and this reflects a move away from a natural science framework". Today, the interpretive paradigm has come to be regarded as an "alternative [to the natural sciences, my addition] epistemological basis for human sciences" (Carr & Kemmis, as cited in Connole, 1998:13).

According to the interpretive paradigm, multiple realities are to be found in situations that are investigated in their natural settings. Hoy and Miskel (1996:18) said that "the world consists of plural constructions and diverse realities" which are socially constructed.

The interpretive paradigm is "... holistic in nature and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life" (de Vos, *et al.*, 2002:79). The researcher "attempts to gain entry into the conceptual world" of the participants "in order to understand how and what meaning they construct through interaction, around events in their daily lives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998:23, 25) as they "unfold naturally" (Patton, 1990:40).

With interpretive research, a researcher's emphasis must be on how people view the world through interaction with others. The interpretive paradigm is based on the assumption that understandings and meanings are socially

constructed. Individuals construct their own understanding of reality from their own experiences and their interaction with others.

My research goal was to investigate the understandings and meanings which College staff attach to relationships in a specific organization, so my research has been located within the interpretative paradigm. By having adopted the interpretive approach, I was able to listen to and then convey the experiences which management members and lecturers of the College related during their interviews. "The intent is to uncover the implicit meaning in a particular situation from one or more perspectives" (Anderson, 1998:90).

This author stated that the researcher using the interpretive approach should:

First try and understand phenomena through the participants' eyes, then place that understanding within your theoretical and conceptual framework of the phenomena and reconsider the participants' perspective within the goal of trying to define, unravel, reveal or explain their world. (Anderson, 1998:125)

The following section describes and defends the case study method which was selected to achieve my research goal.

### **3.3 Research method**

Since the research goal was located within the interpretive paradigm, the case study was found to be an appropriate method to use to attain this goal. Merriam (as cited in Anderson, 1998:152) pointed out that "there is little agreement on what exactly constitutes a case study". Case study research is perceived as "one of the most difficult methods to do well ...". Anderson noted that case study research "is highly data-based and strives for the same degree of reliability and validity as any good research". He stated that,

... generally speaking, case studies are a useful way to systematically look at a specific case, collect data, analyse and interpret findings within their context and report results.

(Anderson, 1998:152)

Merriam (as cited in Anderson, 1998:152) describes a case study as a “holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyse a specific phenomenon”. It is, therefore, imperative for any researcher who intends to use a case study to attain a goal, to relate it to his or her “interest in describing, explaining or evaluating a specific case” (Anderson, 1998:154).

In addition, a researcher should consider whether the case study is “intrinsic, instrumental, or collective” (Stake, as cited in Anderson, 1998:155). Stake stated that intrinsic studies are used to gain “a better understanding of a specific case”. Given that my research comprised investigating relationships in a single College of Education, this study can be classified as an intrinsic case study. “A contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” was investigated (Yin, as cited in Anderson, 1998:153).

I also found a case study appropriate since the scope of my research was limited. As Stake (1995:8) put it, “the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. A researcher’s intention is not “to generalize his or her findings beyond the specific sample studied” (Bailey, 1994:94). The emphasis is on uniqueness, understanding and on how things happen and why in a specific context or situation.

My chosen case was the first teacher training College in Namibia. It was established by missionaries in 1913. After World War One, with the then South West Africa becoming a United Nations mandated territory, the College became part of the South African college sector. In 1949 expatriates from South Africa replaced the missionaries.

Courses offered at the College at that time included, among others, the Primary

Teachers Certificate, the National Education Certificate and the National Higher Education Certificate. The teacher education curriculum was revised in 1990 and the Basic Education Teachers Diploma replaced the former courses offered at the College. At the time of my research there were over 900 enrolled students with over 75 lecturers and, for the first time ever, a female headed the College. The College management team is comprised of the Rector, Vice-Rector and eight Heads of Department representing diverse areas of subject specialization.

### **3.4 The Research Process**

#### **3.4.1 Participant Selection**

Typically, an interpretive study focuses in depth on a small, sometimes even a single case, purposefully selected sample. With purposeful sampling, a researcher selects "information rich cases for in depth study" (Patton, 1990:169).

I initially proposed to interview twelve, purposefully selected participants, that is, five management members, two senior lecturers and five lecturers. However, only six people participated in the study: two management members, two senior lecturers and two lecturers. Of the six who did not participate, three had left the College and the other three were too preoccupied with their daily activities and responsibilities to fit me into their programmes. I, too, had a very busy schedule. For much of the data gathering time, I was required to attend workshops which were scheduled at the last minute, by which time it was too late to reschedule my data gathering programme.

Although I would have acquired a wider variety of data from twelve participants, the six people who did participate were all information-rich sources. They included all three academic staff levels at the College, that is, Management,

Senior Lecturer and Lecturer. With hindsight, I believe that twelve participants would have provided with me too much data for this small study.

Given that I selected colleagues from my place of employment, I also used convenience sampling. With convenience sampling, a researcher chooses the “closest live persons as respondents” (Bailey, 1994:94). I chose a convenience sample because of the limited time which was available for my research and because it was convenient to work with people who were geographically close to me.

### **3.4.2 Data gathering**

My initial intention was to use three data gathering methods for this study, namely, interviews, observation and document analysis. However, when I studied available documentation, such as the Mission Statement, Code of Conduct and Quality Assurance documents, I found no information which related to interpersonal relationships in the College. This, in itself, suggested to me that a rather low priority was attached to such relationships, so I used only two methods, that is, interviews and observation.

### **3.5 Interviews**

Interviews were my main source of data. Stake (1995:64) pointed out that “much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others” and that “the interview is the main road to multiple realities”. According to Patton (1990:27), the “purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind”. Schutz provides a powerful analogy to highlight the value of the interview. He tells us to imagine an observer walking in the wood and seeing a man chopping wood:

The observer can watch this behaviour and have an “observational understanding” of the woodchopper. But what the observer

understands as a result of this observation may not be at all consistent with how the woodchopper views his own behaviour. To understand the wood-chopper's behaviour, the observer would have to gain access to the woodchopper's "subjective understanding," that is, know what meaning he, himself, made out of his chopping wood. The way to meaning, is to be able to put behaviour in context.

(as cited in Seidman, 1998:3)

Moreover, "to hold the conviction that we know enough already and do not need to know others' experiences is not only anti-intellectual but it also leaves us at one extreme, prone to violence to others" (Todolov, as cited in Seidman, 1998:3). "If given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on" (Bertaux, as cited in Smith, 1995:35). Kvale (1996:145) pointed out that the interview is "self-communicating – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra description and explanation".

I conducted semi-structured interviews with my six participants, which allowed me to ask open-ended, and also follow up, questions. I probed the participants' experiences and perspectives of academic staff relationships at the College to acquire an in depth understanding of their perceptions of interpersonal relationships. Patton (1990:324) pointed out that "probes are used to deepen the response to a question, and to increase the richness of the data being obtained".

Patton (1990:325-326) identified three types of probes, namely, detail-oriented probes, elaboration probes and clarification probes. I repeatedly asked my participants to provide examples and anecdotes and encouraged them to "tell me more" about questions. In this way, I obtained rich, descriptive data, recorded in the participants' own words.

Before the interview process began, I explained the purpose of my study to the selected participants. I also gave each one a consent letter to sign,

whereupon they consented to participate in the study, to be interviewed and for the interview to be tape-recorded.

The research literature reflects varying opinions on tape recording for research purposes. Nevertheless, it has been stated:

To work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text to study. Creating a text from interviews is to tape record the interviews and to transcribe them. By preserving the words of the participants researchers have their original data. If something is not clear in a transcript, the researchers can turn to the source and check for accuracy.

(Seidman, 1998:97)

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:450), "interview-recording forces the interviewer to be attentive, can help pace the interview and legitimizes the writing of research insights during the interview".

I assured the participants in my study that their anonymity would be protected (see Appendix B). I was guided by Kvale, who wrote:

Confidentiality in research implies that private data identifying the subject will not be reported. If the study involves publishing information potentially recognizable to others, the subjects need to agree to the release of identifiable information. This should be stated in a written agreement.

(1996:114)

I asked identical initial questions of each participant (see Appendix A). Follow up questions varied, depending on an individuals' responses to the initial questions.

Each interview lasted for one hour and took place in each participants's choice of venue, such as in their office or at their home. Anderson (1998:202) pointed out that "it is best to meet in some neutral but convenient places where the participants can be expected to feel comfortable". Participants also chose when to be interviewed. Some preferred to be interviewed on a

Saturday, some on a Sunday, whilst others preferred it to be done on a work day, during work hours.

The interview sessions did not take place without distractions; those that took place during work hours were the most disrupted. Although there was a notice on the door that stated, "interview in progress, do not disturb", at times there was a knock at the door, or a disturbance from somebody who just entered the office.

I was disappointed with the first interview which I conducted. After I had completed it, I replayed the recording, only to find that it did not exist. Thanks to the interviewee's patience, I was able to repeat that particular interview.

I transcribed the interviews immediately after each one had taken place. As did Seidman (1998:98), I found that transcribing interview tapes "is time consuming, the work is so demanding that the researcher can easily tire and lose enthusiasm for interviewing as a research process". I transcribed each interview verbatim. It took me seven to eight hours to transcribe each interview. However, by doing my own transcribing of the interviews, I gained a sound knowledge of them.

### **3.6 Observation**

According to Stake, (1995:66-67) "it is usually better if we can see it ourselves". Informally, I was able to observe the College staff on a daily basis and I noticed practical aspects of interpersonal relationships amongst the staff in the College. For example, I observed how staff members interacted at departmental level and across departments and their behaviour towards one another. I also did observations during staff meetings and recorded my observations in a research journal. These data were used to complement the interview data.

### 3.7 Data analysis

Stake (1995:71) stated that “there is no particular moment when data analysis begins”. According to other researchers, data analysis:

... entails certain activities – that is, ongoing discovery – identifying themes and developing concepts. In analysing the data, the researcher tries to make sense of the data by keeping track of the emerging themes.

(Taylor & Bogdan (1998:141)

A workshop held during the Master’s course was helpful to me. I used the technique of reading through interview transcripts and observation notes and highlighting emerging themes. I coded my data by indicating which data fitted under which theme, by means of a number.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:467-468) said that “coding is the process of dividing data into parts by a classification system”. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:274) stated that “coding is at the heart and soul of whole-text analysis. Coding compels a researcher to make judgements about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text”. I did this, according to McMillan and Schumacher’s (2001:468) suggestions, in an “inductive, generative and constructive process”. The categories were not predetermined but were “carved out of the data” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:468).

When presenting the data for this research, broad descriptions of participants’ experiences and perceptions, in their own words, are provided. Erlandson, *et al.*, ( as cited in Creswell pointed out:

Rich, thick description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study. With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics.

(1998:203)

### **3.8 Research ethics**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998:42): "Ethics in research are the principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts at a particular time". In research, one is working with persons whose rights and privacy need protection. To reassure participants in my study about their rights to privacy, I informed them, from the outset of my research, that I would not identify them. I also informed them of their right to withdraw from the study, should they so wish. By assuring the participants that they, and the College, would remain anonymous and that information collected from the study would be treated in confidence, I won their trust and confidence. Participants signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study under these above conditions.

### **3.9 Research quality**

The interpretive approach "produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words" (de Vos, *et al.*, 2002:79). I provide broad descriptions, in the participants' own words, as well as from my observation notes. My presented data permits participants to "speak for themselves". I used more than one data source and have a high ratio of participant-to-researcher voice.

So as to minimize any possibility of my views unduly influencing my study, I used inductive analysis and

... allow(ed) the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions would be.

(Patton, 1990:44)

I present the multiple perspectives which emerge from the data by "focusing on an insider-perspective rather than on an outsider-perspective" (Becker, as cited in Mouton, 2001:194), without making assumptions.

The quality of research “relates to issues of trustfulness of responses and accuracy of records ..”. (Anderson, 1998:13). My tape-recordings of the interviews enhanced the quality of my research since recordings provide “an accurate and relatively complete record” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:410). Recordings also “ensure completeness of the verbal interaction and provide(s) material for reliability checks” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:450).

The quality of research depends “to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher” (Patton (1990:11). Being a novice researcher, I started my research mostly unskilled in interviewing, observation and data analysis. Despite these limitations, it did not take long for me to become confident once I began practising these skills in the field. I believe I conducted the research with absolute integrity.

I anticipate receiving feedback from my colleagues regarding the outcome of my research, once they have read this thesis and, in this way, my research will be peer validated. I believe that the research will provide an agenda for problem-solving of staff relationships at the College which was researched.

Data is presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

Data collected from interviews and personal observations during the interviews are presented below. Three groups of interviewees at a Namibian Teachers' Training College were interviewed, that is, the management group, the senior lecturers' group and the lecturers' group.

As indicated in Chapter Three, the inductive technique (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) was used to analyze the data. In this chapter, I report on themes which emerged from the data and which are: communication, teamwork, recognition, collegiality, openness, college atmosphere and democracy.

As the research is interpretive, broad descriptions of interviewees' responses are presented, so as to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the process of data presentation. I then present what interviewees believed was happening at the time of the research undertaken at their College, and what they would like to see happening in the future. Each theme ends with a summary, which encapsulates the main issues deduced from the data. This provides the basis for my discussion on the data in the subsequent chapter.

The topic of the research is very sensitive in nature. Interviewees gave me practical examples of interpersonal relationship incidents they had experienced. Some of these examples and information presented were so sensitive that I feel, in the interests of confidentiality, I should not present them at all.

All the participants' names used in this thesis are aliases.

## 4.2 Communication

All participants recognized communication as being fundamental to sound relationships. They did, however, raise a number of issues surrounding communication in the College.

Pawa said:

The relationship is not good. We do not communicate with one another very well. For example, we are a department here and we do not communicate much with other departments. We do not know what is going on in other departments. In other words, we do not share ideas. People from different departments are locked up in their offices and we do not know what they are thinking about. It affects the function of the College. If you feel that you are cut out, that people do not communicate with you that much, you will not have courage and be motivated to work for the betterment of the College as a whole. For example, in the College, we have a vision and we are supposed to work towards that vision. We need to talk to one another about how far we are in meeting that vision. That platform is not here. We need a platform where we meet, talk about our feelings and fears, hopes and aspirations.

Shali commented:

I believe that communication is an important aspect in relationships, whether it is verbal or written communication. It is important because it makes a person know your expectations. At our College, we communicate with each other but, in most cases, we use written communication instead of having meetings to discuss issues. To me written communication does not create a platform to ask questions. I know in most cases colleagues do not support written communication because there is no platform to clarify issues. This does not help us to take decisions as a team because you just tell people things. To me this does not help us to develop the College as a team. I regard our communication as top down. This means communication flows from one direction only, and that is from the top to the bottom or, let me say, from management to the lecturers. I think there is a need for us to have more discussions.

Sunday reported her experience with communication:

My observation during our departmental meetings is that if there is something from the head office and you ask a question, sometimes you are told that 'it is an order from the office. No questions, no discussions". Therefore, you just keep quiet even if you need more clarity. This is not good because it does not promote good communication and, as a result, this leads to a situation where relationships are not good because people are not given the opportunity to express their ideas. Sometimes you just see things happening and you do not know why. You are not informed.

The relationship between the management members and lecturers is perceived as not good in terms of communication. A number of the interviewees talk about their experiences, as follow:

Letu felt that:

We are not free to speak out our ideas because of the cliques we have in this work place. We should abolish these cliques and supervisors should encourage people to speak out. People should be encouraged to put their ideas in writing. They do not need to write their names on the papers, but they can say what is bad and what is good. They should also encourage verbal communication and small groups discussions.

Ndangi believed:

Relationships depend on mutual trust and good communication. We should not have an autocratic society like we have here. In other words, here if you have a problem you have to go through all these bureaucratic lines. We should have a levelled communication whereby I do not need to follow all these bureaucratic lines if I have a problem that I need to be solved immediately. For example, I, myself, have developed myself a good relationship and communication between the management members and myself. I do not know how I manage to do that, but I entered into personal space with every member of the management that I know if I have a problem I can go there. I always approach the person who is to solve that problem. I do not follow these bureaucratic lines because I do not believe in bureaucracy. I believe in democracy where we have to tackle problems as a group. If we improve our communication, our relationships will also be good.

The data throughout theme reflects that participants strongly desired more face-to-face interaction and communication at an organizationally broad level. They

experienced that most communication was in writing, passed down from the top. It seems that there were no opportunities for staff to express their views or enact the College's vision by, for example, the sharing of ideas, which they believed made no sense in being part of the College "team". Some participants felt that broader, more consultative decision-making would make the work environment more democratic, for the benefit of all concerned.

In addition, participants felt that the College hierarchy and bureaucracy inhibited the free flow of communication. Some participants wanted to see a more evenly balanced organizational structure, so that they could communicate directly with people. One participant had taken it upon himself, successfully, to develop informal communication links, despite (or in spite of) the hierarchy.

Departmental meetings were held but some participants felt that even in such meetings communication was closed. They verbalised that they did not feel free to express their own ideas or to ask questions. The presence of cliques also inhibited people's participation in meetings. Some participants suggested that by anonymously submitting written ideas to management, or by using small groups to approach management together, this may encourage people to be more open and share their ideas and opinions.

### **4.3 Teamwork**

Teamwork was alluded to by participants as being vital in organizational relationships. They expressed their views in this regard, as follows:

Pawa commented that:

We do things together and we help one another in some departments. For example, if one finds something very nice they can show you and say, 'Look, I have these things, what do you think?' I think that one is very good, because we are growing together. I would like to see that happening throughout the College. This is not a community atmosphere I see at this College. We do not seem to

have close family relationships. In other words, we are not working as one big family, thus as one team for this College.

Paul remarked:

I have observed some individual differences. Some lecturers are co-operative, and others are not co-operative. This is because there is not a good establishment of socialization. Academically we come together as a whole College but, socially, something is lacking, because we do not have social clubs where we can come together and share some experiences, not only academically, but also about social issues. In that way, we establish our teamwork.

I overheard a conversation between Dalia and Sunny one day, in the staff room, when others also commented. They were expressing their concerns as far as working as a team was concerned.

Sunny commented that:

The management members see themselves as bosses and do not even want to be associated with us. Now some of them do not even come to staff meetings. Are they not members of the staff? If we are discussing issues related to the College and they are part of this College, why do they not come to meetings? Why should there be a distinction between management members and lecturers? How can we achieve our goals if they do not attend the staff meetings? We need to address this issue in one of our staff meetings. We can not just go on like this.

Dalia said:

Every time they just discriminate against us, forgetting that they are part of the teaching staff. I do not understand them. Sunday is of the opinion that "people need to feel that they are valued as part of the team and that they should be made to feel belongingness by being involved in decision-making.

Ndangi stated:

One thing I have observed that affects our relationships is teamwork. I mean, if there is a problem we have to tackle it - all of us. It should not be one sided. All of us should be involved in solving problems at our College as well as taking decisions. If somebody has an idea on a certain issue, that idea should be brought to the community. With

“community”, I mean all of us. Then we will start shaping one another, build our relationships and avoid conflict among ourselves.

Shali stated:

This is one organization with one vision and we need to unite and work towards this vision as a team. It is the responsibility of the leader’s advisors, in this case the management, to make the leader aware that there is a need for teamwork. Like now, people divide themselves in groups, for example, a group of those who side with the Vice-Rector and the other group sides with the Rector. This is not good. If we are in different groups, it is obvious there is no way we can work as one team. Teamwork means we put our differences aside and work for a common goal.

Teamwork is a culture that is formed by people’s attitudes and the atmosphere that prevails in the institution. The atmosphere that prevails will determine the kind of relationship in the institution. In our case, the atmosphere prevailing is people fear each other, and this results in relationships that are not good. I want us to be a team where people are open and treated as equals.

Letu remarked:

We are too much departmentalized and isolated. We are here for the same goal, to educate student teachers. When we are at work, let us work as a team. I remember we had a communal tea here every Wednesday. That was a good idea to bring us together, chat informally and socialize, but it just died a natural death. I think we should revive this tea.

Paul had this to say:

The social aspect of the College staff is of the utmost importance in establishing good relationships. I think we should establish social clubs; for example, games, debates and revive the birthday chart, and so on, just to enrich each other.

I would like to refer to one doctor, Dr Peter. I had a conversation with him one day and he said to me, “You Namibians, you are very good people, but the problem with you is that you do not know how to socialize. You can come up with different clubs, for example, for professionals like teachers, lawyers, police and others to share some ideas. In such a way, you bring some development in your country as a whole. That is a good way of socializing and establishing relationships. But here everyone just wants to be on his or her own, which is not good.



The comments outlined above reminded me of the remarks made by some of the lecturers during an informal get-together, when we were all enjoying refreshments, that social events will help management and staff members know one another better and teach them to work in unison, as a team. There could be people who do not want to participate in social functions but they should be encouraged to do so, for the ultimate good of the organization. It is so necessary to have strong interpersonal relationships amongst an organisation's management and staff, and these can be engendered by going out for meals together after work, or attending community functions together, going away together for a week-end, and so on.

At the same function, the Rector of the College encouraged lecturers who had organized the refreshments by stating: "Let us keep up this spirit of teamwork. You did well. We need these coming together for the well-being and progress of our College. Keep it up".

On another occasion I heard a conversation between Penny and Siami, during break time in one department. Penny commented: "I like the Rector. She wants us to be as a team, but oh, people do not want to cooperate". Siami responded, "She is trying her best, but you know some people always try to fail other people. I do not know".

I agreed with Penny's words. At the beginning of each academic term, the Rector urged the College staff to "work as a team, for the benefit of our students and that of the College as a whole".

The data throughout this theme revealed that teamwork was good at a departmental level, in the sense that they people worked together, helped each other and grew to understand one another. It goes without saying that there were also individuals who did co-operate as well as they might have done.

Participants recognized that, on an organizational level, team spirit was lacking in the College. Some could not see a community spirit, or that of family relationships, prevailing. They attributed the non-existence of teamwork at the organizational level to individual differences, isolation and not having opportunities to socialize outside of the workplace.

Some participants suggested the revival of the communal tea or the establishment of a social club, organizing games and having fun together as a means of building teamwork at an organization level. They seemed to yearn for social events that would bring them together. They believed that informal opportunities for interaction would assist them in growing, as a team in the workplace.

Furthermore, participants' experience was that management members came across with a dictatorial attitude and that they had created a distinction between themselves and their subordinates. Some participants felt there was an element of discrimination between the management and lecturers and this contention was supported by the fact that some management members did not even attend general staff meetings. Participants regarded these attitudes as drawbacks to achieving teamwork at the College.

All participants desired that the College's management and staff might work together, as a team. They wanted management and staff members to put their differences aside and regarded the College's vision as being a conduit to unite them.. They perceived that mutual problem-solving and decision-making was necessary for the team to function at its best.

## 4.4 Recognition

Recognition is another fundamental issue pertaining to relationships which participants identified during my research.

Pawa said:

People here do not recognize other people's work. I am doing a good job and there is no recognition. I am not appreciated for what I am doing and that demoralize me. We need to give one another compliments for what they have done well. I think this will encourage people to work hard.

This reminded me of a discussion between two lecturers, Penny and Paula, one day in the staff room, when Penny commented:

What I hate in this College is that people generalize too much. Why do not they recognize those of us who do well and talk privately to those who are not doing their work, instead of generalizing? I do not like this. This frustrates me too much.

Paula responded by saying:

It is only that I do not have anywhere else to go, otherwise I would leave this College. What is the use of working hard and people do not recognize your efforts?

During the research for this thesis, Sunday commented:

Some people are not recognized for what they do while others are recognized for what they do not do. This affects the performance of those who are not recognized. If I am not recognized this will demoralize me. I will not perform to the best of my ability because nobody appreciates what I am doing.

Ndangi said:

My experience is that the relationship here is in a dwindling situation. People look at who is talking. Sometimes you try to sell ideas but your ideas are not even considered. Since your ideas are not supported and not recognized, you give up and cool down.

Letu verbalised it this way:

Colleagues do not feel counted. For example, some people complain when it comes to serving on committees. They are serving on committees and the management does not consider their ideas. They take decisions, but their decisions are not considered. This creates feelings of not being recognized. This creates unhealthy relationships between management and lecturers.

Shali stated:

My observation is that different people are good in different aspects. For example, we have colleagues that are good at harmonizing the situation. The College also has people who are good at discipline. Without such people, the College lacks something. Sometimes these people are not recognized for what they are doing.

Throughout this theme, participants expressed their feelings that they were doing a good job but nobody recognized what they were doing and, as they felt unrecognized, they became demoralized and frustrated. There was a very real, expressed need to be appreciated and complimented for their efforts. They believed that recognition of people's achievements would encourage staff to work even better.

Participants expressed that they felt offended when people generalized that staff were under-performing. They suggested that management should address guilty parties in private, and that the entire staff should not have to feel compromised.

They further contested the tendency for management not to take subordinates' ideas seriously and believed that people should be recognized for their skills; for example, if a person is skillful in conciliatory procedures, or in fairly disciplining another, they should be recognized for their abilities. They believed that people with talents should be acknowledged because, were that person not in the organization, something serious would be lacking.

## 4.5 Collegiality

In the participants' views, collegiality is fundamental to engendering positive organizational relationships.

Shali commented:

We are all professionals and we do not really experience physical fighting, but there is cold war here. This means, we are fighting each other, although it is not a physical fighting. For example, on one side you lecturers and on the other side the management members. This division is not good. People do not see each other as colleagues.

Sunday responded by saying:

We have a situation at the College where people are afraid of one another. One is not always free to talk to colleagues because you might say things that a colleague is not happy with because of the division here.

The other thing is that there is a spirit of celebrating people's mistakes. In other words, if you made a mistake, for example, failing to do something or to perform a certain task, some people will be happy and celebrate your shortcomings instead of helping you.

Letu's response was:

Some colleagues in some departments, and even in the College at large, do not talk to each other, because of personal conflicts. To me this is not good, and you can not work with someone whom you are not talking to.

Another observation is that you may talk to somebody and this person may change what you have said and try to create bad things against you. For example, someone does not come to work on time. I talked to the colleague, not in a bad way, just a concern I raised. The colleague took this differently, in a negative way, just because that spirit of together does not exist. That is why it is not easy to talk to people because you fear the consequences. We are not like colleagues and we do not trust each other.

Ndangi responded:

My experience is that sometimes we teach the same subject as a group of lecturers. A colleague you are sharing the subject with may feel offended if you go and sell ideas to him or her. This person might develop a negative attitude against you. He or she might think you regard yourself as better than he or she is, and perhaps you are trying to undermine his or her capabilities, which is not the case. It may create personal conflicts that will cause that lecturer to go and gossip about you to students, behind your back and, as a result, students will develop a negative attitude towards you. When you are in the classroom, you suddenly realize that students are no longer responding to you as they used to. This is what happened to me.

Another example I can give you is of a colleague who came to sell negative ideas to me about another colleague. This person tried to create a conflict between me and our other colleague. I rejected these ideas and since that day, when that group see me coming, they stop talking; even if they were discussing something constructive, they withhold the information. This is just because I did not accept the bad ideas they tried to sell to me.

If we do not gossip about people, mutual trust will be there. If we share the little knowledge we have mutually, our relationships will grow and we will regard each other as colleagues, and not enemies.

The participants' responses indicated a lack of collegiality in the organization. They referred to a number of instances which they perceived as evidence of no collegiality at the College. Although there were no physical attacks, they perceived emotional conflict between management members and lecturers.

Participants felt there was a division between management and lecturers, which led to the situation where people were afraid of one another and did not talk freely to one another. Mutual trust was lacking. Although somebody might have an idea he or she would like to share with others, there was reluctance to do so in case other people responded negatively. There were suspicions that certain people gossiped behind other people's backs, rather than helping and assisting those who failed to meet a challenge. Participants verbalised that there could be mutual trust and cohesion in the College if people were dissuaded from gossiping and encouraged to socialise with one another.

## 4.6 Openness

Participants regarded openness and transparency as anchors to good interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Letu commented:

We lack openness. Some colleagues do not express themselves openly. In other words, they do not say what is inside their hearts. For example, a person might feel that what I am doing is not correct, but that person does not come out and tell me that, 'hey, you are not doing the right thing'. When you meet with that person, he or she pretends as if he or she is happy with your work, but in reality he or she is not. I think that is not good and will not help me to change for the better. We need to be open with one another.

Paul responded by saying:

Some people are not transparent. Transparency goes hand in hand with openness. Some people here pretend. What they are saying is not what they mean. For example, you will find a person preaching that people should work as colleagues but, in reality, he or she does not mean it. This person is always seeking others' weaknesses instead of giving support. You find people undermining others. Not everyone does that but, for sure, some people do that. They lack respect and trust for others. This affects the College negatively, because people who are undermined will not have courage to execute their duties as expected.

Participants acknowledged that there were some individuals who were open and transparent at the College but they were of the firm view that not everybody could be trusted in this regard. They experienced that certain people were not honest when they noticed someone's mistakes but pretended that they were happy with that person's work. In the participants' views, this did not help a person to improve. The participants all felt that this attitude affected the College negatively.

Some participants expressed a need to be corrected when they went wrong and that, in their experience, this was not happening in the College at the time of the research.

## 4.7 College atmosphere

In the participants' views, sound relationships in an organization are based on the prevailing atmosphere throughout the workplace, that is, between management and staff.

According to Shali:

The fact that we have divided ourselves in groups is an indication of an unhealthy atmosphere at the College. I think it is the responsibility of us, as leaders, to create a good atmosphere and a harmonized working environment, which will make people want to stay in the College and not to frustrate them to go.

Letu felt that:

The atmosphere in the College is one of the things that contributes to unhealthy relationships at this College. For example, there was an incident where some individuals nearly fought, just because of personal conflicts. This does not happen very often but it is unhealthy. This creates a tense atmosphere among individuals.

Paul remarked:

There is this tendency for people to ask: 'Who is this person to tell me about this'. The College activities will not be effective because of this kind of sabotage. The College will not grow if we are not supportive of one another. It will only function well if everybody participates and works together, in the interest of the College. I think we should put our differences aside.

Sunday's response was:

Leaders are not working together. For example, my observation is that members of the management are not working together. One can clearly see the tension among them. This made the atmosphere not to be good. If the top management is not in harmony with each other, what can be expected from people at the bottom of the ladder?

Pawa observed that there is suspicion between management and the lecturers at the College. He said:

Sometimes the management feels that the staff is not doing their work properly; for example, that they are not attending their classes and other stuff. On the other hand, the staff also feels that the management is not doing its job properly. This kind of situation creates an unhealthy relationship between management and staff. They do not trust each other, which in turn creates a working environment that is unpleasant, an atmosphere where people are not comfortable with one another.

I think there should be a platform where we talk about what we feel about the working of this College. Usually there is no platform to discuss, for example, about the management and what we as lecturers feel the management should do or what the management feels the lecturers should do.

This platform would help all of us to clear up misunderstandings and the suspicions we have about one another. If we do not do that, this kind of unhealthy atmosphere we have now will persist and we can not go on like this. You learn from the feedback you got from other people and that helps you to change your attitudes and behaviors. Blaming one another will not take us anywhere.

The data obtained from participants in response to this theme revealed a number of issues which participants believed were contributing to an unhealthy workplace atmosphere at the College. Division caused by personal conflicts had a negative effect on the entire staff and created unnecessary tensions. There were occasions when people almost fought physically with one another. The participants were concerned, too, about people under-mining one another and not being supportive of College activities.

A sincere concern was that top management did not appear to work harmoniously, which affected the people at the bottom of the hierarchy. Mutual suspicion was seen to exist between management and lecturers, with one side always accusing the other of not doing their work properly. This did not create a conducive atmosphere in the workplace.

Participants expressed a need for a platform where two conflicting parties could air their differences and clear up their misunderstandings or suspicions.

Participants felt that honest feedback from management and their peers would

assist them in addressing shortcomings which might exist and also to change attitudes and behaviours of all members of the organization.

## 4.8 Democracy

Some participants regarded democracy as important for building healthy relationships in an organization. They were concerned that despite democratic systems being in place, in practice there was little democracy.

Sunday stated:

We have many committees here. When you look at these committees, you see how democratic the institution is, in principle. In other words, one would think that the running and management of this College is everybody's responsibility. In reality, it is not. For example, on paper, committees are to take decisions on certain issues. The committee might take a decision, but the way the management receives and react to this decision does not reflect democracy. The final say lies with the management and they can turn down a committee decision. I thought the reason why we have committees is because we have confidence in those committee members, and what they have decided upon is in the interest of the College, that has entrusted them with such a responsibility. Why should we waste people's time and energy, discussing things and take decisions that will be turned down later on? If the decisions are turned down, there should be good reasons given and the committee should take this in good spirit.

Letu's response was:

I heard people complaining about the management imposing decisions on them, but from what I have observed it is not always that management turns down decisions from committees. I accept, though, that there are times that management might reject a certain decision ... I think somebody should find out how lecturers at this College feel about the way in which decisions should be taken. Look at the findings and communicate the findings to the staff, discuss and find ways to work together.

Shali said:

I have observed two things here. For example, some of our leaders here are dictators, while others are democratic. We have people here who believe that they are intelligent and do not even listen to others. I am not mentioning names, but we have some people who always want others to listen to them, but they do not listen to others. We have people who, because of their positions, believe in telling others what to do and do not see the necessity of discussing issues with them. They decide things alone and impose their will on others. That type of person just wants to manipulate the whole situation.

We need to shape our personality and beliefs in order to change our personalities from selfishness and dominating others. We need to have a collective standpoint. In other words, we should table issues, analyze them collectively and reach an agreement together. We can do this by using a survey whereby we look at strengths and weaknesses. However, I do not know who will lead us. We need to consult how others manage to keep democracy in their institutions. We need a mediator to help us, or maybe someone among us should stand up and break the wall of silence.

Research participants regarded the existence of committees as a sign of democratic intention, in principle, but they felt that, in practice, no-one other than the formal managers had any real say in the management of the College. Participants wanted to feel that the establishment of committees at the College was regarded as a reflection of the confidence management had in the College staff. Research participants were confident that decisions taken by these committees would be in the best interests of the College.

However, at the time of the research, participants believed that the way in which College management received and reacted to decisions taken by the committees did not reflect democracy. Participants were not against management rejecting decisions, but felt that it should be done in a respectful and transparent manner, where a committee was informed of why a decision was being rejected. Some participants felt that the unexplained rejection of a committee's ideas wasted people's time and energy in serving on such a committee.

Certain participants felt that College management reflected two leadership styles: dictatorial and democratic, and that some management members acted in an authoritarian way; in that they did not listen to others, they believed in telling others what to do and did not see a need to discuss issues with others on the staff. It was felt that management autocratically imposed their ideas on others.

Participants expressed a need for change to a collective or participative approach in decision-making at the College. Issues should be discussed collectively and joint agreements reached. They believed that a survey, where staff could, collectively, identify strengths and weaknesses, would reflect a democratic approach in the College. Some participants believed that consultation would advance democracy in the College and they felt that a facilitator could help to develop democratic practices in the workplace.

Issues which have emerged from the abovementioned themes, as they relate to the research goal, are discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses and interprets the three broad themes which emerged from the research data as presented in Chapter Four, so as to give the findings deeper meaning in the light of the literature which was reviewed on interpersonal relationships. These themes are:

- Interpersonal communication.
- Broad organizational structures which are democratic and open and which foster trust.
- Organizational processes which facilitate communication and encourage good interpersonal relationships.

#### **5.2 Interpersonal communication**

Participants in this research study viewed the existence of cliques amongst the staff at the College as being the most prominent, interpersonal communication norm. These cliques resulted in College members having compromised attitudes and feelings towards one another.

Participants indicated that they did not feel free to talk openly and honestly with one another since they feared causing offence. They felt that there was favouritism when certain College members' proposals were considered and that, firstly, a judgement would be made as to who was speaking before any weight was lent to the proposal. Such attitudes did not give cognizance to others' capabilities.

This attitude, it seemed, created a situation where College members entered into gossiping behind people's backs and that the resulting conflict undermined productive collaboration throughout the College. Participants felt that College members acted in virtual isolation and were not sharing ideas and knowledge and that an unpleasant, undesirable and tense atmosphere prevailed in the workplace.

Participants agreed that the undesirable atmosphere left staff feeling frustrated and uneasy in one another's company. Certain people took glee in another's downfall, and would not work with them as colleagues. The data identified a lack of transparency, trust and respect amongst members of the workforce, since what people said is not what they did. It also seemed that there were too few opportunities to confront and question those in authority and a certain reluctance to share their skills seemed to prevail amongst staff.

An analysis of the data reveals that, at best, relationships are guarded and, at worst, they are dysfunctional. This type of attitude influences the quality of work. Participants believed that the staff at the College felt that the entire community in this institution suffered as a result of not being able to draw freely on the talents and expertise of others. This attitude also prevented the College's vision from being fully embraced and operationalized by all. In some cases, participants believed that staff members felt sufficiently frustrated and discouraged, so much so that they considered leaving the College's workforce.

Interpersonal norms such as trust, respect, authenticity, openness and the sharing of ideas and feelings appeared to be lacking in the College at the time research was conducted for this study. However, most participants expressed a positive desire for this situation to be turned around.

According to Schmuck and Runkel (1994:122), the presence of trust, respect, authenticity, openness and the sharing of ideas and feelings in an organization “not only set a context for interpersonal communication”, but also pave the way “for improving the interpersonal skills and other processes on which improvements in organizational functioning depend”.

### **5.2.1 Trust**

Trust is a critical ingredient in human relationships. It promotes interdependence, co-operation and group cohesion amongst staff in an organization. The College needs to embrace these aspects as one “can not be achieved without reliance upon another” (Hoy, n.d.). Trust among College members can “contribute to their functioning as a team” and lead to “a professional learning community” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

### **5.2.2 Respect**

Participants were of the opinion that management and staff relationships should be based on mutual respect, as every person is worthy of respect. They argued that instead of blaming one another, each tier of the hierarchy should display empathy and sincerity towards another, and all should work together respectfully, with common purpose. Participants believed that the top hierarchy needed to extend respect for individuals by giving credit when credit is due. Dinkmeyer and Eckstein (1996:146) put it succinctly: “communicating respect for individuals starts at the top”. When respect is given, respect will be returned.

College staff wanted their voices to be heard and their proposals and ideas respected. Many inequalities in organizations are “attributable to ineffective interpersonal processes that are traceable to an attitude that privileges one’s own opinions over those of others” (Leithwood, *et al.*, 1996:1085). Participants in the research conducted for this study were vehemently opposed to a situation where some people are undermined, as this reflects poorly on the work performance of management and the workforce and discourages them from being active participants in all aspects relating to the College. The participants were adamant that the College staff need their ideas to be heard, irrespective of whose ideas might be proposed.

Respect by all, for all, ensures a “fair opportunity to speak and to challenge” others without fear (Leithwood, *et al.*, (1996:1085). These researchers stated that “to embrace respect without also being committed to valid information is to foster unexamined consensus and to embrace valid information without respect is to undermine the trust and openness needed for a free and full debate of differing points of view” (Leithwood, *et al.*, 1996:86).

### **5.3.3 Openness**

An analysis of the research data revealed that participants desired a situation where staff members did not take unfair advantage of one another, for example, by gossiping behind one another’s backs to management in order to advance their own interests or to feel important. Participants felt that the staff required interpersonal norms to protect their emotional well-being, with honest, open and authentic communication amongst all tiers of staff, where they could feel that their attitudes, actions and words are in alignment with expectations.

Participants also wanted their colleagues not to distance themselves from one another. Their desire was that staff should be able to discuss with other staff

members about their inner feelings and how they regard others, without fear of castigation or humiliation.

Whitaker stated:

It is often relationships with others that cause our most difficult and emotionally painful moments. It is not surprising, then, that the additional pressures that work involves can increase the challenge and stress in our relationships.

(1993, 37)

He went on to say:

... small changes in personal moods, attitudes, emotional states and felt experiences can often have enormous consequences in an organization especially regarding interpersonal relationships in the workplace. (Whittaker, 1998:68)

Participants' responses revealed a desire for a transparent culture in the College.

#### **5.2.4 Feedback**

Participants expressed a need for staff, from time to time, to receive constructive and honest feedback on each member's work performance. According to Schmuck and Runkel (1994:135), mutual feedback is a "cardinal feature of transactional communication". Transactional communication refers to a situation where each participant "engages in active listening" and attempts to understand the other (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:121). Constructive feedback enhances mutual communication between people and, when it is seldom, if ever, given, miscommunication and misunderstandings occur.

Whitaker's view was that feedback is significant in organizational interpersonal communication since it involves the "development of others" and helps them:

... to extend their skills and competencies in order to satisfy organizational needs. One of the ways of doing this is to help colleagues to reflect on their experience in order to learn from it. Feedback must be "a true wish for the welfare of the other person.

(1993:125)

## **2.5 Sharing of ideas and knowledge**

According to Smith and McKeen (n.d.) "knowledge sharing is positively linked to growth ... innovation", and increased satisfaction amongst an organization's members. A knowledge-sharing norm creates a platform where people can openly share knowledge and ideas and demonstrates a willingness to teach and learn from one another. A good example is that of personal conversations and face-to-face meetings which build bridges between individuals' differences, thus increasing spontaneous exchanges.

Knowledge needs to be socially shared amongst the workforce. The development of an interpersonal communication structure and active practising of it cultivates a sense of community. Participants believed that when such a norm exists, ideas can be freely exchanged and knowledge gained from others.

It can be concluded from the state of interpersonal communication norms and practices at the College at the time of my research that there was a definite need for College staff to achieve shared agreement about what interpersonal communication norms they would like to practice in the workplace. The data reflects that at least some of the staff were ready to engage in such an exercise and, if possible, with the an external facilitator.

## **5.3 Organizational broad structures that foster communication and satisfying relationships**

At the time of this research study, the situation in the College was that information flowed from the top down to the bottom of the hierarchy but that there was little, if any, regular communication between staff members in one department with staff in other departments. Staff "find it difficult even to discover what is going on

beyond their own little sphere of operations” (Owens, 2001:151). The participants’ responses depicted an isolationist culture at the College. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (in Leithwood, *et al.*, 1994) described an isolationist culture in terms of norms of interaction and norms of authority. In the previous section, the absence of interactive norms required for effective interpersonal communication was discussed.

As far as norms of authority are concerned, research participants reported that there was no teamwork amongst groups at the College, and that they worked as peers in a hierarchy, but not as colleagues. Some researchers have pointed out that:

If the educational organization is to remain responsive to demands of all sorts, an open flow of information from and to the various groups must be maintained.

(Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:119)

In line with this quotation, at the time of this research study participants believed that the College staff needed an organizational structure that would encourage them to work in a collegial way and would allow them to “benefit from the support and expertise of their colleagues” (Bush, 2003:66).

The hierarchical line of authority and isolated departments in the College prevented people from reaching out to one another for support. Participants preferred to have a more level hierarchical line of communication so that staff members could interact with one another without fear of castigation. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:142) refer to a “link-pin structure” in which various organizational components are able to communicate with one another and take joint decisions on a regular basis. Participants believed that this would enhance the quality of relationships throughout the College and would provide an integrated organizational structure that “emphasizes the wholeness” (Owens, 2001:151).

The fostering of communication and resultant satisfying relationships requires an organizational structure which provides for upward communication. "Upward communication serves as the feedback loop in the interpersonal communication" (Bagraim, *et al.*, 2003:124). This means a structure which encourages people at the bottom of the hierarchy to communicate their ideas to those at the top of the hierarchy and serves as a way to empower an organization's members, who, in turn, want those in the hierarchy to leave their offices and "observe first hand what is happening in the organization" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004:216).

## **5.4 Organization processes that foster participative decision-making and satisfying relationships**

### **5.4.1 Participative democracy**

Research participants commended the existence of committees in the College. They indicated that the establishment of such committees should be aimed at making everybody part of the decision making process. However, at the time of the research they felt that committees were established only because Namibia is a democratic country and people in authority were just trying to conform to that policy, without really knowing how to go about it. Participants believed that the important factor is not merely to have democratic structures in place; rather they need to be fully operational.

Participants expressed a desire for participative decision making processes in the College. In their experience, committees made decisions which were, unilaterally, overturned by management. (Senge, 2000:204) reported that when "no one has access to all the data needed to make critical decisions, no one can consider as many alternatives as several people could". The participants wanted a situation to prevail where the College could be seen to be a "democratic community

governed by its members” (Evans, 1996:230), and where individuals were empowered to take decisions and their ideas were not suppressed.

At the time of this study, participants believed that all staff at the College needed to have their opinions taken into consideration before decisions were made. They argued that it was their right to be heard, to have their views considered and be permitted to express their feelings, offer knowledge and information and contribute to decisions in the College where they were employed. According to Owens (2001:288), organizations that “draw on the knowledge of their staff make informed choices and enjoy higher levels of morale,” as well as good interpersonal relationships.

The ideal of Ubuntu, an authentic African leadership perspective, may foster participative democracy. Moses stated:

... our uniqueness lies in who and what we are and in order to discover it, we have to deal with humanity. The concept of 'ubuntu' ... we are what we are through our interaction with others.  
(as cited in Bagrain, *et al.*, 2003:196-197)

Participative management would foster such interaction.

Senge (2000:75) stated that replacing hierarchical levels of decision making with broad organization participation in decision-making processes is likely to ensure that essential components of quality interpersonal relationships, such as collaboration, participation and teamwork, are established in an organization. This provides an organization's members with opportunities to engage in dialogue with one another.

During the dialogue process, individuals learn how to think in unison with others, not only in analyzing a shared problem or creating new pieces of shared knowledge but also of having a role in the collective sensibility, in which thoughts, emotions, and resultant actions are not those of merely one individual or a minority but, rather, all of them. Senge (2000:77) added that dialogue creates a

situation where people are happier “with the decision than they would have been if dialogue have never taken place”.

Participative democracy can also satisfy social needs. Participants want others to know what they are capable of doing and what expertise they have. “Becoming part of a collaborative enterprise is a very important element in most people’s lives, and the opportunity to make friends and to forge partnerships serves as a basic need” (Whitaker, 1998:125).

#### **5.4.2 Teamwork**

The data reflected little evidence of teamwork in the College being researched. Participants believed, at the time of this study, that teamwork is the key to the College’s success. They believed that by working as part of a team, they would feel appreciated by their colleagues and this would contribute towards good interpersonal relationships and enhance collective decision-making. Participants expressed desires for strong bonds and mutual support from one another that, according to Smith (2003:94), can also be considered as “a manifestation of Ubuntu, the African character of communalism and concern for learning in human relations”.

According to Charoux (2000:58), “no man is an island”. Participants expressed a need to work together more often as colleagues, as well as spending additional, informal and social time together. The research data indicates that they yearned for a situation where they could unite together as a team, to identify aspects and discuss areas of concern for the entire College. Such an opportunity would cultivate a sense of belonging amongst themselves.

According to Smit and Cronje (1992:320), belonging to a team and being accepted by colleagues “can raise an individual’s feelings of self-esteem”.

Participants expressed the need for an environment in which they obtain assistance from their colleagues when they have difficulties, whether related to their teaching practices or anything else.

Participants saw individuality in isolation as an obstacle to teamwork in the College and they desired a collaborative and co-operative work environment throughout the College. Instead of one blaming another, they wanted credit to be given where it was due and for their colleagues to learn to use “we” instead of always referring to their colleagues as “them” and “us”.

Whitaker's (1998:280) hypothesis that the absence of “social cohesion and a sense of community” retards progress is true, and this was what participants believed had resulted because of cliques at the College. There is a definite need for a paradigm shift towards “a community-focused organization” (Whitaker 1998:208).

According to Whitaker, a community-focused organization:

- Works tirelessly to build close and intimate relationships amongst groups, committees and teams.
- Helps others to appreciate that although they may feel lonely, they are not alone.
- Provides a support structure for networking, partnerships and friendships, and
- Builds a culture in which a powerful sense of belonging is experienced by all.

Participants in this research study felt that to engender a spirit of teamwork and to improve interpersonal relationships in the workplace, collaboration throughout the College should cut across all departments and levels. In such a way, the ultimate goals of the College could take shape in the context of relationships with others, where "information and opinions are shared through collaboration" (Leithwood, *et al.*, 1996:930). Such an organization could be considered to be a "community" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004:523).

Research participants appreciated that teams are indispensable in well-functioning organizations as they can solve problems, make decisions, promote information sharing and encourage participation. Groups and teams create a sense of egalitarianism among staff. Team members' support of one another has a synergistic effect which, in turn, can increase levels of mutual acceptance, thereby further improving relationships.

Participants believed that through the sharing of ideas and the collective decision-making which would result, issues concerning their College would facilitate the development of teamwork. They also felt that regular meetings, other than academic staff meetings, for example, meetings where social issues could be discussed, would also enhance their spirit of teamwork. This expressed need translates into what Harris (2003:75) termed "distributed leadership".

### **5.4.3 Distributed Leadership**

Research participants pointed out that they wanted to work together, share ideas and construct meaning and knowledge in a collective and collaborative way. They expressed a need to interact and share information with people in other departments in the College, both formally and informally. They desired to have collaborative norms to encourage involvement, mutual support and assistance

from one another, believing that this would engender and maintain good relationships amongst themselves.

According to Harris (2003:75), distributed leadership encourages “shared and collective endeavor that engages all members of an organization. It implies a redistribution of power and a realignment of authority within an organization,” as well as power relationships within an organization, because “it is better for leadership to be shared rather than to be vested in one person” (Coleman, 2005:11).

Collectively, participants wanted to be empowered and, as a team, to take the College forward to attain its goals. They desired collective problem-solving platforms and collaborative ways of working within the College. They also wanted committees to be empowered to take decisions, with leadership being distributed throughout the College and not only be one individual's (or a minority's) responsibility. Harris (2003:76) pointed out that, “in most working relationships individuals are part of informal teams and their effectiveness depends upon their relationship with others”.

#### **5.4.4 Group Problem-Solving**

Participants expressed feelings of frustration at the unpleasant situation which prevailed in the College at the time of this research study. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:235) pointed out that frustrations “signal a problem worth working on”. Participants wished to see democratic norms in the College implemented, as that would enable them to discuss and comment openly about their problems, since “the proper place to solve the problem may lie in the interpersonal skills and norms of the College” (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:235).

Participants expressed a need for face-to-face meetings to take place for the purpose of identifying problems and resolving them through open discussion.

One participant used the metaphor of a village where villagers have to know their neighbours and talk to them. In turn, in times of need those very neighbors will protect and help them because there has been social discourse and they have learned to care about one another.

Participants mentioned that some people in the College were not talking to each other because of unresolved problems. They felt that this was a result of the tendency in the College of not addressing problems and resolving them amicably. People at the College tended to hope that problems would just “fade away” and, in the participants’ view, this created even deeper rifts as problems do not “just go away”.

Participants expressed a need for a workplace environment where staff members were not “pointing fingers” at one another. They desired a work environment where assumptions were not made about what others might be thinking and they wanted staff members to solve their problems collectively. Robson (1988:5) argued that “having a number of minds attuned to the problem will improve both the discussion and decision as long as (they) use (the) problem-solving process and work together”.

The creation of a platform for open discussion about problems can enhance group relations and foster good interpersonal relationships amongst staff members, since issues and ideas are likely to be clarified. Staff members would be able to contribute to ideal solutions to problems. Participants felt that the process of problem-solving would improve the entire staff’s morale. They believed that a democratic problem-solving platform would serve as a mechanism through which they all could develop proper problem-solving skills.

### **5.4.5 Conflict Management**

At the time I conducted my research, interpersonal relationships in the College were characterized by interpersonal conflicts and differences. Participants expressed dismay that staff members brought personal conflicts into the workplace. In their view, personal conflicts and problems which emanated outside the College should not be carried into the work environment and should be put aside for the duration of working hours. They believed that such conflicts create tension, anxiety, frustration and unpleasantness amongst staff members as a whole, and encourage unhealthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Participants felt that staff members were split into camps which, in turn, led to situations where certain staff members acted antagonistically toward each other and openly expressed negative feelings about others, for no apparent reason. Participants pointed out that some staff members attributed certain undesirable characteristics to others because of personal, often outside the workplace, conflicts. Because there were no problem-solving mechanisms in the College, those in dispute started disliking one another and regarded each other as “bad” people. Such attitudes led to certain staff members withdrawing from personal involvement in College activities; for example, they would absent themselves from staff meetings since they did not see any value in taking part in College activities, apart from teaching. They would just finish their teaching duties and then leave the College premises.

Pondy (cited in Owens, 2001:313) said that “if conflict is genuinely resolved to the satisfaction of all participants, the basis for a more co-operative relationship” may be laid. When interpersonal conflicts are not exposed and properly dealt with, they can lead to “informal groups and underground networks”, which, in turn, creates “destructive tension and personal hostility” amongst the parties involved (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:329).

These authors stated that there is a need to develop a capacity to transform interpersonal conflicts into “a creative tension that inspires problem-solving” (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:327). Participants suggested ways in which conflict could be managed in the College. They desired that norms be agreed upon which support open discussion of conflict in the workplace. Such norms would encourage interpersonal trust amongst staff members.

Participants suggested that conflict in their workplace could be managed effectively if personal differences were handled properly and if emphasis was placed on their common goal, that is, the College vision. Sentiments expressed by the participants were that the College vision could not possibly be achieved without the co-operation of all members of staff at the College. Without proper conflict management, the College’s goals would not be achieved and an unpleasant working atmosphere would prevail.

Interpersonal intelligence is a skill needed for conflict management. Gardner (as cited in Whitaker, 1998:74) referred to four important components which characterize interpersonal intelligence, which are:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Social Analysis</b>       | that is, skills which an individual needs so as to understand other people’s feelings and concerns.   |
| <b>Personal Connection</b>   | where an individual reaches out to others, making contact at a deep interpersonal level.  |
| <b>Negotiating Solutions</b> | assist individuals to communicate openly and honestly with one another to prevent conflict and, if it does arise, to constrain and overcome the adverse situations in a mutually beneficial way before it gets out of hand. |

**Enabling Groups** assist people in expressing their unspoken collective sentiments and articulating and agreeing on shared goals and aspirations.

Interpersonal intelligence, together with co-operation and collaboration skills, is required to support norms of openness and trust so as to manage and limit conflict and maintain healthy relationships in organizations.

#### **5.4.6 Informal socializing**

Participants regarded informal socialization as being fundamental to the establishment of sound relationships in the College. They saw social functions as opportunities to get to know one another better, away from the constraints of the work environment. Social events are also occasions where informal group norms can be established, to bond people together and create a spirit of togetherness.

In informal social situations, group members interact more easily and tend to cultivate relaxed relationships with one another. Such functions encourage individuals to engender a high degree of mutual trust, harmony and “match(ing) the elements of our own unique world with those of others” (Whitaker, 1998:73). This means that group members can establish new group norms amongst themselves and to which they conform as they socialize.

Participants believed that such socialization would develop a sense of belonging, of being part of a team, somewhat like a “big brother” (a reference to the reality television show, “Big Brother”, where characters from diverse backgrounds had to live and co-exist together and develop relationships with one another, as a team). Bolman and Deal (2003:265) expressed the view that to socialize is to stabilize, reassure and convey acceptance to individuals, resulting in a sense of common ties.

#### **5.4.7 Human need satisfaction**

The participants in this research study wanted College staff to engage in social interaction, create a supportive environment and prevent loneliness and an isolationism in the workplace. They believed that social interaction is important in determining the quality of the relationships in the College. They expressed a need to feel that they “belonged” to the College team, and they desired positive and caring relationships with other staff members.

Participants reflected a desire to be liked and accepted by others, and to have relationships with colleagues where there was a high degree of mutual understanding. They expressed the need to feel valued and to realize their potential by being involved in decision-making processes, thus gaining recognition and a sense of achievement.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994), drawing on McClelland, referred to the needs of affiliation, achievement and influence as “human needs”. According to Whitaker (1998:85), everyone has needs and a failure to satisfy some of them can result in a “sense of not being involved” and “a feeling of being unappreciated and undervalued”, as the success of relationships “is affected by the degree to which the parties to such relationships see the potential for satisfying their needs” (Hayes, 2002:298).

Participants desired respect, recognition and appreciation for their achievements which, in their view, would stimulate and motivate people to give of their best. This desire was highlighted in a memorandum which the Rector of the College addressed to all departmental staff throughout the College:

We are approaching the end of the academic year. Let us look back and see what we did (reflection). Who deserves to be recognized for what he/she has done? Please recognize someone in your work

place. People need to be appreciated in life. This could be done in many categories. Just think of a person who did something in an extraordinary way. Remember, this could be an academic staff member, an institutional worker or a student.

In a workshop which I attended, it was said that leaders can attend to human needs' satisfaction in their organizations by writing personal notes to staff members, expressing appreciation for special efforts they have made, or by sending them "thank you" cards. Others do this "by visiting the teachers at his school" (Smith, 1994:94) and by using positive reinforcement, the simplest being a sincere "thank you" for good work.

Smith (1995:303), in his study of a racially and culturally diverse staff, discussed the challenges associated with attaching equal success value to the contribution of a culturally diverse group where what counts as "success" can vary across groups. However, he found that, "where provision is made for multiple skills in achieving a group task, individuals with various skills and interests can achieve success". In this regard, an organizational structure needs to be created, to allow for recognition of multiple, culturally derived meanings for success to satisfy both management and staff members of an organization.

Participants identified issues that they felt affected their interpersonal relationships in the College. Among others, they were concerned about group interaction, teamwork, cooperation, communication and feedback. In their views, such issues hampered their personal relationships. They believed an intervention was needed to address the situation. Some expressed the need for a platform where they can talk about their experiences. This is in line with OD, which believes that organization functioning and, thus, relationships in organizations "is enhanced when people feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and their feelings" (Moerdyk & Aardt, 2003:45).

#### **5.4.8 Organization development**

OD recognizes that “emotions, personal values and interpersonal relationships are a critical part of an organization success” Smither (as cited in Moerdyk & Aardt, 2003: 45). Without critical attention to these issues, an organization’s success is limited.

As Moerdyk and Aardt (2003:44) stated, “organizations are essentially networks of relationships, and they do not exist outside of the people who constitute them”. How these people relate and work together affects the quality of their work. “OD specialists focus a large part of their efforts on interpersonal relations, attitude change and personal growth” which is also the desire expressed by the participants in this study.

Participants mentioned that they wanted to do a survey, as a College, about the current state of interpersonal relationships, how such relationships ought to be and how they might improve on existing relationships. However, participants expressed that they do not have the expertise to conduct such an exercise on their own. They suggested that somebody should be invited to come and carry out a survey and hear from all staff members at the College how they feel about interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Participants also suggested that the findings should be analyzed by the person concerned, together with the rest of the staff, and that together they should identify problems and plan strategies to achieve solutions. This is a sign of readiness for OD. OD should not be imposed on an organization’s staff, and an organization’s members should show that they are ready for change. In the case of the participants in this research study, they reflected that they were ready for a change (improvement) in their interpersonal relationships.

Another sign of the College participants' readiness to engage in a change process was their desire to take ownership of the process. OD emphasizes the importance for success of problem-solving participation in diagnosing and identifying issues affecting their organization life and considering solutions to such issues. OD provides each staff member with an opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of their organizational life and empowers an organization's members and gives them a say in decision-making. It offers them opportunities to seek solutions on issues affecting them as members of the organization, creates open communication amongst staff and facilitates the ownership of the change process and outcomes for those in the workplace.

In addition, OD promotes a culture of collaboration and continuous learning amongst an organization's members. In other words, OD builds staff capacity and enables them to resolve their own problems. It values collaborative efforts amongst staff members. It is a collaborative effort where all members of an organization show readiness to bring about change in their organizational processes, structures and culture; for example, the participants in this research wanted to improve on their communication processes, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict management, as well as "authenticity in interpersonal relations, participation and interpersonal respect" (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:14). Furthermore, the participants wished for a "democratic social structure and more humanized interpersonal relationships" (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:14) in their College.

It has been pointed out that the main concern of OD is:

... the human social system of the organization. Its focus is on the organizational culture that characterizes the climate of the organization, such as the way in which people in organizations relate to each other, attitudes, feelings, how open their communication is, how they deal with conflict, and to what extent they feel involved in decision-making, and the quality of the relationships between individuals and groups within the organization.

(Owens, 2001:202-203)

## 5.5 Conclusion

The issues discussed in this chapter are closely linked and one can not discuss one without mentioning the other. An example is that one can not talk about decision-making without touching on problem-solving, conflict and or teamwork. It was difficult for these issues to be separated when writing up this thesis. However, the study has provided me with insight into the participants' experiences and perceptions of relationships in their College.

The issues discussed above reveal that staff members were not happy with the current state of affairs at the College at the time of the research, as far as interpersonal relationships were concerned. Participants wanted to be part of a change for the better. They indicated that neither College structures nor processes at the time of the study would foster sound relationships amongst College staff.

Participants demonstrated a strong desire for the College to establish norms which could engender good interpersonal relationships in the College. The most important issues they raised related to interpersonal communication, conflict management and a collaborative culture amongst College staff regarding decision making, problem-solving and related issues. In order to promote a norm for a collaborative College community, the participants wanted all College staff to contribute towards meeting the College's goals.

This study also revealed that recognition, feedback and teamwork are vital aspects in setting the climate for good interpersonal relationships in the College. This implies support of College staff, mutual respect, openness and authenticity in their relationships with one another. In turn, this may result in celebration and camaraderie amongst staff and contribute to a congenial work environment.

At the time of this study, participants in this study were ready for change. They desired intervention and guidance from a facilitator, to help them address issues

related both to College processes and structures and to promote and cultivate sound interpersonal relationships.

In Chapter Six the research findings are discussed, as is the value of the research, and recommendations are made for instituting problem-solving mechanisms. Recommendations are then made for putting suggestions into practice and further suggestions are made regarding further research which could be done.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

As a case study, the intention of the research was to understand participants' perceptions and experiences as well as the meaning they attached to their relationships in a Namibian Teachers' Training College, and it is impossible to make generalizations. However, the findings may well be of practical use to a reader of this thesis.

This chapter serves to:

- summarize participants' perceptions and experiences of their relationships in the College;
- discuss the significance of this study;
- make recommendations for practice, and
- to offer proposals for future research.

The research is written from a Namibian perspective. Although there is a vast amount of literature concerning relationships in organizations, I could not find any literature written from a Namibian perspective. My research highlighted eight main relationship issues that have been regarded as contributing to effective relationships in organizations and, particularly, in the College which formed the basis for this study.

## 6.2 Summary of Findings

The main lesson to be learnt from this study is that there is a need to foster a congenial work environment and proper processes within the College, through which staff can develop quality interpersonal relationships with one another. The findings reflect unhappiness amongst participants with the situation which existed at the time the research was conducted, especially as far as communication was concerned. The study revealed that the relationship that existed between management and lecturers was, mainly, bureaucratic.

The College's hierarchical structure was described as being "top-down", with most communications from management to staff being in writing, meaning that there was little, if any, face-to-face communication between management and staff. Individuals merely had to comply with another individual's autocratic instructions. At the time of the research, there was an absence of interactive norms which might encourage more effective interpersonal communication and sound relationships in the College. However, there was some satisfaction with communication and relationships on a departmental level.

Five key features of effective interpersonal communication were identified as lacking in the College and their absence was contributing to unhealthy relationships in the College. These aspects are trust, respect, openness, feedback and the sharing of ideas and knowledge and because they did not exist, the staff tended to form cliques.

Participants in this study believed that poor relationships had had a negative impact on their work. A desire was expressed for interpersonal norms of openness, respect, honesty and trust to be established in the College. Feedback was identified as important in establishing good relationships. Participants believed that feedback from others enabled one to grow professionally. There was a need for College staff to reach shared agreement about what interpersonal communication norms they would like to establish in the College.

Participants desired an organizational structure in the College which would encourage interaction with other staff throughout the entire College and not only at a departmental level. They believed that this would allow them to benefit from one another's expertise. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:142) referred to this as a "link-pin-structure", to promote information flow within an organization. . A link-pin structure implies a more level hierarchical line of communication. with level structures which require teamwork and a collaborative culture that operates in terms of norms to be established for interpersonal communication amongst staff.

The concept of participative democracy in building satisfying relationships has also been demonstrated in this study. Participants acknowledged that the existence of committees was evidence that democratic structures were in place in the College, but that ultimate decisions were being made autocratically.

In the participants' views, it is crucial that not only should such democratic structures be in place but that they should function democratically. Participants felt that individuals and groups should have real decision-making power as this would satisfy the staff's need to experience a sense of influence and achievement.

At the time of the research, participants wanted the College to become a truly democratic community, led mutually by management and its members. Though there was evidence of teamwork at a departmental level, there was no evidence of teamwork on an organizational level. Participants felt that the development of an open interpersonal communication structure would build and instill a sense of community. There was strong evidence of a desire for what could be called "distributed leadership", whereby College staff would lead the College collectively and collaboratively.

There was a tendency to apportion blame, rather than solve problems in the College, and an absence of social cohesion evidenced itself. Interpersonal

relationships were characterized by personal conflicts and differences and this had led to a situation where certain staff members were feeling antagonistic towards their colleagues, expressing negative feelings about some and attributing undesirable characteristics to others.

Participants indicated frustration at the unpleasantness with which they had to deal in the workplace. They desired a collective problem-solving platform in the College to address conflicts and to improve interpersonal relationships amongst staff members, thereby making their working lives more satisfying and enjoyable.

There was evidence of readiness among staff members to manage interpersonal conflicts in the College. They desired a norm to support open discussion about areas of conflict. They felt that if this could be achieved if some degree of interpersonal trust was cultivated amongst management and staff members.

Participants believed that personal conversations and face-to-face interaction, not only in formal academic meetings but also at informal or social events, would build bridges between individuals and groups. They believed that informal socialization is fundamental to the establishment of sound relationships in the workplace. Social functions would provide opportunities for staff to get to know each other on more personal levels and assist them in building interpersonal relationships. Participants felt that this would contribute to individuals feeling a sense of "belonging" and "being an integral part of" the College.

There was a strong desire expressed by participants for human needs' satisfaction amongst staff members in the College. There was a desire to be liked, valued and accepted by others and to be recognized for their efforts. Some staff members wanted the College to conduct a survey of staff relationships, with the assistance of a facilitator.

### **6.3 The Significance of the Research**

The literature review in Chapter Two is indicative of the significance of interpersonal relationships in organizations. This study is based on the proposition that one of the most important components of both effective leadership and effective management is the relationship between an organization's management and staff.

In this study, it is proposed that if interpersonal relationships between management and staff in an organization are characterized by effective communication, trust, respect, openness, authenticity, teamwork, collegiality and democracy these will result in sound interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Above all, it is hoped that this study will contribute to an understanding in Namibia of the nature of relationships in educational organizations.

Also, this study is significant as it could well form the basis of future research in the area of interpersonal relationships in an organization. Those who are in leadership already may consider the findings useful when setting up structures to manage relationships in their organizations. They may gain knowledge from these research findings and be able to prevent similar, unfavourable situations in their workplaces, or they may choose to adapt what they find positive in this study for the benefit of their organizations.

The research findings could also be useful as a guide for promoting staff development by way of courses in human relations in education leadership and management.

Finally, this research could be significant to the very College where the research was conducted. This thesis is, in effect, a "survey data feedback" (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994:29) since it provides information about an existing situation in the College at the time of the research in so far as interpersonal relationships were

concerned and provides an agenda for the College to implement structures to aid interpersonal relationships amongst the staff.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for practice**

The study finds that there is a need for the College, as a whole, to cultivate a united system which will encourage interpersonal relationships across all spheres.

With the assistance of an OD facilitator, this could result a complete change around in staff attitudes towards one another.

I am teacher at the Teacher's Training College where the research was conducted and, as OD has been a partial requirement for my Master's Degree, I believe I could play a useful and realistic role in assisting the College to better interpersonal relationships which exist amongst the various tiers of staff.

It is recommended that some agreement be reached on what norms should be practised to enhance interpersonal relationships in the College. There need to be set guidelines and all staff need to be made aware of them, encouraged to participate in social interaction and get to know one another better. There also needs to be a definite plan, agreed to by all staff with proper guidelines instituted, as to how conflict will be handled in the College. If every management and staff member knows what to expect then, *inter alia*, backbiting could become a thing of the past.

Another recommendation is that, together, management and staff create collaborative structures and teams in which the College staff actively participate, so that there will be a shift away from personal goals and egos in the workplace.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

The research on interpersonal relationships, conducted for this thesis, was relatively small in that only a few participants, at one particular Teachers' Training College, were involved. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding into the nature of interpersonal relationships in Namibian Colleges of Education, as also in organizations, it is suggested that, using this research as a basis, other scholars could venture into more advanced research. The outcome of an accumulation of such research may well find an ideal solution for intervention, both at national or regional level.

Another possible area for future research is to investigate specific levels of management's perceptions of interpersonal relationships as compared with staff perceptions in various educational institutions, governmental departments and commercial organizations.

Ultimately, the benefits of Organization Development (OD) should never be under-estimated as this field affords all organizations the ideal platform to address relationship issues in the workplace, at both interpersonal and structural levels.

Ongoing research projects which investigate the efficacy of OD interventions in organization relationship building, in a Namibian context, could be of tremendous value to organizations wishing to investigate and change the nature of interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

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## Appendix A

### Individual interview questions:

How do you understand the concept of interpersonal relationships?

What aspects do you think facilitate relationships in the College?

How do you view interpersonal relationships at your College?

What effects do you think these kind of interpersonal relationships have on the climate and functioning of the College?

What kind of relationships do you want to see at your College?

Do you have any idea on how to enhance interpersonal relations in the workplace?

## Appendix B

### Consent Form 1

I hereby agree to participate in an interview with Popyeni Amushigamo. I understand she will be enquiring about my perceptions of relationships, what issues affect relationships at the College and the effect which the nature of interpersonal relationships have on the climate and functioning of the College.

Signed: .....

Date:

.....

### Consent Form 2

Popyeni Amushigamo is hereby given permission to record an interview with me as part of her data collection for a research report that she will be writing for the completion of her Master's degree. I understand that transcripts will be made of the interview and that extracts from these may be used in the final report. I have been assured that the names and identification of both the College and myself will remain anonymous in that report, and kept confidential by Popyeni Amushigamo.

Signed: .....

Date:

.....

