

**EXPLORING FACILITATION SKILLS IN ASSET-BASED
TRANSDISCIPLINARY TEAMWORK**

by

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- Above all to God, my Lord, Father, Brother, Guide and Friend – thank-you for your blessings and love.

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ABSTRACT

Much has been researched on how to manage and participate in teams, as well as on teamwork in transdisciplinary and early intervention groups. However, no single source adequately details the skills needed to facilitate such a unique group as that of the asset-based transdisciplinary team. A limitation in the theoretical body of knowledge regarding this subject matter spurred the purpose of this study to explore the facilitation skills conducive to asset-based transdisciplinary teams.

A conceptual framework was created from the researcher's perspective of the theoretical knowledge researched and acquired.

Applying an interpretative epistemology, the instrumental case study was chosen as research design to explore groups of transdisciplinary team members. Two focus group interviews were conducted, transcribed, qualitatively analysed with the supplements of field notes and coded with the help of two independent coders. Theoretical assumptions were tested, interrelations shown, categories and themes short-listed and criticisms from the participants considered.

It was found that skills alone do not suffice to equip members in their facilitation of asset-based transdisciplinary teams. Attitudes of involvement, flexibility, support, transparency and trust; approaches that are asset-based, narrative, holistic and family-centred and possessing knowledge of diversity, ethics, teamwork and discipline expertise were considered paramount to the competence of a facilitator.

It is recommended that in future research of facilitation, attention be given not only to the skills acquired, but also to the knowledge, attitudes and approaches needed. Combination of categories, integrating skills, attitudes, approaches

and knowledge should also be investigated. It is recommended that the role of the caregiver be given greater status among health professions and that the findings of this study be applied in the pre- and in-service training of prospective health professionals and facilitators.

Asset-based theory was informed by emphasising the importance of facilitation skills, and acquiring appropriate attitudes, approaches and knowledge in order to ensure successful implantation of those skills. The inclusion of role release underscored the need to facilitate networking and encourage shared leadership and the narrative approach also presented itself as a possible addition to asset-based theory.

Finally, as a development of the collaborative project in Early Childhood Intervention, interpretations from focus group interviews as well as research in literature were used for the Masters degree in Early Childhood Intervention (MECI) in the Educational Psychology elective module.

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List of Keywords

Asset-based approach

Capacity building

Facilitation

Skills

Teamwork

Transdisciplinary approach

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You have been told also that life is darkness,
and in your weariness you echo what was said by the weary.
And I say that life is indeed darkness save when there is urge,
And all urge is blind save when there is knowledge,
And all knowledge is vain save when there is work,
And all work is empty save when there is love;
And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself,
and to one another,
and to God.

The Prophet: Kahlil Gibran

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PLEASE NOTE

This study had its inception in the collaborative project of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), which transpired between 2000 and 2002. Data was gathered and provisional findings were used to supplement the Educational Psychology elective module for the M(ECI) degree course.

It was subsequently decided to direct and process this work into a qualitative research project as a mini-dissertation for the course MEd (Educational Psychology). This text is therefore written predominantly in the past

CHAPTER ONE OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

We must indeed all hang together,
or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.

Benjamin Franklin

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The ability to facilitate or rather, the art of facilitating, is learnt and practised, rather than inherited. It is however often presumed that facilitating is an innate quality of humans, and specifically those people in the caring or health service professions.

Professionals and paraprofessionals are trained and assessed in their specialised fields of study. Information and expertise gained from these experiences are usually imparted to others in an uncomplicated and consultative manner. However, sharing such knowledge and experiences to such an extent that others learn to adopt and implement these skills, becomes more difficult and perhaps even territorially threatening. It is in such instances, which are becoming more frequent, that the ability to facilitate the process is key in order to effect a successful outcome.

It is from this viewpoint that the purpose of this study was launched. The study aims to explore and describe the facilitation skills conducive to asset-based transdisciplinary teams and so inform asset-based theory. As such, this dissertation serves also as a report of research, which had been already conducted in 2001 and was initially used for developing the Educational Psychology elective module of the M(Ed) degree course. This study reflects not only the challenges facing members of such a pioneering team as the asset-based transdisciplinary team, but also the skills and values, means and mechanisms used to confront these challenges.

1.2 CONTEXT OF INQUIRY AND MOTIVATION

The motivation for this study originated from my participation in the Collaborative Project in Early Childhood Intervention initiated between the Universities of Pretoria and Durban-Westville. The project included a multitude of disciplines as well as international figures. In this project, the Department of Educational Psychology from the University of Pretoria was one of several asked to compile an elective module for the newly developed MSc degree in Early Childhood Intervention.

The mentioned collaborative project started with pioneering work designed to transform people's perceptions and approaches. The process of early intervention, although highly regarded and obviously indispensable in a family, is often characterised with an emphasis on the problem and needs of the individuals involved. A new approach, the asset-based approach, both challenging and enriching for all stakeholders, was offered as an alternative. This novel approach is not intended to override the traditional techniques of intervention, but can however, bring about a new attitude among members of the relevant disciplines as well as of the families.

The **asset-based approach** seems to be in complete contrast to the traditional needs assessments used with families experiencing challenges. Focussing on strengths rather than on limitations empowers individuals and communities to work in collaboration and ameliorate situations, which would otherwise have seemed hopeless and limiting. This concept is closely linked to that of capacity building, referred to later in section 1.8.

Accompanying this original perspective on the process of intervention, another, perhaps more challenging outlook would be that of the transdisciplinary approach. Traditionally, and perhaps even currently, people's areas of expertise have been and are clearly demarcated. Even in a multidisciplinary or even interdisciplinary helping team, each member is responsible for assessing and intervening through only his or her own domain of learning. It is only in the last stage of the team process, if one is fortunate, that heads are put together and a

joint decision is taken. This decision though may mean excluding other significant others, such as the caregivers, teachers and other members involved in the life of the client. The transdisciplinary approach is not merely a cross pollination of ideas, expertise and knowledge, but also allows for the release from one's own role as an expert at one point in the process, to take on the role of another discipline and function.

Facilitated appropriately and conscientiously in conjunction, these new approaches could result in effective and healthy interactions. Such teams could eventually lead to speedier outcomes; a greater focus on clients as individuals and collaborators, not as patients; more creative and organisational learning and an ability to solve more complex matters. Such a model would also act as a single point of contact for information and decisions (Parker, 1994:6).

The asset-based approach is an innovative perspective and the transdisciplinary model presents a groundbreaking manner of team functioning. It is from this stance that the need for effective facilitation of the people involved, and consequently the need for this study, arises. A working assumption of this study is that, in order to ensure optimum team working, various facilitation skills need to be operative and effectively implemented. Furthermore, the Educational Psychology module-writing team agreed that, although often overlooked, a need exists to train students in the facilitation of transdisciplinary teams, using an asset-based approach.

There has been research and works published on how to manage, participate and function in teams. Various articles have been published specifically on teamwork in transdisciplinary and early intervention groups (Briggs, 1991; Briggs, 1993; Briggs, 1997; Galentine & Seery, 1999; Katz & Scarpati, 1995; Ryan-Vincek, Tuesday-Heathfield, & Lamorey, 1995), with annotations by members themselves and descriptions of how the roles of the caregiver and child have adapted to new approaches. However, no single source adequately details the skills needed to facilitate such a unique team as that of the asset-based transdisciplinary team. Consequently, a contribution of this study could be a theoretical description of such skills.

1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the facilitation skills conducive to asset-based transdisciplinary teams.

During a literature review of this topic, a lot of information was found on facilitating teams; less was found on transdisciplinary teams and very little was found around the concept of the asset-based approach. It became very clear that finding resources, which would include all aspects together, and specifically within the asset-based theory, was unlikely. The fact that a limitation exists in the theoretical body of knowledge regarding this subject matter compels the need for and adds value to this study.

I therefore aim to make a theoretical contribution regarding the afore-mentioned and investigate the skill of facilitation in transdisciplinary teamwork to inform and enhance asset-based theory. Indirectly, a practical contribution could also be possible, regarding the effective implementation of the facilitation skills.

Further sub-aims can be derived from the purpose of this study:

- To determine and elaborate on the reasons for the need to identify facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teams, i.e. the reason for this study
- To identify which facilitation skills are appropriate in asset-based transdisciplinary teams

The study will therefore attempt to reach these aims through exploration, interpretation and construction of meanings.

1.4 STATEMENT OF INTENT

The statement of intent that steered this study is formulated as an exploratory question: What are the facilitation skills in transdisciplinary teamwork that could inform asset-based theory?

The following are sub-questions relating to the research question:

- Why is there a need to identify facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teamwork?
- What is a theoretical framework for facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teamwork?
- What associations exist amongst the concepts “facilitation”, “transdisciplinary” and “asset-based”?
- Which facilitation skills would be appropriate in asset-based transdisciplinary teams?
- How can this theoretical framework inform asset-based theory?

1.5 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

1.5.1 PHILOSOPHY OF THE STUDY

As a researcher with my own assumptions and beliefs, I inevitably interpret my reality and subsequently have an influence on the research study. Influenced by the post-apartheid and post-modern society in which I live, as well as the phenomenological and anthropological paradigm that have informed my academic schooling, I selected an interpretative approach for this study. According to Schurink (1998:246), reality in an interpretative paradigm is understood and interpreted, but not predicted or controlled. Knowledge is further believed to arise from observation and interpretation.

I selected the above-mentioned research perspective as it complements the asset-based and transdisciplinary approach. The acknowledgment and employment of each person’s meanings and interpretations of their experiences are essential for effective team functioning and role changes and is reflected in interpretivist epistemology.

1.5.2 CONCEPTUAL PARAMETERS

Two new approaches are predominantly being investigated in this study in relation to facilitation. The **transdisciplinary approach** professes to be an

improvement and successor of the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives, where the need for collaboration was already acknowledged. However this new outlook calls for disciplines to cross the unseen but very real boundaries that separate each from the other and encourages learning amongst members in an empirical manner through role release. This means that members not only observe each other's work in a team, but also assist one another, through supervision, to acquire and actually practise new intervention techniques, previously exclusive to the other discipline. Hence, for example, parents or social workers can perform certain physiotherapeutic techniques on their children, instead of the therapists themselves.

The **asset-based approach** is also a novel way of encountering people and situations and focussing on the strengths and virtues rather than on the needs and limitations. I view this approach not only as one for use in assessments and therapies, but in the transdisciplinary team functioning itself.

1.5.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

I feel it necessary to approach this study in a qualitative manner since this mini-dissertation studies facilitation skills in the context of people, rather than facilitation skills out of any social context. Leedy (1993:139) states that the choice in research methodology depends on the nature of the data and the research problem. Since the study concerns itself with an area of social reality, which Silverman (2001:32) admits can often not be measured by quantitative statistics, and since the data obtained will be of a verbal nature, the choice of a qualitative methodology seems justified.

Schurink (1998:241-2) explains that qualitative research is interpretative and inductive in approach, holistic in nature and searches for meaning from everyday situations and people. It does not aim "to objectively measure the social world, to test hypotheses and to predict and control human behaviour" as the quantitative paradigm does and therefore allows for the researcher to be subjectively interactive in the study. Concepts induced will be in the form of themes, rather than variables; and data will be presented as words, transcripts and quotes,

rather than exact figures. In brief, I do not claim to control or predict the area of social reality investigated in this study, but instead seek to try and understand it.

The study has both exploratory and descriptive research aims. With regard to the latter, a thorough literature study will be carried out and inferences from focus group interviews analysed, reduced, coded and described. Mouton and Marais (1990:43) mention that the aims of an exploratory study could include the gaining of new insights and expounding central constructs. In this study, these aims would refer to the new concepts of transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches. Thus, as fairly new terrain is investigated and simultaneously compared to more traditional territories and perspectives, exploring and describing qualitatively are the most appropriate research aims.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The empirical, and specifically the instrumental, case study has been selected. Such a design type aims “to provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization” (Stake in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:437). In this instance, the case studies refer to groups of transdisciplinary team members.

The data in case studies is textual and hybrid in nature, consisting of new and existing information. There is however a low degree of structure in the design itself (Mouton, 2001:149). This empirical design was selected as it complements the exploratory aim and inductive reasoning used.

In judging the strengths of this research design, and in particular for this study, what emerges is the high construct validity and in-depth insights, allowing one to establish rapport with the research participants. Other characteristics and advantages of the instrumental case study include the following: providing material for readers to discover and learn on their own that which even the researcher may not know; committing the researcher to continuously reflect on and revise meanings and impressions made; refining theory and encouraging working assumptions and subsequent studies; establishing limits of the ability to generalise and providing rich, in-depth information (Stake, 2000; Berg, 2001).

The shortcomings of this research design include the issues of objectivity, the extent to which generalisations are made and structure, but these will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three of this study.

The instrumental case study supports the interpretative paradigm and descriptive aim I have selected for this study in that it provides detailed information and recognises the existence and influence of various views of the issue in question. In the same way the approaches of asset-based and transdisciplinary acknowledge and encourage the use of different perspectives in building meaning.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 PARTICIPATION

Participants, directly and indirectly involved in the Collaborative Project in Early Childhood Intervention, were purposively selected to participate in focus group interviews. The reason for their selection was due to the fact that the participants have experience and/or knowledge of the conceptual parameters, i.e. transdisciplinary and asset-based approach, increasing the applicability or transferability of the study. Participants were contacted personally and/or telephonically, but all also by electronic mail through an invitation letter (Addendum A). A form explaining the purpose of the study accompanied this letter (Addendum B) and prospective participants were requested to ponder on the points mentioned before arriving for the interviews. Eight participants eventually were able to take part, five for the first focus group and three for the second, excluding myself as researcher. As far as possible, a variety of disciplines were represented at the interviews.

1.7.2 DATA GATHERING

Data was gathered through self-reporting via focus group interviews. Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998:314) define a focus group interview as “a purposive discussion” of an issue or issues amongst persons with similar

background or interests. The criteria for selection of participants included participants' understanding of the concepts as well participation in the seminars mentioned above. Thus, research was conducted with those who are familiar and/or have personal experience with the implementation of the novel "transdisciplinary" and "asset-based" approaches.

Selecting this method of data collection allowed for discussion in the interview to be clear, specific and directed. By selecting knowledgeable participants there was minimal misunderstanding of new concepts used. Schurink *et al.* (1998) also mention that focus groups are small enough for all to share insights and interact easily and are flexible enough for the facilitator to probe if necessary. Speedy results are possible, but also with a greater understanding and interpretation of the matter being discussed. Interaction and the empowerment of participants are also possible and preferred in focus groups, rather than having an inflexible discussion controlled by the interviewer (Morgan, 1997:11f).

On the other hand, one must be aware of the possible limitations of such a form of data gathering. There is less control in focus group interviews than in formal and structured interviews. The manner in which data is analysed and interpreted can be subjective (interviewer effects) and participants can be so homogenous that fair distribution of opinion is not guaranteed. Information obtained will also not necessarily be able to be generalised.

The possible disadvantages mentioned above were addressed by, *inter alia*, stipulating to the participants, beforehand, what the boundaries of the subject matter to be examined were. Intermittently during the interview, matters discussed were reviewed and confirmed. In this study I also did not aim to generalise the findings, but instead wished to stimulate thought on the matters that arose.

Data was collected from focus group interviews and documented in the form of transcriptions from audiotape and videotape recordings. Field notes made by both myself and retrieved with permission from the participants were also used (Addendum C).

Data access was in a large part already readily available before the start of this study. As mentioned in section 1.2, my involvement in the collaborative project in Early Childhood Intervention facilitated my access to knowledge and information surrounding transdisciplinary teamwork and the use of the asset-based approach. My participation not only enabled me easier access to data, but also to a variety of people, and in particular, to various disciplines. This gave me prior knowledge which influenced my study to the extent that it enhanced the interpretative paradigm selected for this study.

Other means of data access were obtained during the focus group interviews. Ethical issues were first addressed to ensure confidentiality. Once this was managed, data was retrieved via self-reporting, interpreting of the transcripts and the use of field notes made by the participants themselves. Through literature review, data was accessed easily in the form of texts.

1.7.3 DATA ANALYSIS

An effort was made to keep data analysis continuous in nature. The methods of data analysis were based on the qualitative approach of Tesch (1990:154-156) integrated into that of Marshall and Rossman (1989:112-120). The latter approach served as the broad framework guiding me in the organisation of data and generation of themes and working assumptions. These were tested against alternative explanations. The approach of Tesch provides a detailed step-by-step process of how to organise the themes that emerge and enriches especially the first three phases of the Marshall and Rossman approach.

Tape transcripts were read in detail and then analysed and organised in order to identify themes, categories, sub-categories and patterns. Data was given to two independent coders for open coding. This facilitated comparing, confirming and/or disputing of former categories. Identified categories were later e-mailed to the participants for final verification or adjustments. These mentioned steps support the interpretative epistemology selected for this study. Incorporating literature control into the process at this stage enabled working assumptions to

be investigated and challenged, alternative explanations to be searched for and categories or themes to be confirmed.

The input of others in this process ensured that my subjectivity was not the only one determinant of conclusions made and thus increased “confirmability” (Poggenpoel, 1998:340). This strengthens the quality criteria or trustworthiness of the study in that findings may be more easily transferred to and consistent in other contexts and populations.

In fig. 1 (Addendum D), a simplistic diagram is portrayed of the research analysis process described above. Two focus group interviews resulted in data being organised and categories and themes selected. This part included the steps of Tesch to view the data first holistically and then analytically for underlying meanings. Topics listed were clustered into columns, coded and then changed and short-listed into categories. The presence of two independent coders was invaluable at this stage. After this, data was interpreted by relating it to existing theoretical frameworks and models acquired through literature control. This complemented the third and fourth phases of Marshall and Rossman where emerging working assumptions were tested against the data and alternative explanations sort. In the last section of the diagram, the final steps of Tesch were integrated in that interrelations were shown and, where necessary, recoding done in order to create appropriate patterns. Complementary patterns were identified and categories loosely coordinated. As the final part of the diagram portrays, however, the pattern (or puzzle) is never completely closed, offering leeway for developing and changing perspectives, as the participants themselves were able to comment here.

Poggenpoel (1998:336-338) mentions some strategies and guidelines necessary and useful in the analysis of data in qualitative research. Of these, the strategies of analysis, inductive reasoning and analytic induction seem to be most relevant to this study. Coding can only be done through analysis where the wholes are resolved into parts. Since no “explicit conceptual framework” is used, but rather working assumptions, in an attempt to discover relationships in the data, inductive reasoning is hereby employed. Inferences are implied from two focus

group interviews and later compared with information gathered from literature study. Relationships and patterns can be discovered through close scrutiny of the data, resulting in a possible conceptual framework. This is similar to the term 'analytic induction' where universal statements are provisionally made, but where there is still always a constant search to disprove the working assumptions, enabling a more refined conceptual framework. On close inspection, however, one cannot deny the presence of a deductive form of reasoning in this study. Interpretative in approach, the findings of this study are consequently interpreted in the context of my perceptions, background, personality and experiences, including my perceptions of the literature review and the interactions in the focus group interviews. I therefore approached the data with a certain amount of pre-conceptions, which influenced the manner through which I reached conclusions about the categories and themes. It is therefore more accurate to state that inductive-deductive reasoning was jointly pursued in this study.

1.8 CONCEPTUALISATION

For the sake of clarification, the following concepts used in the study will be elucidated:

- **Asset-based approach**

According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2002:149), this approach focuses on capacities, skills and assets within a social system. Deficiencies in any given eco-system or sub-system are not ignored, but in fact confronted and addressed by focusing on strengthening the inherent assets in a system.

- **Capacity Building**

Almost synonymous with the asset-based approach, this is essentially a community development approach. It is orientated towards an understanding of what the activities, institutions, services and involvement of people are in the community in which they live so that people can more effectively use these assets to their benefit. There are thus two parts to this approach: What are available in the community, i.e. community profile, and how the relevant individuals participate in this, i.e. individual profile. Again, needs are not ignored,

but assets are emphasised. People in communities are not viewed as clients and consumers, but rather as citizens and producers (Collaborative Project in Early Childhood Intervention, 2000).

- **Facilitation**

“The process of making a group’s work easier by structuring and guiding the participation of group members so that everyone is involved and contributes.” (Rees, 2001:73). Kinlaw (1993:16) also adds that this refers to helpful interventions by any person that will “help the team to meet certain criteria for success.”

- **Teamwork**

This is the act, but also process, of “people working collaboratively to make something happen”. It is used to “decide what the work is, determine how it should be approached and discover how to survive under [any] challenges” that may arise (Rees, 2001:18, 27).

- **Transdisciplinary**

This refers to a multilevel system where “members commit to teaching and learning from each other, assume interchangeable roles and responsibilities (role release) and allow the needs of the child and family to dictate their goals. Team leadership is negotiated and rotated. One team member is typically designated as coordinator of care for each family and ... incorporate[s] team decisions and integrate[s] other disciplines’ goals into a treatment program” (Briggs, 1993:36). There is team assessment and decision-making, enabling knowledge and competencies to expand.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations as expounded by Strydom (1998:24-33) are implemented hereafter:

1.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from the participants of the focus groups as adequate information on the goal and procedures of the investigation was given before the meeting (via electronic mail) and just before the onset of the interview. The privacy of the participants was also not jeopardised as confidentiality was maintained and participants granted permission for the interview to be recorded.

1.9.2 CO-OPERATION WITH COLLABORATORS

Colleagues of the Collaborative Project for Early Childhood Intervention were involved in the focus group interviews, some being participants themselves or alternatively suggesting possible members to be participants. One member, myself, also acted as the facilitator of the discussions.

1.9.3 DECEPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Through informed consent and the forwarding of the invitation letter and interview form before the interview dates, deception of the participants was avoided.

1.9.4 VIOLATION OF PRIVACY

Synonymous to this are the rights to self-determination and confidentiality. The former was not violated as there was informed consent and the latter was achieved by ensuring that the names of the participants were not released. The focus group discussions were audio taped and videotaped, but all participants were made aware of this. Field notes taken in from the participants at the end of the interviews were also handled in a confidential manner.

1.9.5 ACTION AND COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHER

I do not claim to have practical expertise in facilitation or transdisciplinary teamwork, but, in my public capacity as a Masters student conducting research, as well as a member of the Educational Psychology team compiling the elective

module for the MSc course in Early Childhood Intervention, I consider myself competent to accomplish the investigation. This research was also always done under supervision by a senior lecturer and doctor in educational psychology.

1.9.6 RELEASE AND PUBLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

Participants involved in the focus group interviews were e-mailed with the transcriptions and categories and sub-categories derived from these interviews as findings by an independent coder and myself. This was, however, for the purposes of verification and/or adaptation. Findings from this study will also be submitted in an article for publication for the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

1.10 MEASURES TO ENSURE RIGOUR IN STUDY: QUALITY CRITERIA

1.10.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Poggenpoel (1998:348-350) describes Guba's model of trustworthiness by referring to four criteria: the truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. According to an interpretative perspective these can be interpreted as, respectively; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, participants and context. Comparing results to what is written in literature and finding interrelations amongst these sources supported this criterion of quality. The literature review acted as a tool for enrichment or comparison in important matters that could have been excluded from the focus group interviews. Literature review also offered a good understanding of the relevant issues from current and previous studies.

Dependability – whether the findings would be the same if the study were replicated with the same participants or in a similar context – and transferability – the ability to generalise to larger populations – are closely related. As mentioned before, the aim in this study is not to necessarily generalise and create a theory.

However, the fact that input was sought from other people during the data analysis, namely by the independent coder and participants involved, strengthens the fact that findings made are fairly consistent and can possibly be compared to other groups of people and situations.

Confirmability implies that there is freedom from bias in the research procedures and results. Findings are mainly a function of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives. However, as an interpretative epistemology directs this study, such findings were influenced by my assumptions and background. My competence as a researcher, mentioned in section 1.9.5, I trust, ensured that such influence was not detrimental to the extent that the results became inappropriate.

I believe that, as far as possible, these criteria were satisfied. I am confident that the research design, participants and context were of such a nature that the findings could be deemed truthful, consistent and applied to most other settings.

1.11 RESEARCHER'S ASSUMPTIONS

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is intricately woven into the study and the researcher himself or herself becomes an important tool in the process.

This study should always be read through the "coloured" lenses of my assumptions, values, beliefs, and background and consequently biases. Indeed, these are not necessarily detrimental to the study, especially one social in nature, but should always be taken into account in the interpretation of the findings.

I am a thirty-year old woman from Portuguese descent, born and bred in South Africa, currently in a post-apartheid and post-modern society and initially educated on a tertiary level through the paradigms of existentialism and phenomenology. I am also a woman open to changes and novel approaches and have therefore openly, but discerningly, embraced the philosophies of interpretativism as well as constructivism. I have concluded my internship at a

school for special educational needs, where assessments, interventions and discussions are conducted in interdisciplinary, but also multidisciplinary ways.

I aim to address these 'coloured lenses' by reflectively acknowledging how they impact the research choices I make and thus also direct the consequences of my findings and conclusions.

I believe that my desire to be an educational psychologist allows me to explore reality from a kaleidoscope of perspectives and, although I must be accountable for the influence of this on my findings, in terms of what was mentioned in section 1.10.1, I must also admit that it provides enrichment to this study.

1.12 STRUCTURE AND SEQUENCE OF STUDY

The following structure is loosely described and envisioned for this study:

Chapter Two sets out the structuring of the literature review, providing for later interpretations of themes and categories. Chapter Three of this study focuses on the research design and offers further detail on the ethical strategies and trustworthiness, as well as the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Following this, Chapter Four presents the results of the focus group interviews in the form of categories and subcategories and offers interpretations in terms of literature control. In Chapter Five, final conclusions and recommendations are made in the light of possible shortcomings and limitations of this study.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This research study does certainly not attempt to be the sole source in suggesting possible facilitation skills and functions in such a unique group as that of the asset-based transdisciplinary team.

It is an attempt to study some of the relevant literature and interpret it in conjunction with findings from two focus group interviews. I therefore hope that more will be investigated on this topic and that, in the spirit of collaboration and transformation, new ideas, suggestions and outlooks will be proposed.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE FRAMEWORK

What I ask from professionals is that you stand next to me,
that you believe those kids that you work with are okay.
Too often I feel that the professionals who are working with me pity me,
they pity my child.... I want you to value them. I want you to value me.

(Parent of child with disability)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To synthesise comprehensively, one must first analyse. The fused conception of *facilitation skills in an asset-based transdisciplinary team* will therefore, subsequently, be studied in discrete components. Although rather unnatural separating these, since the separate concepts invariably overlap, one can eventually reach a greater appreciation of the gestalt.

It is appropriate to mention here that the very need for a facilitator has actually been questioned in former literature. Berman, Miller, Rosen and Bicchieri (2000) reported that, when team members were adequately trained in holistic assessment and intervention, they were able to manage a clinical case without any assistance from an outside facilitator. In fact it is stated that “meetings without the presence of a facilitator are more characteristic of the transdisciplinary approach” (Berman *et al.*, 2000:629). This matter will be more fully addressed in the final chapter under the section 5.5.

In this chapter, the asset-based approach will first be elucidated and contrasted with the traditional model used in most health services. The coming about, benefits and process of the transdisciplinary model will then be described, including the new position of so-called non-professionals in this paradigm shift. Thirdly, teamwork will be studied in its composition, process and development. All three mentioned concepts will find their place in the fourth point discussed, namely facilitation skills, which will also be further discussed. The role of the

facilitator and the skills, attitudes and knowledge possessed by such a person will be explained in the team context, as well as, essentially, in the approaches of “transdisciplinary” and “asset-based”.

2.2 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

2.2.1 ELUCIDATION

The asset-based approach is simultaneously a new and old term. Named differently, but coined by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), one could also argue that the idea in itself is not a novel one. In fact, in her book, *Teach your team to fish*, Jones (2002) dates this same philosophy to the ancient wisdom of Jesus Christ more than two thousand years ago.

Assets are defined by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003:14) as the “skills, talents, gifts, resources, capacities and strengths that are shared with individuals, associations, the community and organisations”. Similarly, resources are defined by Trivette, Dunst and Deal (1997:76) as the “potentially useful information, experiences, opportunities...that might be mobilized and used to meet the needs of an individual or group”. These assets could be physical, economic, vocational, educational, emotional, cultural, social, medical and logistical, to name a few (Trivette *et al.*, 1997). The asset-based approach therefore emphasises the recognition and strengthening of these assets to ameliorate the relevant situation or system, not exclusive to addressing the needs and shortcomings too. It is characterised by a belief in ingenuity, inherent capabilities, self-determination, networking and building relationships and mutually beneficial alliances.

The asset-based approach is knowingly or unknowingly mirrored by a variety of terms: the resource-based approach where Kinlaw (1993) explains the need to find and use resources in order to develop self-sufficient teams; the strength-based perspective which Bruns and Steeples (2001) believe is imperative in forming an effective partnership between parents and professionals; and capacity building emphasis (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) based on community development work in the United States of America (<http://www.northwestern.edu/>

IPR/adcd/). According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003), even the ecosystemic model of Bronfenbrenner (in Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1987) is viewed as a good starting point for the asset-based approach, especially in a South African context.

Trivette *et al.*, (1997:74) expand this issue further, stating that the asset-based approach “derives from a human ecology framework” and emphasises the fact that families are surrounded by a wider-based community that transcend physical boundaries and that serve to support and be supported by them. When focusing on intervention in a community, Smith, Littlejohns and Thompson (2001) state that a community has a better chance for desired change if the emphasis is on building the community’s capacities, rather than on delivering services. In such a situation, those involved in intervention become partners in the efforts, instead of only suppliers of service (Ammerman & Parks, 1998). Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) clarify the role of the professional in the asset-based approach by mentioning that it becomes one of helping communities to acknowledge and use their resources, supplying information, networking and establishing relationships on their behalf so as, for example, to access financial backing for the community, without the professionals being in control of the funds themselves.

Mitchell and Sackney (2000) and Carman (2002) use a school system to illustrate the applicability of the asset-based approach. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) mention that, in order to build a community, three capacities are needed, i.e. personal, interpersonal and organisational, so that every level of the community is involved and integrated. Carman (2002) states that the objective in this approach is to manage the limitations in such a way that the strengths or assets are released and can develop to such an extent that they can make the limitations insignificant. Perspectives are transformed: mistakes are viewed as means to success, not as failures; services change from being centralised to decentralised to eventually being integrated and; critical feedback changes into a process of helping each other to build strengths.

According to Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003), the asset-based approach, especially with regard to intervention, is characterised by self-determination, collaborative

networking and a belief in the existence of resources and personal ingenuity and power. The approach is most effective when the expectations made are realistic and clear and when recognition is given to those that realise the expectations (Carman, 2002).

Trivette *et al.* (1997) illustrate the resource-based approach as consisting of three parts. Sources of support, as the first component, can be in the form of individual assets or groups of people, as well as programmes and services available. The second component comprises mapping the resources so that one knows how to locate them. Finally, strategies are needed to build the capacity of the community and organisations so that they can be resourceful to others. These strategies include identifying the strengths of the community, demonstrating how they can benefit others and how they can be used to remove any obstacles.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) signify the asset-based approach as internally focused, relationship-driven and focusing on what is available, not absent. The approach strives to empower that which has and/or those whom have been disempowered and to encourage a spirit of participation on equal footing. Problems are not ignored but attempted to be solved in a wider and more collaborative environment, where people are not only more aware of their resources, but also motivated to be contributors to the system through these assets.

2.2.2 COMPARISON WITH THE NEEDS-BASED APPROACH

The true meaning of a concept often emerges when it is placed alongside its converse. The needs-based approach or deficit model is one that has been and is still used today as the foremost approach to investigate and solve solutions. Without denying its invaluable use, comparing it to the asset-based approach will highlight the essence of the latter mentioned.

Based on tables by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) and works of Briedenhann (2003) and Trivette *et al.* (1997), the comparison, and indeed contrast, between the needs and asset-based approaches are visually depicted below in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: COMPARISON OF TWO APPROACHES (Adapted from Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003:12, Briedenhann, 2003 and Trivette *et al.*, 1997:77)

The Needs-based approach	The Asset-based approach
Emphasises problems, shortfalls and needs	Emphasises resources and potential
Bottom-down approach; Outside-in solutions	Bottom-up approach; Inside-out solutions
Professional centred	Community centred
Narrow, one-sided perspective in which list is drawn up of what is needed and problematic; Scarcity paradigm; Deficit focused	Holistic perspective in which there is consensual defining of what is needed and beneficial and an asset map is drawn; Synergistic paradigm; Asset focused
Professionals are viewed as experts who deliver a service and impart knowledge and advice to their clients who are viewed as inexperienced	Professionals are viewed as partners, advocates and networkers involved who support, build relationships, share knowledge and acknowledging the expertise of clients
The Needs-based approach	The Asset-based approach
Disempowerment and dependency of clients; Formal support emphasised	Empowerment and interdependency where each is motivated to contribute; Formal and informal support
Fragmented support	Collaboration and participation

In their article concerning the implications of the asset-based approach to early intervention, and thus presumably to any health service where a variety of disciplines are brought together, Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001) recommend changes to be implemented in order to achieve enhanced and sustainable service. These include moving away from the concept of professionals as only experts and broadening it to include networkers and collaborative partners. Mention is also made here of the transdisciplinary approach (which will be discussed later) and the process of role release which complements this change in conceptualisation. Role release forms part of the role transition process and occurs after members have observed, acquired and implemented intervention methods under supervision and are now ready to practise new techniques independently, continuously consulting and promoting mutual respect and equal status (Woodruff & McGonigel, 1988:164-181). Furthermore, these authors suggest that this philosophy needs to be filtered into the academic institutions that train the so-called professionals, so that lecturer and student alike can take ownership

of the new approach. By so doing, this could ultimately effect a change in society as a whole.

A member of a focus group who participated in a research project on asset-based early intervention (Kriek, 2002) reflected on the asset-based approach and compared it to a mining process. The deeper one mines, the more diamonds one discovers. Extending this simile further, I can also appreciate the immense work and patience required to mine things of value. I am also reminded of the fact that coal and diamonds are in fact one and the same thing, but for only the difference in time and pressure. Following the asset-based approach does not negate the problems and necessities. However, it does believe that something good can come from any situation and that there are numerous resources worth utilising, provided one is willing to put the time and effort into exploring and developing them. Kriek (2002); Briedenhann (2003); Kriek and Eloff (2004) and Lubbe and Eloff (2004) found in their research that, although the asset-based approach can be time-consuming, it is well worth the effort implementing it.

In exploiting the assets of every situation and group of people, the transdisciplinary approach also strives to pool resources from team members to create a cohesive team where interdisciplinary boundaries are vague and roles exchanged for the sake of the greater good. It is evident that both the asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches can function productively within a team context where diversity and therefore potential for multifaceted roles and resources exist. In implementing this effectively, facilitation skills are paramount to ensure open communication and team productivity. In the following section, the transdisciplinary approach will be discussed at greater length.

2.3 THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

2.3.1 ELUCIDATION

According to Rainforth and York-Barr (1997), the transdisciplinary approach was originally and is still mainly used in the health services profession to build relationships with primary caregivers and to recognise “the fact that children do

not perform isolated skills irrespective of function or environmental demands.” Through the transdisciplinary model, members commit themselves to teach, learn and work with each other across conventional discipline boundaries so they can offer more effective support to those with special needs. It is an approach characterised by enormous collaboration of ideas and expertise among team members, as well as in conducting assessments, collectively planning, creating integrated goals and jointly implementing treatment plans. Information and skills are exchanged across the disciplines and a global environmental frame of reference is used (Rosen, Miller, Pit-ten Cate, Bicchieri, Gordon & Daniele, 1998; Berman *et al.*, 2000; Ryan-Vincek, Tuesday-Heathfield & Lamorey, 1995).

According to Briggs (1997) the key components of a transdisciplinary model include:

- Many disciplines, flexible boundaries and overlapping roles
- Collaboration and consensus decision-making
- Integrating families in the process of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation, recognising their ultimate authority
- Co-ordinating a core person (usually a family member) to incorporate team decisions and integrate goals of other disciplines into a treatment programme
- Shared meaning, synergy and cohesion – understanding different terminologies, relevant concepts and working with families unique to the team.

Transdisciplinary teams can comprise various numbers, meeting various times. Ryan-Vincek *et al.* (1995) however found that these groups average a number of five members who meet three or four times a month. The group usually aims to improve the total functioning of a child with a disability and the following members could be included, depending on the specific need (Orelove & Sobsey, 1991):

- # Primary Caregivers
- # Physiotherapist
- # Occupational therapist

- # Speech therapist or/and Audiologist
- # Psychologist (Educational and/or other)
- # Nurse or paediatrician/physician
- # Social Worker
- # Educator
- # Vision specialist
- # Nutritionist
- # Other medical specialists, e.g. ear-nose-throat specialist, neurologist, orthopaedist, urologist, dentist
- # Other non-medical specialists, e.g. pharmacologist, respiratory therapist, rehabilitation engineer, computer scientist.

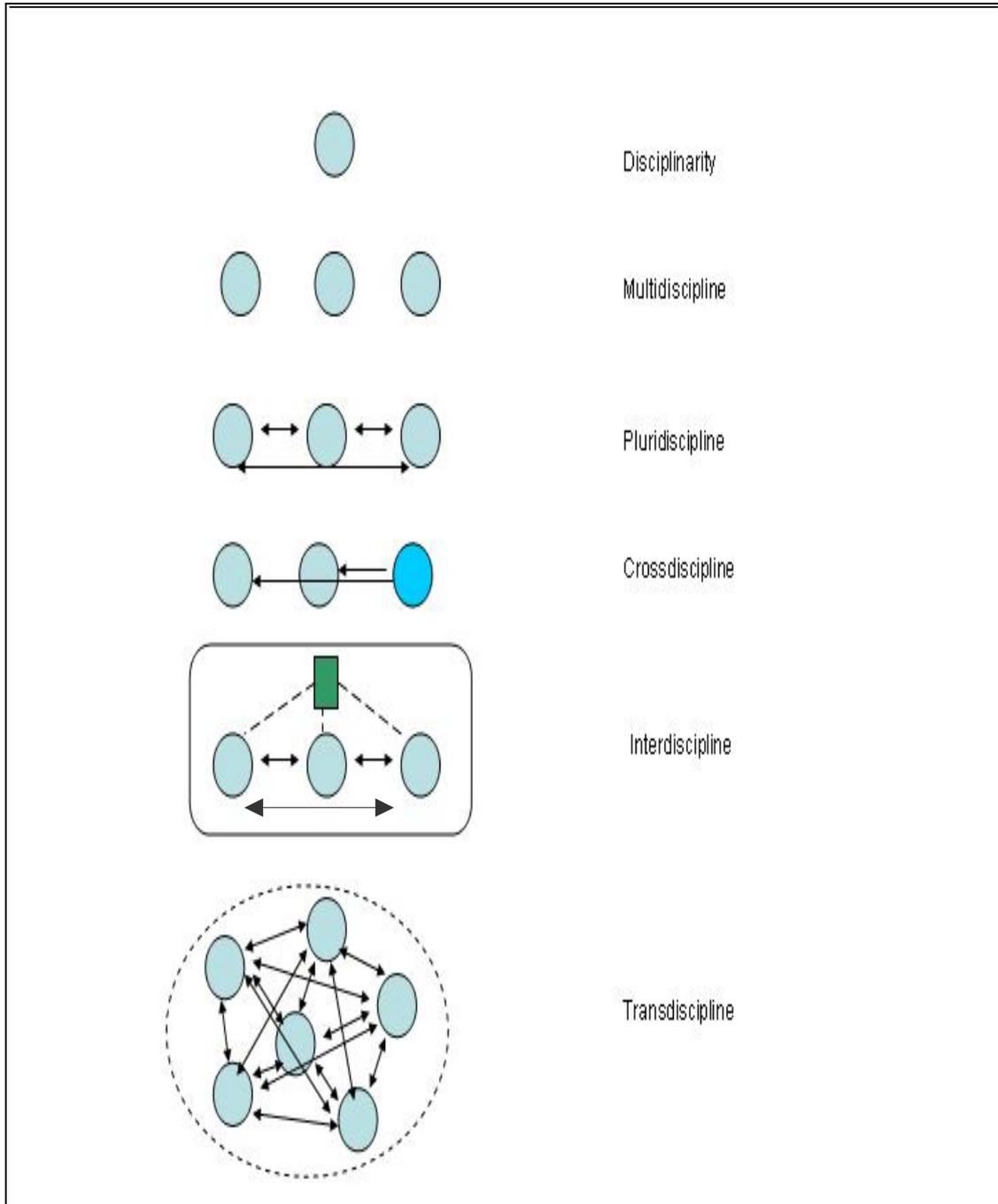
The transdisciplinary team is therefore always a kaleidoscope of personalities, functions, roles and expertise, presumably resulting in challenging and enriching exchanges.

2.3.2 EVOLUTIONARY DESCRIPTION

Although many axioms may warn us not to look back, recognising the development and progress of the service model can provide great perspective to our present and future.

Based on the works of Jantsch (as cited in Shalinsky, 1989); Orelove and Sobsey, 1996; Rainforth and York-Barr, 1997 and Engelbrecht, 2004, comparisons amongst the different models of service have been compiled in Table 2.2 (p.26). Generally speaking, the evolution in these team approaches proceeded from first to last mentioned, i.e. to the current transdisciplinary model. A visual representation of this, based on Jantsch's hierarchy (as cited in Shalinsky, 1989:) can be found in Figure 2.1 below.

FIGURE 2.1: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS (Adapted from Jantsch [as cited in Shalinsky, 1989])



The evolution of these service models is clearly seen and described in the following table, Table 2.2 below.

TABLE 2.2: COMPARISON OF SERVICE MODELS (Compiled from works of Jantsch [as cited in Shalinsky, 1989]; Orelove & Sobsey, 1996; Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997; Engelbrecht, 2004)

Model	Objective	Process	Participation / Accountability	Communication
<i>Unidisciplinary</i>	Develop own field competency	In isolation	In isolation	In isolation
<i>Intradisciplinary</i>	Believe you & colleagues can contribute to those with special needs	Assess, plan & implement with own-field colleagues	Colleagues of own discipline involved and responsible	Amongst colleagues of own discipline
<i>Multidisciplinary</i>	Recognise contributions of other disciplines	Separately assess, plan and implement their field part	Caregivers meet with individual team members	Informal lines
<i>Pluridisciplinary</i>	Cooperate with other disciplines, not coordinated	Assess, plan, implement separately but consult	Participate informally, each accountable for own part	Informal
<i>Crossdisciplinary</i>	Cooperate and coordinated, controlled by one discipline	Main discipline determines manner of assessing, planning and implementing	All participate, main discipline accountable	More formal, meeting determined by main discipline
<i>Interdisciplinary</i>	Co-operate, coordinated, jointly decide, higher level goal as incentive, develop interventions that are supportive & complementing	Separately assess and plan but share & decide together & try to incorporate other sections; Follow up services	Caregivers meet with team and members responsible for sharing and implementing their part	Periodic case-specific meetings
<i>Transdisciplinary</i>	Commit to teach, learn and work with other disciplines to better serve, multi-level coordination, promote mutual emotional and technical support	All assess & plan together according to family needs & assets; assigned service provider implements as/with family	All participate on same level, incl. Caregivers; shared responsibility - ensure that designated service provider implements plan, usually caregiver or teacher	Regular team meetings with continuous transfer of knowledge & skills

In reflecting on this table and on the transformation in approaches of service delivery models, clear differences and transformations are noted. Members from each model change from what seems to be a centripetal to a centrifugal approach and then to one that incorporates both, by focusing on one's own discipline and self, but also away from that, onto others, in a way that promotes

interdependence. Other fields and disciplines are first almost ignored, then recognised and utilised, until a stage is finally reached where sharing and participation are the key elements of interaction.

With transformation comes a greater employment of non-professional members (although expert in their own rights), as well as a greater number of contact sessions with all stakeholders. Communication, although informal in the first few models mentioned, is limited. With more formality comes more contact until eventually, in the transdisciplinary model, communication is characterised by respect and mutual cooperation. Transformation takes place not only within the particular case situation, but also beyond it. In the former models no follow-up sessions are implied. With the interdisciplinary perspective, these are made available, while through the transdisciplinary approach, the emphasis changes to sustainability, where the client and community are empowered to follow-up and follow-through themselves making use of available resources.

In their research, Lamorey and Ryan (1998) discovered that the three most well known models, namely those of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary are increasingly bridging the differences amongst them. Positive aspects of the transdisciplinary approach (discussed in section 2.3.5) are now becoming integral parts of the other two models.

2.3.3 THE ROLE OF THE PARENT/CAREGIVER

Parallel to the evolution of the service model mentioned in the previous Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2, is the evolution of family-professional partnerships as discussed at length in Turnbull, Turbiville and Turnbull (2000). Based on power relationships, the authors note that there has been a move in these partnerships from “power-over” to “power-with” to eventual “power-through.”

The family-professional partnership (mainly 1950s-1960s) involved controlled decision-making by the professional, using resources of the latter and characterised with distant communication. This was followed in the 1960s and 1970s by the parent training/involvement partnership, still typical of the “power-

over” relationship where parents were considered as extra hands, if sufficiently trained, that could help the professional. In the 1980s the family-centred model was most commonly used in which power was distributed amongst and decisions taken by all members including the parent. All resources, both professional and domestic were considered important. Currently the tendency is to apply the collective empowerment model of relationships, where all significant members (parents, family members, community citizens and professionals) form part of a synergy to make decisions. Communication is dynamic and empathetic and insight is encouraged for creating new resources in addition to those existing.

Mittler and McConachie (1983) declared that parental involvement and partnership were not synonymous terms. They described a partnership as one containing mutual respect, recognition of the family and child’s uniqueness, equality, sharing of information, skills and feelings and collaborative decision-making. The call was made for both professionals and parents to sometimes “switch roles”. Partnerships in Europe were showing success on this front. In one particular case it was cited that parents started an early intervention centre in Belgium. Parents acted as the welcomers and orientators and were involved in the assessment and training of children through two-member units allocated per family, which consisted of one parent and one professional (McConachie, 1983).

Comparing perceptions between parents and professionals, Winton (1988) found that parents believed professionals to be lacking sympathy, focusing on negatives and needing a coordinator. Professionals in turn perceived parents to be frequently using defence mechanisms of denial and avoidance of activities. Indeed it was found that parents generally perceive more holistically and with emotions, noticing changes far easier than professionals, who understand mainly through diagnostic categories.

Salisbury and Dunst (in Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997) place responsibility for meaningful interaction and decision-making at the door of both parents and professionals. They cite differences and problems in communication (non-use of mother-tongue language, use of jargon, ineffective skills), perceptions, values and attitudes (insensitivity, ignorance and prejudice to differences and time or

goal priorities), logistical difficulties (transportation, schedules, child care availability) and team dynamics (how the team is conducted and who is present) and call for “inclusionary practices.”

Though the transdisciplinary model is described as that being used at present, many caregivers/parents are ostracised when it comes to their relationships with service providers. Even recently in 2001, Bruns and Steeples were providing guidelines to facilitate parent-professional partnerships, still unsatisfied with the imbalances in power. These guidelines included involving parents in the planning, as well as implementation and evaluation phases; supporting, trusting and respecting parents; adopting a strength-based perspective; understanding the unique perceptions and experiences of all parties and individualising practices to match the needs of parents.

All that has been discussed in this section can naturally be applied in introducing other key members to the transdisciplinary team too, i.e. other family members, community citizens and significant others. Apart from the asset-based approach, another effective approach and model to use in this case would be the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner where the client is understood in context (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem interrelated) and personal and process factors are given significant consideration (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002).

The evolution of partnerships and service provision is a sign of progress and, with research showing that most transdisciplinary teams can show up to 83% of parental involvement (Ryan-Vincek *et al.*, 1995), one is motivated to persevere in achieving optimal interaction amongst all stakeholders.

2.3.4 ROLE TRANSITION

The essence of the transdisciplinary model can be appreciated only by understanding the role transition process (Child Development Resources, 1991 as cited in Briggs, 1993 and Woodruff & McGonigel, 1988). It is through this that boundaries eventually overlap, fruitful exchanges are possible and members

become transdisciplinary. Each member of a transdisciplinary team must take the six distinct but related steps of the role transition process:

1. Role extension – improve own discipline-specific knowledge and skills
2. Role enrichment – general understanding of terms and practices of other fields
3. Role expansion – exchange information and make knowledgeable observations and suggestions outside own field
4. Role exchange – learn, implement and practise techniques of other field under supervision
5. Role release – implement new techniques independently, consulting other members
6. Role Support – informal encouragement, feedback and support from team, especially to coordinator of care.

Role release is the most crucial step of the process where new roles are accepted and “old” roles liberated. Equal partnership and mutual respect is promoted as members take on certain parts and skills of another discipline. It is often the core coordinator or facilitator, possibly the concerned caregiver, who takes this step in order to effect treatment and growth for the child and/or family.

Through these steps one can understand that the purpose of a transdisciplinary team is to “expand the common core of knowledge while increasing individual member’s competencies” (Briggs, 1993).

2.3.5 ADVANTAGES OF THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Table 2.2 already reveals or at least implies an array of benefits to people applying the transdisciplinary approach. These include the process of role transition and specifically role release where members obligingly exchange knowledge and expertise for the greater good of the team’s purpose. Involving parents in the planning, assessment and decision-making process leads to greater understanding of the situation and empowerment of those who were once not considered relevant except for accepting and implementing the advice given

to them. In fact the needs and desires of the child and family dictate the goals of the transdisciplinary team.

Briggs (1993) also mentions that, the use of a case manager or coordinator – possibly also a facilitator – to integrate the team decisions into a programme and help the client integrate it, reduces unnecessary intrusion into the client's life. With team leadership negotiated and rotated, different perspectives are drawn upon and mutual understanding increases. The fact that the boundaries are flexible roles, overlapping, compels a spirit of collaboration. Ryan-Vincek *et al.* (1995) go on to mention that the transdisciplinary model can also facilitate therapy and teaching skills through the child's natural environment; increases mutual respect amongst members and; emphasises shared accountability.

However similar points can result in dissimilar effects and the disadvantages of the transdisciplinary model must be acknowledged as possibilities. Feeling threatened and acting defensively is natural when disciplines perceive their 'territories' being infringed upon and the greater the number of perspectives in a team, the greater the probability for disagreements and conflict if not handled proficiently. Unclear role definitions and liabilities; inadequate training; use of jargon and resistance to change are also mentioned as criticisms to this model (Ryan-Vincek *et al.*, 1995).

Lamorey and Ryan (1998) make recommendations to address the following team barriers through in-service training, even with transdisciplinary teams, which one would presume has already overcome or mastered the points below:

- Administrative incompetence
- Organisational ineffectiveness, i.e. through collaborative skill-building
- Problems in effective communication
- Lack of understanding of team: structures, functioning and collaboration
- Insufficient field-based practice
- Inadequate tapping of parental resources
- Disparity between members' perceptions of team success and variables identified as contributors to this success

Although Rosen *et al.* (1998) and Berman *et al.* (2000) proved that there is more team member participation in and member preference towards transdisciplinary teamwork, team development was not higher than that of the multidisciplinary team, since the former offers increased opportunity for conflict and power struggles. This is attributed to lack of time in adapting to the new approach, but more importantly to the lack of training in team process. This finding, as well as the afore-mentioned points of Lamorey and Ryan, justify to a large extent the purpose of this study. An ideal model with virtuous intentions and fertile ground may be doomed to a barren end if there is no relevant training and skills to facilitate the team process within this model.

2.4 TEAMWORK

2.4.1 ELUCIDATION

As defined in the first chapter, teamwork is the act and process of collaborative work amongst people to reach a specific goal (Rees, 2001). It is jointly determining the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'how' of tasks and working together at meeting and utilising any challenges that may arise. The ultimate aim of a team is to achieve the goal of the greater organisation, whether that organisation is a physical body or a higher concept.

Traditionally, managers would head organisations and take sole responsibility in creating goals and implementing decisions. Due to the increase in size and diversity of these organisations over time, it became impossible to place such expectations on one individual. Such a person was not the only expert in the field; more departments and sections with their own required skills were needed. In addition to this, there was the realisation that the social quality of organisations was just as, if not more, important than the technical aspects. The purpose of each member is now not only recognised, but also deemed essential for the successful running of the whole body.

Rees (2001) emphasises that teamwork helps distribute power, acts as a motivator and is an investment offering long-term benefits, such as shared

responsibility, staff development, partnerships and adaptability. He states that “teams are the structure; teamwork is the process” and that “teamwork is more than skills... than forced group cooperation... [but is] at its best, a spirit, the spirit of cooperation fuelled with the desire to excel.”

The change in paradigm seems to have taken place at a faster rate, however, than the acquisition of teamwork skills necessary for the effective functioning of the team. These skills, from the perspective of the facilitator, will be discussed in section 2.5.

2.4.2 FUNDAMENTALS

According to Rees (2001) group dynamic studies show that teams have specific needs in order to function effectively. These are:

- Members agreeing on common goals
- Leadership guiding the team
- All members interacting and participating
- Each member’s self-esteem being maintained
- Open communication
- Power within the team to make decisions or influence
- Equal importance given to content and process
- Mutual trust
- Respect for differences
- Constructive conflict resolution

The facilitator of a transdisciplinary team must be aware of all these fundamentals, especially since this team is so diverse and inundated with potential and assets.

2.4.3 ROLES AND STYLES

Various authors have compiled lists of the most common types of personalities or characters in teams. Some, like Lamprecht (1990), have even compared these

roles and styles to animals, describing behaviour that is analogous to, for example, the bulldog, donkey, lamb, grasshopper, tiger, monkey, giraffe, frog and elephant. Indeed in a team comprising an assortment of disciplines, cultural backgrounds and values, the different styles that arise are infinite. Some contributions on this issue will be shared.

Briggs (1993) describes membership simplistically according to four constructive styles of members. A *contributor* is needed who is dependable and task-orientated and acts as a role model for the rest of the team. The *collaborator* is goal-directed and works flexibly and inconspicuously ensuring the team is on track. The *communicator* is process-orientated and monitors the interests of the team. Lastly, the *challenger* questions all that takes place and is decided, thinking creatively and honestly.

Hart (1992) takes rather an in-depth and comparative approach, distinguishing between *Helping Roles* that increase team progress and *Hindering Roles* that impede it. Table 2.3 below is based on his tabulation of these roles, which are mostly self-explanatory, although some roles will be further illustrated.

TABLE 2.3: TEAM ROLES

HELPING ROLES		HINDERING ROLES
<i>Task roles</i>	<i>Maintenance roles</i>	
Initiator: proposes goals & ideas, identifies problem	Encourager	Dominator: through patronising or flattery
Information seeker	Harmoniser: reduces tension	Withdrawer
Information giver	Expresser of team feelings	Avoider
Clarifier: reflects, gives examples	Gate keeper: facilitates communication/participation	Degrader
Summariser: concludes	Compromiser: modifies ideas for sake of cohesion	Non-co-operator: often with hidden agenda
Consensus tester: checks agreement and readiness	Standard setter/tester: checks satisfaction with procedures; offers new	Side conversationist

Great value can be learnt in reflecting on this table. Knowledge of these and other roles played by members can lead to intra-group, as well as intra-personal awareness of motives, behaviours and attitudes that can either facilitate or impede the success of a team. It is good for a facilitator to be aware of members that can contribute to the team, as well as those who will act as impediments to its progress. Identifying these roles in participants can assist a facilitator to delegate tasks accordingly and have insight into which persons would benefit being paired off for specific activities and which not. It is important that members' expertise are acknowledged and that they feel free to make use of their talents, be that to motivate, summarise, offer information, make peace or encourage communication, to name a few. Teamwork is not determined by an individual. It is therefore important to make certain roles explicit right at the team's conception, as well as be aware of possible roles that could emerge.

2.4.4 TEAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Teams are living structures and so develop and transform in a certain way as the individual members in them change too.

Lowe and Herranen (1982) describe a six-stage process of team development, which, although more than two decades old, resembles most related models to this day. They described teams first Becoming Acquainted and then experiencing a Trial-And-Error Phase as they start to work together and form cliques. As role conflict begins, there is a time of Collective Indecision where direct confrontation is avoided in order to maintain equilibrium and no team norm for accountability yet exists. Despite this, a Crisis stage develops eventually where the importance of the team mission is realised. Members start working as a team and sharing leadership and decision-making in the Resolution phase followed by a time of Team Maintenance where conflicts are managed effectively and the relationship with the client becomes paramount.

A similar, condensed and easily remembered version is that of Tuckman's four stages of team development, which Briggs (1991, 1997) has modified into the following five phases:

1. *Forming*: orientation period where members look to strong guidance, but are superficial in their commitment and expectations;
2. *Storming*: resistance to others' ideas and roles and contentious relationships form, but the team identity begins to form;
3. *Norming*: team cohesion and cultural norms become established as members trust and communicate more openly;
4. *Performing*: team purpose and individual roles are well established and more effective problem-solving and decision-making can occur;
5. *Transforming*: the team seeks new challenges, is interdependent and promotes personal learning.

Smit (2004) describes these stages of team development, but inserts a preparing stage in the beginning, where aims, objectives and rationale are dealt with. An adjourning stage at the end, where the team dissolves and issues of loss and readjustment can be anticipated, is also inserted.

Smit (2004) also mentions the psychoanalytical, person-centred and multicultural approaches to team processes. This encourages a greater awareness of the dynamics amongst team members, a need for empathetic and congruent facilitation and a cautious attentiveness to the influence of stereotyping, groupthink and language on the social interactions in the group.

There is much value in knowing about the development and processes of a team, especially for a facilitator. Anticipating the changes and possible dissonance within a team enables the facilitator to prepare and act proactively. In addition to this, members who recognise their team as a living organism that constantly changes and offers unique characteristics can be more tolerant of its transformations and can contribute to its running process. Insight into the progress of a team facilitates goal setting, conflict and resistance handling, decision-making, management, the move to interdependence and the development from isolated individuals to the ownership of one team identity.

Whatever the stages may be, it does seem evident that change, however difficult or seemingly pointless at the time, must be allowed and even encouraged so as to allow the team to develop.

Briggs (1996) also describes the sequential phases of change which individuals and teams experience. The knowledge and causes of these phases are important to consider. The first reaction to change is that of resistance, originating in fear and perhaps grief or loss, and characterised with individuals resisting openly or through passive non-involvement. Uncertainty follows where stress replaces fear and members prefer to remain neutral and passive. This stage may repeat itself. There is then gradual assimilation of the new as familiarity sets in and experimenting is tried. Transference occurs with full replacement of old with new and the focus is on making things work. Eventually with integration, the change is accepted and a sense of excitement is common. A call is also made for “change leaders” (coined as “change masters” by Kanter as cited in Briggs) to manage the team process through their assets of non-linear thinking and reconceptualising of process, problems and procedures. Attention will be given to the ‘change facilitator’ in section 2.5.2.

2.4.5 EFFECTIVE TEAM PROCESS AND PRINCIPLES

This section could easily have been added to that of section 2.5.2 concerning the facilitation skills of managing a team process. However, since the latter involves describing various skills used in different situations typical of a group, emphasis is placed here on the development of a team and specifically the approaches and principles that need to be applied in the stage-form team process.

Three perspectives will be used: one focusing on participation at grassroots level and in the community, one based on Christian ancient wisdom and one taken from a transdisciplinary approach. All three sources show clear and common characteristics of team work.

White (1999) introduces various authors to contribute to the knowledge of the inter-related phases of the participation process, which she describes as follows:

1. *Activation of members.* Interest, thinking, creativity and understanding are engaged. The catalyst communicator, which every member must eventually become, catalyses action, interaction and reflection; is open-minded; believes that conflict is constructive; has theoretical and practical knowledge; is culturally sensitive and possesses effective interpersonal skills (White & Nair, 1999). Individuals must be harmonised into a constructive interdependence or synergy (St. Anne, 1999) where all familiarise themselves at the beginning with any relevant projects or fields that will be used or any potential “turf conflicts” (Koniz-Booher, 1999: 114). Team members must get to know and even be prepared to nurture each other on all levels.

2. *Enabled Participation.* This occurs through various techniques and approaches depending on the capabilities, values and commitment of the facilitator. Power and trust must be balanced and participation must be genuine, not superficial or manipulatory (Gómez, 1999). At this stage, learning must be mutual, expectations realistic and roles reversed if necessary (Fowlie, 1999). Perceptual differences need to be recognised and bridged and grassroots participation towards the community developed (Anyaeibunam, Mefalopulos & Moetsabi, 1999). There should be a move from the “traditional patriarchal...learning situation to equalising the relationships” in the team (Berry, 1999). A safe environment, both physically and psychologically, will support more risk-taking, and encouraging “critical appreciation”, where members’ progress is assessed through positive reinforcement, reflection and critical thinking are of paramount importance at this stage (Berry, 1999).

3. *Community Building.* Here, the ultimate purpose of any team is reflected as the upgrading of communities. Search-based (establishing collective interests after identifying commonalities and differences) or consensus-based collaboration is applied in resolving conflicts and making decisions. The emphasis is on the interests of the community or client, rather than determining the advantages and disadvantages. Nothing is

noted as an individual idea and even disagreements are the responsibility of the team (Johnston, 1999).

Not dissimilar to this, Jones (2002) uses principles from the biblical New Testament as motivators for teamwork, dividing them into progressive phases of participant excitement, grounding, transforming and releasing.

In the *excitement phase*, members are motivated to work by knowing the purpose of their efforts, which they internalise as their own mission. They learn to think like a community and have a sense of belonging. Members are guided to realise that values are more important than rules, that quality outweighs quantity and that the only way to move forward is to let go of unnecessary obstacles, such as prejudices, past mistakes, etcetera. Humility, creativity, collaboration, simplifying, reflecting on how one expresses oneself effectively and the value of sustainability are placed as important values for the progress of the team.

In the *grounding stage*, members are made aware of realistic expectations and potential difficulties. Through “cross-industry benchmarking” diversity is valued and a holistic approach is integrated. Stewardship is considered more important than ownership of one’s talents or others’ decisions and pride in the form of worldly power or self-righteousness is discouraged. Also essential at this point are regular reflection, perseverance, optimism, unusual thinking, true commitment, internal loci of control and restraint through listening and contemplation.

Transformation implies a fundamental change and relationship building is more highly valued than “deal-making”, since success of “deals” will arise from relationship transformations. All are informed and empowered equally and boundaries are dropped in order to “go deep”. Discipline, completion or wholeness and prioritising are important now, with the higher purpose or bigger picture being supported through individuals letting go of trivia. Assertiveness is rewarded and comments and concerns are encouraged.

Finally, in the *releasing phase*, members are turned into recruiters, spreading news and channelling what they have learnt into sustainable action. Resources of each are utilised to their maximum, but control is at its minimum. Responsibility is shared and difficulties or hurts are attended and/or forgiven. Success is rewarded with further training and duties and members are assured of their value through a spirit of cherishing.

In conclusion, Briggs (1993, 1997) mentions qualities of effective teams, especially transdisciplinary teams, most of which are implied in the aforementioned approaches. They include the following:

- Clearly stated and understood goals and mission
- Sufficient available resources, such as time, people, money
- Expertise among members in the form of training, skills, experience and knowledge
- Open communication
- Commitment to process as well as outcome; fostering growth
- Continuous evaluation of roles, values, norms and performance
- Continuous interaction
- Trust and support, leading to risk-taking and creativity
- Strong leadership through empowerment of all
- Available organisational support
- Prevailing systems thinking; synergy

It is interesting to also note at this point that Barnes and Turner (2000) found in a specific case that as the frequency of team meetings and sessions for reviewing goals and progress increased, fewer objectives were met. The implication made was that greater analysis and accountability for the objectives occurred, resulting in fewer met objectives. In the end, quality exceeded quantity.

Possessing a team with effective principles and role players who are open to an asset-based and transdisciplinary approach can be futile if the team process cannot be facilitated. By discussing facilitation skills in the following section, it is

hoped that the afore-mentioned concepts will be cemented and that the dynamism of the study, i.e. the active facilitation within an asset-based and transdisciplinary team, will become evident.

2.5 FACILITATION SKILLS

2.5.1 ELUCIDATION AND OVERVIEW

Facilitation suggests making things easier and skills denotes a practised ability or expertise. Facilitation skills therefore refer to those capabilities that allow a goal to be reached in an effective manner. A facilitator is a person who can do that. Facilitators are “agents of change who...work on helping individuals, groups and the organization as a whole to develop or improve performance” (Robson & Beary, 1995:vii).

According to Robson and Beary (1995), facilitation as a term originated in the late 1970s where assistance was needed to help the leader and members of a workforce in solving problems in a professional manner. The greatest influences are mentioned as being Kurt Lewin (who invented the term ‘group dynamic’), Carl Rogers (who emphasised client-centred counselling and ownership), and Edgar Schein (who promoted process consultancy as opposed to expert consultancy, assuming the client to have the solutions).

Although facilitation can, and sometimes must, overlap with the acts of moderating, advocacy and leadership, it is worthwhile drawing the distinction. A moderator is in most instances synonymous with a facilitator, possessing the same qualities and skills, but focuses more on mediating disputes and acting as a strategic consultant and planner. The advocate does not usually begin where the team is, but often has an agenda separate from the team or community, which reflects short-term goals, rather than sustainability. A leader takes control of the content of the decisions made, in a directive role, or control of the process, in a facilitative role (Rees, 2001), in both cases preferably not in an autocratic manner, but through collaboration. Each of these roles are not exclusive to the

role of facilitator, but the latter is mainly concerned with the needs of the team or client and accessing the assets members have in order to reach their potential.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the role of the facilitator is not permanently designated to one individual of the team, if that team operates according to a transdisciplinary approach. In such a team each member has the potential to take on that role and possess the facilitation skills necessary to manage the variety of disciplines and exchange of roles. In so doing the role of facilitator can rotate spontaneously amongst the team members depending on the situation, process or expertise called for at the time.

2.5.2 SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES WITHIN TEAMWORK

2.5.2.1 Management skills

The act of managing or organising by a facilitator can be viewed, to an extent, as an umbrella term for all other techniques and skills mentioned. Managing the processes of communication, decision-making, problem solving, conflict resolution and negotiation is just as vital as the processes themselves. Each of these skills will however be given individual attention. The management of three elements of a team will be elucidated in this section, namely that of team process, change and cultural diversity.

- **Team process**

Robson and Beary (1995) state that "...95 per cent of the problems that groups face are to do, not with the lack of technical expertise of those involved, but with a lack of understanding of group dynamics and how to manage group process." In addition to that mentioned in section 2.4.4 concerning team process and principles, Rees (2001) stresses that facilitation of a team begins before the team gets together. Planning is crucial and facilitators need to determine feasibility and relevance of the meeting, as well as focus more on objectives, rather than agendas. Objectives must be written and agreed upon before anything else. Members need to remain focused by having the facilitator reiterate the team's objectives and norms, periodically ascertaining expectations and encouraging

participation from the start through introducing themselves and sharing their previous experiences of teamwork.

Participation has been highlighted previously through the work of White (1999), but additional practical points (which overlap with communication skills) are mentioned, taken again mainly from Rees (1999). Most listening and recording should take place from the facilitator, allowing the other members to do most of the talking. Verbal techniques can be effective, especially if they promote open-ended questions, positive responses to contributions made, redirect comments to other members, request different points of view, paraphrase for clarity and appropriate restraint. Non-verbal techniques, such as gestures, silence and voice and facial expressions, are just as essential. Organising the physical space of the meeting in U-shaped or circular set-ups can also make an immense difference.

Rees also provides further guidelines for the process itself. Open participation needs to be balanced with structure and regular reflection complements both of these elements. Subgroups can be established when necessary, such as during work overload or lack of participation and creativity. The facilitator must be perceptive enough to know when adjustments are needed and foresee any problematic situations or members.

- **Change**

Bearing in mind the points mentioned in section 2.4.3 regarding the stages of change in a team, facilitators need to manage transformations competently. Such change leaders (Briggs, 1996) should tolerate ambiguity and be flexible and creative, be focused by a clear vision, encourage paradoxical thinking, support permeability, monitor progress, be able to integrate goals and serve as an example for change behaviours. Facilitators need to anticipate and plan for change and be prepared to deal with and monitor the different stages and emotions that come with any adjustment, allowing for gradual progress, rather than sudden revolutions. Briggs further mentions (1996:345) that the most sustainable change is “transformational change... involv[ing] a deep shift in a team’s culture and in the culture of the organization in which the team functions...

[this] requires constant monitoring and follow-through.” The 21-day rule is helpful here, which states that a new habit can be developed only after at least 21 days of practising it.

- **Cultural diversity**

The facilitator must always presume differences among and uniqueness in all members, ranging from different languages, learning styles and expertise to dissimilar values and beliefs. Even if a team is fairly homogenous in terms of its norms and purpose, the likelihood is there that these will not be the same in the clients. Although finding the commonalities is important, differences cannot be ignored and are indeed sources of greater openness and creativity. Bennett, Zhang and Hojnar (1998) mention that the following factors need to be considered before attempting a collaborative partnership with clients or families, especially in a health professions context:

- Predisposing family factors (ethnicity, education, acculturation, socio-economic status, family structure and characteristics)
- Perceptions of disability, health and health practices (based on cultural values and beliefs)
- Child rearing beliefs and practices
- Perceptions of the role of the professional
- Knowledge of relevant issues (e.g. early intervention, special education)
- Communication style
- Perception of time
- Cultural competence of professionals

Facilitation in this context must be based on promoting a relationship of mutual trust, openness and respect. Bennett et al. (1998), Rivers (2000) and Madding (2000) offer the following guidelines in facilitating management of cultural diversity:

- Emphasise differences as important values
- Encourage expression and awareness of different needs, concerns, priorities and perceptions

- Clarify objectives so it is clear to all members
- Ensure all members become acquainted with cultural-relevant information
- Avoid assumptions and stereotyping, but be open to different interpretations
- Use interpreters and/or let members learn basic language skills if necessary
- Be culturally sensitive in use of jargon and practices used
- Encourage family-centred principles
- Make information and services readily available, with training if necessary
- Emphasise individual and system strengths – make use of support network
- Be flexible

Discernment is needed in balancing recognition of differences and achieving common ground. As the paradoxical saying goes, “You are unique, just like everyone else”.

2.5.2.2 Communication skills

Apart from what has been discussed on participation, which is imperative to communication, many other skills can be mentioned to ensure communication, which is thorough and prudent in carrying its message across.

Kinlaw (1996) underscores the fact that all communication must be underlined with the ability to listen well. Only this can produce quality communication, which is interactive, balanced, concrete, respectful and relevant. Hart (1992) adds to this in stating that not only is listening important (through attentiveness and paraphrasing), but so too observation (of verbal and non-verbal cues) and asking honest, concise and challenging questions.

Egan (1998) also highlights the importance of being skilled in communication. He describes competent attending, listening, understanding, probing,

summarising, open-ended questioning and basic empathy to be essential ingredients, the latter-mentioned sometimes making or breaking the success of the discourse. The acronym SOLER is relevant here, where the participants must Squarely face each other, have an Open posture, Lean slightly towards each other, maintain Eye contact and maintain a Relaxed disposition.

Briggs (1997) defines the listening process as stages: defining the purpose of listening, making the decision to listen, remaining silent, attending, empathising, monitoring and processing the message. She distinguishes between active and passive listening, supporting the former as that where the listener reflects, paraphrases and gives feedback on that heard. The speaking process accompanies the listening course, in which the speaker must formulate the message clearly, send it, listen for a response, clear up misunderstandings, summarise again and direct oneself to action.

The other side of the coin to effective communication is being aware of the possible barriers to it. According to Briggs (1993; 1997) these could include judging, controlling, advising, interrogating, threatening, disrespecting, stereotyping, using jargon, arguing, lecturing, praising falsely, manipulating and negating responses of others.

Being able to make oneself heard and be silent almost at the same time is indeed a skill and, although not the only fundamental of an effective team, is an important cornerstone of it.

2.5.2.3 Decision-making skills

The facilitator, as facilitator and not leader, should aim to process decisions through the team and not on his or her own. In a transdisciplinary team, this is of even greater significance. Briggs (1991, 1997) describes a five-step process used universally.

1. Information must be gathered so that the problem or matter can be clearly defined and goals set. A competent member or, preferably all

members should collect information that is unambiguous, accurate, sufficient in quantity and from a variety of sources (textual, observational, experiential, etc). Information must be processed through analysis, discussion and working with the data obtained, always with the awareness that diverse values, emotions and assumptions can influence this process (Egan, 1998)

2. As many solutions and alternatives to help make the decision must be produced. Divergent thinking and brainstorming are useful tools at this stage.
3. Everyone in the team evaluates alternatives, selecting then that which is considered most viable. Thinking becomes more convergent and critical now in order to reach an appropriate action plan. Planning of strategies for the following two stages take place, in which evaluation criteria, data collecting methods, role allocations, resource identification and time frames are stated.
4. In the implementation step, all members should be committed and know “who is to do what by when”.
5. In monitoring, the plan is continuously evaluated and adjusted according to the needs of the relevant parties.

In conclusion, a vital part of decision-making must be explicated. Goal setting is important in that goals form part of the first step, but exist also long beforehand in the minds of the members. Egan (1998) suggests that broad aims or goals be set as specific outcomes that are prudent and that will make a real difference. They should be sustainable, flexible and realistic to the values and time frames of those deciding.

2.5.2.4 Problem-solving skills

The problem-solving process is similar to that of decision-making since the problem or goal must be identified, alternatives generated, objective criteria

established, best-fit solution selected, action taken and evaluation followed (Rees: 2001). Two interrelated views by Robson (1993) and Hart (1992) will be discussed.

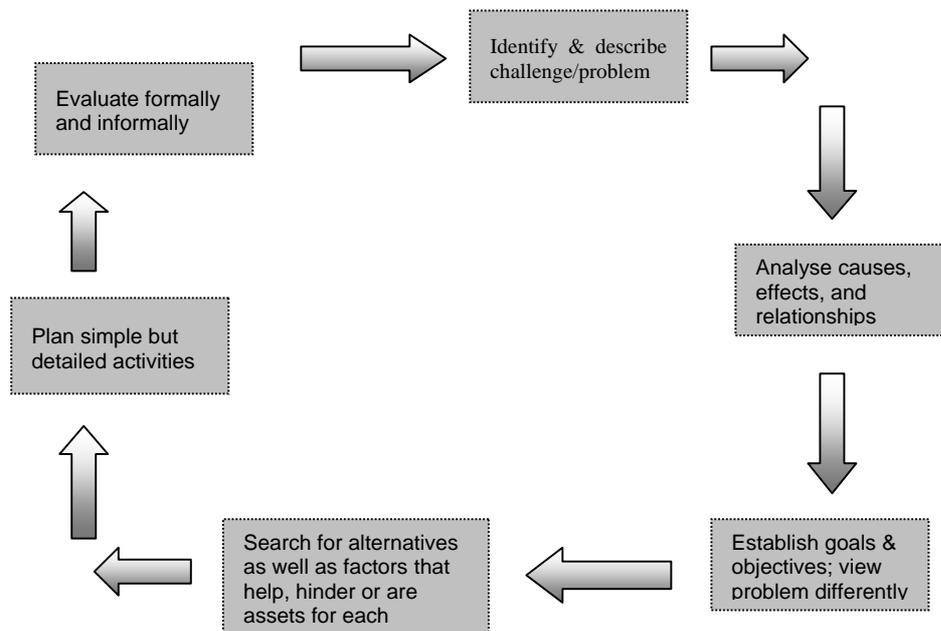
Robson (1993) believes that solving problems should be executed analytically as well as creatively. He describes six steps in the process, commencing with brainstorming for ideas before anything else, although this technique may be used later too. A broad problem area is established and one theme from the brainstorming session is selected and reworded into a consensual problem statement. The problem is then analysed and techniques such as the cause-and-effect diagram or 6-word diagram can be applied. In the former-mentioned, a sketch of a fish is made with the right side stating the effect and the “ribs” of the fish reflecting the main problem areas or causes. Causes are discussed and prioritised from most significant to least significant. After analysis and deliberation, data is collected on the cause which was deemed the most significant. The latter-mentioned tool asks “who”, “what,” “when”, “where” and “why”, as well as the converse, such as “why not”. Causes and non-causes are brainstormed before following a similar procedure as that of the cause-and-effect technique.

In the fourth step, members using the same tools or criteria collect relevant data. Data is then interpreted quantitatively or qualitatively. Solutions are sought using a variety of techniques such as Force Field Analysis, the Modified Delphi method and the Swapping technique.

Finally a cost-benefit analysis is carried out to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the solution and course of action taken. Continuous evaluation and monitoring is important and all members in the team must be facilitated to work together.

Hart (1992) mentions also the nominal group technique where the problem statement is defined, each member writes down ideas, discusses and then ranks the problems so that decision-making and planning can follow. The problem-solving cycle according to Hart is depicted as follows:

FIGURE 2.2: PROBLEM-SOLVING CYCLE (Adapted from Hart, 1992)



Not only is the problem-solving process analogous to that of decision-making, but it is also analogous to the process and art of resolving conflict and negotiating as here there are numerous problems that need to be solved. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.5.2.5 Conflict resolution

Before any attempt is made to resolve a conflict, the facilitator must be certain that conflict arises from substantive issues and not differences in personalities or obvious trivia. In such cases, a more personal approach is needed.

Fisher and Ury coined a term that is still applied today that assists facilitators to resolve conflict by focusing on mutual gains where possible or on an independent standard, being “hard on the merits, [but] soft on the people” (1991:xiv). This method of negotiation is termed principled negotiation and comprises four elements:

1. People must be separated from the problems. Emotions need to be acknowledged, but the conflict should not be based on individual traits.

Communication needs to be clear and consistent and perceptions of why people do and believe as they do must be accurately determined, not assumed.

2. Interests are emphasised, not positions, since the latter is based upon what one has decided, whilst the former indicates what caused one to decide. Interests usually reflect basic human needs, such as security, control or recognition. In emphasising interests, common ground can be found and members are encouraged to imagine from others' points of view.
3. Options for mutual gain are created through all members brainstorming as many options as possible.
4. Finally, objective criteria are applied to evaluate not only whether the goals were reached, but whether the outcomes (interests of the members) were met too.

Ury (1991) also describes useful steps to take when negotiating with difficult people, which, for this section, will be named the challenger. Ury states that, foremost, members, but especially the facilitator (in negotiator role), must show restraint in behaviour and focus on what is relevant. The challenger must be helped to regain mental balance through defusing negative emotions and listening actively. The competence and feelings of the challenger, as well as the facilitator must be acknowledged and members should search for agreement wherever possible.

The crucial point is when bargaining of positions is stopped and replaced with exploring ways to satisfy all interests. Problem-solving and open-ended questions are useful here although the power of silence is also most effective. Attacks should be ignored or reframed, assertions clarified and rules of the game negotiated, bringing any manipulatory attempts into the light.

Involving the challenger by asking for input, offering choices and satisfying unmet interests and basic needs leads to overcoming of scepticism. Important here is also to avoid hastening the process unnecessarily. After making it “easy to say yes”, the facilitator must make it “hard to say no”. The consequences of the challenger not agreeing must be made clear in a non-threatening manner. Mutual satisfaction is the objective and the challenger must be allowed to choose. Obtaining support from others is also of great benefit at this stage.

Ury also mentions that members need to overcome challenges to co-operation, including negative emotions and reactions, hampering habits, scepticism about the benefits of the agreement and perceived power.

It is possible that in a worst-case scenario, members may be requested to leave the team. This is always a last resort and should be made with great discretion. Apart from this, the attempt should always be to enable each member to experience validation, security and purpose in the team.

2.5.3 INTEGRATION WITH THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY AND ASSET-BASED APPROACH

All the skills mentioned above can only be effective in a transdisciplinary and asset-based team if the facilitator or facilitators possess the appropriate attitude and understanding of the principles underlying these two paradigms.

Appreciating the following facts will ensure that collaboration finds its epitome in the different processes discussed above:

- Every team member is a potential facilitator depending on the current need
- All members are equal participants and must be equally empowered.
- Roles need to be reversed and “the other point of view” is vital to the functioning of the team.
- Each has resources which can benefit the team (Moore & Rapmund, 2002)

- All support systems and networks around the particular client, as well as around the team must be incorporated in the team process.

More work and time therefore needs to be spent ensuring that everyone is heard and contributes in making decisions, solving problems and resolving conflict.

It is the responsibility of facilitators to continuously encourage the philosophy and practicality of the transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches and so sustain team members to take ownership of these approaches themselves. Only then can diversity, change and the team process in itself be effectively managed.

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

At the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that a synthesis of the study could only be attained after analysis of the parts. But, as gestalt theory teaches, the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts and so it is here. The question remains as to how facilitation skills would reveal themselves in a combined transdisciplinary and asset-based team. In order to draw inferences and eventually a comprehensive conclusion from the above-mentioned theoretical knowledge, a visual representation, based on my perspective and the references mentioned in this chapter, is depicted in Fig. 2.3.

Circular forms are used to imply a holistic approach throughout, with all participants to be on the same level of participation and of the same importance. This should avoid any hierarchy or a situation where some members of the group may be patronised. Outer circles represent various contextual systems as purported by Bronfenbrenner (in Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002) and mentioned in section 2.3.3. Briggs (1993, 1997) also reflects the view that existing systems thinking is essential for a transdisciplinary team to be effective.

The inner circle, representing the gestalt of the team where rules and consensus generate cohesion, is drawn with a broken line. This implies an attitude of open-mindedness and flexibility as well as avoiding engendering group think (Johnson & Johnson, 1997, in Smit, 2004) or a situation where the team thinks as a whole.

This would therefore prevent a spirit of rigidity and unwillingness to transform. These were considered important in the effectiveness of a team by authors such as Rees (2001) and Briggs (1993). It also allows for flexible boundaries and thus role release in a transdisciplinary team (Briggs, 1997).

Each team member is represented by concentric circles reflecting that each lives in, influences and is influenced by his or her own microsystem of assets and levels of systems. Each member is represented similar in structure, to confirm commonality, but also different in colour, to maintain and validate the uniqueness of each member, as well as their allocated roles or personalities for that particular team or case situation. As different members could take on the role of facilitator, depending on their training and the appropriateness to the situation, the role of the facilitator appears similar to that of other members. The shading and lines of the facilitator-role differs to emphasise the facilitation skills in use, i.e. managing, communicating and facilitating consensual decisions and mutually beneficial negotiations.

One team member is connected by a loose but single-connected line to the centre of the team circle, (star), amongst all the arrows, and then again to one of the other team members. This represents the client, caregiver and/or family. It reminds one that the team is family-centred and that the priorities and decision-making of the concerned caregiver needs to be ultimately considered and respected. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the asset-based approach is characterised, amongst others, by the fact that it is relationship driven and internally focussed. This member is, however, structurally similar to denote equal potential. From this centre, the caregiver is firmly, yet flexibly connected to another team member who acts as the service provider or coordinator. Such a person is important in ensuring that the decisions made in the team are implemented adequately, again a characteristic of the transdisciplinary team.

Each line of communication, information and exchange is represented as a double-arrowed line denoting two-way communication, collaborative negotiation, mutual understanding and trust and a channel for possible role release. The

collection of exchange arrows creates a seemingly chaotic, potentially conflict-provoking condition. With the effective application of facilitation skills, it can become a prolific environment for creativity, networking and effective team dynamics. Such a milieu for constructive conflict resolution is mentioned by Rees (2001) as important and enriching for a team

The broken lines radiating outward reflect the accessing of resources in the various systems and communities, as the asset-based approach encourages, as well as reflecting the releasing phase of a team (Jones, 2002), in which members reach out to the community surrounding the particular case and client. It presumes too, cultural sensitivity from the team members and a consciousness that is raised within the communities themselves. These lines radiate beyond the borders of the last system, implying capacity building (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), sustainability of influence that transcends the team, as well as an empowerment and development of the community.

In all, this model reflects the activation (creativity), participation and community building that a successful team should experience (White, 1999). Team members each have their own assets to offer to the team and are open to a transdisciplinary approach where they can learn from and teach each other.

It is with this conceptual framework in mind that the study investigates its relevance in empirical terms, through feedback on focus group interviews discussed in the Chapter Three.

2.7 CONCLUSION

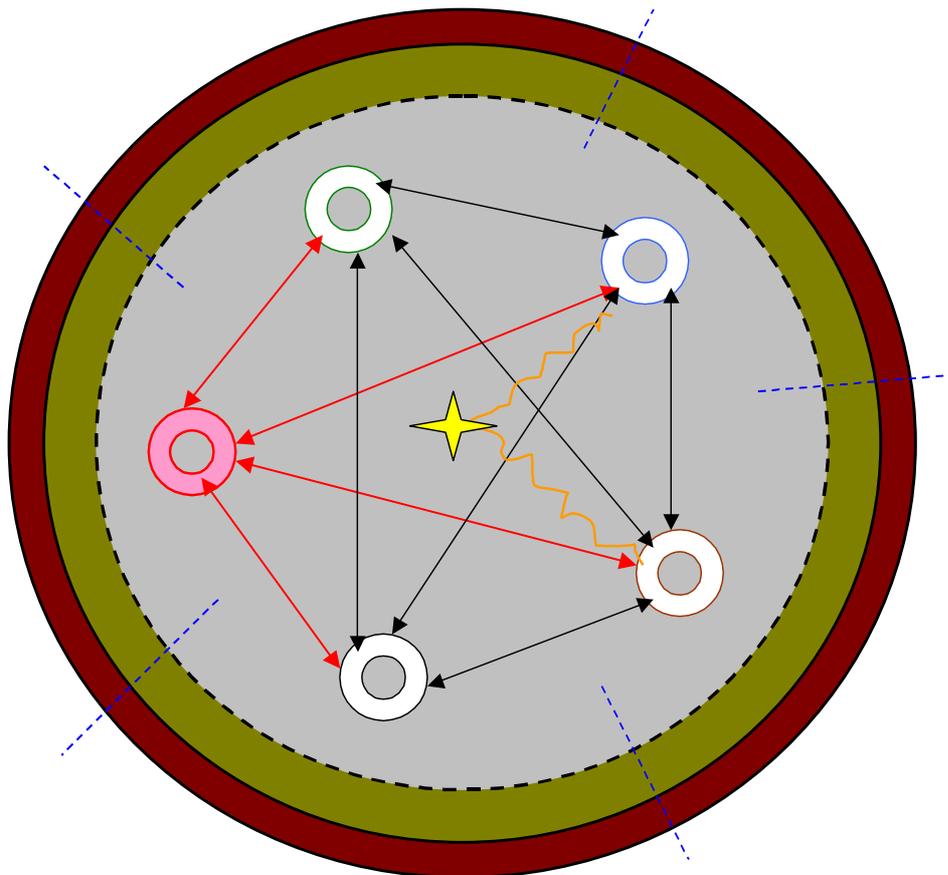
In this study I make the theoretical assumptions that: (1) facilitators are needed; (2) facilitation skills are imperative for the functioning of a team, especially one consisting of a variety of disciplines and (3) every member of a transdisciplinary team has the capacity to facilitate and be trained in these skills.

Health service members belonging to an asset-based and transdisciplinary team need to assimilate therefore two novel approaches, and then, not only into their

assessment and intervention, but also in their interaction with each other. In such situations, client needs are recognised while simultaneously their strengths and resources are appreciated and utilised. Caregivers are encouraged to contribute in the decisions and processes of the team as role reversal and transition takes place. Throughout the process, a spirit of collaboration and mutual accountability is sustained.

The conceptual framework is thus firmly established in this chapter, revealing the interesting complexities of a team working transdisciplinary and asset-based, as well as elucidating the facilitation skills necessary to make this teamwork effective. In the following chapter the paradigm, methodology, design, ethics and trustworthiness of the research study will be discussed.

FIGURE 2.3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PLAN OF RESEARCH

No soul on this road is such a giant
that it does not need to become a child at the breast again.
For there is no state however sublime,
in which it is not necessary often to go back to the beginning.

(Teresa of Avilla)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the backdrop to this study as well as a detailed literature review has been supplied in the previous two chapters, the process in researching the themes mentioned, in a way fitting of qualitative research, remains outstanding. In this chapter, the design and methodology of the research study, as well as the ethical implications accompanying it, will, amongst others, be discussed. In so doing I hope that the reader will come to appreciate the lens through which the research is studied. This should allow the reader to attain a clear understanding of the facilitation skills in asset-based and transdisciplinary teamwork.

The statement of intent steering this study is formulated as exploratory and descriptive questions to investigate and describe the facilitation skills in transdisciplinary teamwork that could inform asset-based theory. The study will therefore attempt to reach this purpose through exploration, interpretation, construction and description of meanings.

3.2 CONTEXT OF INQUIRY

As mentioned in Chapter One, this study originated in the collaborative project on Early Childhood Intervention in which various disciplines and stakeholders participated, including myself as one of the representatives of the Educational Psychology department. Two fairly innovative perspectives, namely the asset-

based and transdisciplinary approaches were introduced and emphasised as key elements to include in the new MSc course.

Although team building and problem solving were included as core modules in the above-mentioned degree course, the Educational Psychology representatives, as authors of one of the elective modules, believed that more knowledge needed to be imparted on these and other issues.

There is a plethora of resources on how to facilitate teams, but information on the skills specifically necessary to facilitate asset-based transdisciplinary teams still needs to be generated. This limitation in the theoretical body of knowledge regarding asset-based theory stimulated work on this subject for both the MSc course and consequently this study.

Individuals participating in a transdisciplinary team that is asset-based in perspective have to adjust not just to one, but two novel approaches. Not only would the phases of assessment and intervention have to be radically transformed to adapt to these approaches, but the steps between assessing and intervening, i.e. communicating, collaborating and jointly implementing, to name a few, would have to be appropriately elucidated and practised.

Unlike earlier health service groups, this new team ideally transcends the needs of the client to emphasise their strengths; enables equal access of and expects more contribution from caregivers to the decisions and processes of the team. It contains formally defined disciplines, but informal rules on traversing their borders and, in all of this, a spirit of collaboration and humility.

For such diverse ways of thinking and working, one would need an individual skilled in facilitating these ways and with an understanding surpassing that of team dynamics and processes. The following section elucidates the aim of this study within the context of an interpretative epistemology and qualitative approach.

3.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY

From the previous section it can therefore be inferred that the purpose of this study is to explore and describe the facilitation skills conducive to asset-based transdisciplinary teams. According to Babbie (1992), exploration can offer a better understanding of and yield new inputs into a topic. Through exploration and description of data, meanings are interpreted and constructed.

Through the comprehensive literature review of the previous chapter, as well as the meticulous transcription, analysis, reducing, coding, categorising and controlling of the focus group interviews, data gathered will be described in detail. To satisfy the objectives of explorative and descriptive study as mentioned in Chapter One and by Mouton and Marais (1990:43), the new concepts and approaches of transdisciplinary and asset-based will be explained and illustrated in order to effect new insight and perspective.

The study also looks at sub-aims to:

- Determine and elaborate on the reasons for the need to identify facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teams, i.e. the reason for this study.
- Identify which facilitation skills are appropriate in asset-based transdisciplinary teams.

The statement of intent steering this study therefore concerns the informing of asset-based theory through the exploration of facilitation skills in transdisciplinary teamwork. In addition to this, the theoretical assumptions made in this study include the supposition that facilitators are needed, facilitation skills are imperative for the functioning of a multi-disciplined group, and every member of a transdisciplinary team has the potential to facilitate and be trained in these skills. This study intends to inform the research body of knowledge regarding asset-based theory by describing possible means of facilitating transdisciplinary teams that ascribe to an asset-based approach. This will be done by exploring and describing the facilitation skills conducive to the said team environment and

processes. Contributing theoretically to the lack of knowledge regarding this matter could, it is hoped, not only enhance asset-based theory, but also play a part in the practical and effective implementation of these skills.

3.4 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

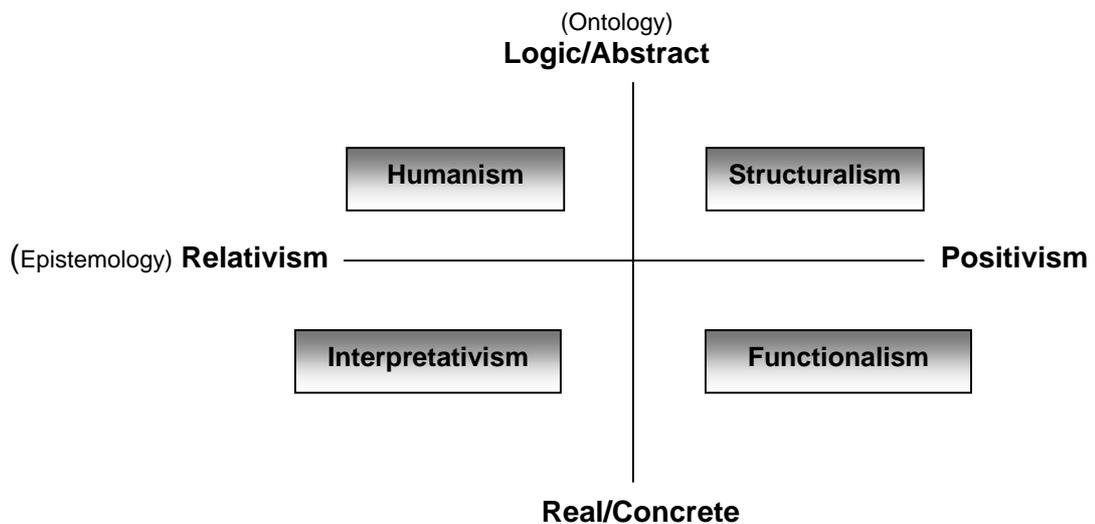
3.4.1 EPISTEMOLOGY (META-THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS)

Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002:131) state that the interpretative lens through which the study was carried out presumes that “people’s subjective experiences are real (ontology), that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology).”

Based on that and on Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) diagram in Figure 3.1 (p.61), this study assumes the paradigm of interpretativism. Therefore, knowledge is understood through relative observation and interpretation and reality is interpreted in a concrete manner, but not predicted or controlled (Schurink, 1998).

The intention of this study is to understand and interpret meanings as they are revealed in interviews and literature. This understanding of understanding, or *Verstehen* (Dilthey in Schwandt, 2000), is best understood in context, i.e. not only to understand the meanings, but also the context in which those meanings are expressed. This is sometimes also named ‘empathic identification’ (Schwandt, 2000:192) when, for example, the researcher attempts to understand the intentions of the author of a text or speaking participant in a focus group interview, as in this study.

FIGURE 3.1: RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGIES AND ONTOLOGIES (Adapted from Burrell & Morgan, 1979)



According to Schwandt (2000: 193), the tradition of interpretativism includes the following assumptions:

- Human action is meaningful
- There is an ethical commitment to respect and be faithful to the life world
- There is a desire to emphasise the contribution of human subjectivity of knowledge without forgoing its objectivity.

Schwandt (1998:249) states that “the future of interpretivist perceptions rests on individuals being comfortable with the blurring of lines between the science and the art of interpretation...” Through especially the focus group interviews, I hope to make it clear that I do respect and value the life world or experiences and thoughts shared by the participants. In addition to this, apart from what is found through trustworthy research in terms of literature control, I believe that these subjective contributions are vital in interpreting and revealing the meanings of facilitation skills in an asset based transdisciplinary team.

Not inconsistent with the interpretative approach, the ecological paradigm also lends itself towards this study. Complementing the asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches, where systems thinking and the application of

multiple perspectives are important respectively, the ecological paradigm views reality as a gestalt and purports that research be undertaken in cooperation with participants and other researchers (Schurink, 1998:247). As will be explained later in this chapter, data was gathered from multiple sources and its interpretation controlled by two independent coders, one making use of Atlas-Ti software analysis and the other manually searching for emerging themes, as well as by the interview participants themselves. The conceptual framework illustrated and described in the previous chapter can therefore be compared to the findings made.

3.4.2 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, the theoretical assumptions of this study are based on information gathered from literature, specifically on the asset-based approach, the transdisciplinary model, and theories on teamwork and facilitation skills.

The asset-based approach focuses on strengths rather than on limitations, empowering people to work collaboratively in searching for solutions to challenging situations. The transdisciplinary perspective is not only an exchange of resources and assets, in expertise and knowledge, but also refers to a release of one's own role in the team at some stages to assume the role of another discipline and function as well as to support other members in doing the same.

These new approaches could result in effectively interactive teamwork if there is successful facilitation through management, communication, decision-making, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills. Members are encouraged in the training of team roles, processes and principles, as well as in the mentioned approaches. In so doing each member is not only capable of facilitating, but expected to do so interchangeably if this is what the situation calls for.

From the theoretical assumptions, a conceptual framework was created and graphically represented in fig. 2.3. It reflects a holistic approach where all members of an asset-based and transdisciplinary team, although unique in what

they can contribute, are presumed to be on the same level of participation and importance. Contextual systems are also deemed necessary indicating a need to understand individuals and situations within their milieu, as well as a need to sensitively utilise the resources and assets available from such environments so as to build and sustain capacities and empower individuals. A spirit of openness, adaptability and collaboration is encouraged.

These are theoretical assumptions made for this study which will be investigated against the empirical research. Such research has been conducted qualitatively as will be explained in the following section.

3.4.3 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The approach adopted for the research design in this study is qualitative in nature, making use specifically of the instrumental case study. Consistent with this study, Schurink (1998:241) describes qualitative research as containing the following:

- An interpretative and inductive approach, seeking to understand rather than explain or control phenomena
- Regard for reality as subjective
- Concepts in the form of themes and categories, rather than quantitative variables
- Data as words and quotes rather than figures
- Flexible research design evolving throughout the research process
- Emphasis on holism, context and relationships.

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding where the researcher builds a holistic image from the findings, analysing words and reporting in detail the views of participants (Cresswell, 1998:15). This involves the participants in the design and implementation of the research (Skinner, 2002:282). In qualitative research, and in this study, the values expressed by interview participants and authors of texts are not only acknowledged, but also used in the understanding and interpreting of meanings.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The instrumental case study has been selected as the research design for this study and takes the form of groups of transdisciplinary team members. The case study is described as both a process and product of an inquiry (Stake, 2000), emphasising the evolving nature of qualitative research and corresponding to the exploratory and descriptive approaches, as well as inductive interpretation suitable to this study.

Stake (2000) furthermore describes the purpose of the instrumental case to provide greater insights into an issue or improve a theoretical explanation. The case becomes secondary to the research interests, supporting the researcher to better understand the research question, as well as to reveal how the concerns of researchers and theorists in general are manifested in the case. In this study the cases refer to groups of transdisciplinary team members and the research question is concerned with exploring and describing the facilitation skills conducive to transdisciplinary and asset-based teamwork. The acquisition of such knowledge is intended to inform and develop greater insight into asset-based theory and is therefore appropriate to the research question. The design also complements the epistemology of this study, namely interpretativism, where the aim is to understand the knowledge acquiesced and make meaning of interpretations from the reality of others.

The issues of a case study reflect usually complex relationships and therefore stimulate input from ordinary experience as well as from “the language and understanding of the common disciplines of knowledge” (Stake, 2000:440). This applies to this study in the extent to which transdisciplinary team members make use of ordinary experience to help facilitate the team processes and how this compares to the knowledge of the literature elucidated in the previous chapter, derived from disciplines mainly in the social sciences.

Other strengths of this research design (Donmoyer, 2000; Stake, 2000; Berg, 2001) include:

- High construct validity and in-depth insights, enabling rapport with participants
- Refinement of theory and encouragement of hypotheses and later studies
- Accessibility to unique situations
- Allows for researcher's (and thus different) perspective
- Bridging of gap between preliminary studies and practice
- Establishment of limits of generalisability.

Complementary to the diversity of the transdisciplinary approach, the empirical case study is hybrid in nature and flexible in structure (Mouton, 2001:149). It can also facilitate the interpretative epistemology in that “both researcher and reader bring their conceptual constructs” to the research (Stake, 2000:442), thus reconstructing knowledge for themselves. Case study designs that are constructive to research also demand reflective researchers and in this study, I aim to continuously deliberate, challenge, revise and verify my impressions during the process by referring interpretations and emerging themes to independent coders (using Atlas-Ti software analysis and the process of emerging themes) and to the participants for appraisal. I will also constantly reflect on the influence of my viewpoints, motives and preconceptions on the research process and findings.

The instrumental case study does have its limitations too however. Due to the fact that the researcher must take many subjective decisions, objective results and findings cannot be readily made (Berg, 2001). In interpretive study, one rather strives and rejoices in multiple, subjective realities. Case studies have also been criticised for possessing a low degree of structure (Mouton, 2001). These characteristics are actually favourable to the study as they complement the interpretative approach followed and allows both myself and the reader to bring our own conceptual structures to the study and form our own meanings out of the findings. Finally, applying a case study in research limits the possibility of generalisation. The instrumental case study however, aims rather to provide insight into an issue or at most refine a theoretical explanation, as the asset-based theory in this situation. Stake (2000:448) encapsulates this by stating that

the aim of a case study report “is not to represent the world, but to represent the case.” Through the detailed transcripts, coding, categorising and verifying of the focus group interviews, I believe that I have sufficiently done this.

3.6 METHODOLOGY

3.6.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive selection was employed for this study as it was believed to be an effective means in obtaining “elements which contain[ed] the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population”, (Strydom & De Vos, 1998:198), i.e. of the asset-based transdisciplinary team.

Individuals directly or indirectly involved in the collaborative project on Early Childhood Intervention, mentioned earlier, were selected based on their availability, but foremost, on their knowledge and experiences of the conceptual parameters, namely the transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches. One of the participants had already been working in a transdisciplinary team for two years at the time of the focus group interview and was able to provide first-hand practical knowledge. Such a selection of participants therefore also ensured greater transferability in the study in that it provided much descriptive data for comparison (Poggenpoel, 1998) and motivates further research to explore similarities in other situations.

Participants were contacted personally and/or telephonically and received invitations via electronic mail (Addendum A) in which the purpose of the study was explicated. In addition to this, participants received a form (Addendum B) stating the question to be discussed at the focus group interviews, as well as the assumed existing knowledge. The form was written from the standpoint that this information would be used in the creation of the elective module for the new MSc course. Participants were requested to ponder on the points mentioned before arriving for the interviews.

As mentioned in section 3.4, one of the apparent shortcomings of an instrumental case study, is the fact that many subjective decisions are taken by the researcher. Similarly, in selecting the participants, purposive sampling was chosen since this was the only way I could ensure that the population represented the criteria of transdisciplinary teams using an asset-based approach. Since these concepts are still relatively new among the health service professionals, it was important to include people who were familiar with, and if possible, implementing the meanings of these concepts.

3.6.2 DATA GATHERING

Data access was possible to an extent already before the commencement of the study. Due to my involvement in the collaborative project in Early Childhood Intervention, I developed an understanding of the concepts of transdisciplinary and asset-based and was introduced to people from a variety of disciplines. This not only helped me gain access to knowledgeable participants for my research, but has added value to the interpretative epistemology of the study. Data was therefore primarily accessed from focus group interviews through self-reporting, field notes, transcripts and interpretations thereof (Addendums C, E, F, G). In addition, as Chapter Two testifies, information was also gathered through a comprehensive literature review.

Self-reporting through focus group interviews was used as the main method for gathering data in this study. Based on the works of Greenbaum (2000), Morgan (1997) and Schurink *et al.* (1998), a focus group can be defined as a research technique that gathers data on a particular topic through purposive group interaction from group members having similar backgrounds, interests or psychographics. The focus is based on the interests of the researcher and a moderator or guide who facilitates and channels discussions without forcing the group into a preset mould.

This method was used firstly because it complemented the conceptual parameters of this study, namely the transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches. The two focus group interviews conducted comprised various

disciplines willing to share their knowledge, expertise and experiences (assets) and learn from each other (role expansion). In Table 3.1 these disciplines were organised, according to availability, as follows:

TABLE 3.1: DISCIPLINES INVOLVED IN FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

DISCIPLINES	FOCUS GROUP
Parent of mainstreamed child with disability	Focus group 1
Communication Pathology	Focus group 1 & 2
Educational Psychology	Focus group 1
Occupational Therapy	Focus group 1
Physiotherapy	Focus group 1
Nursing Science	Focus group 2
Social Work	Focus group 2

Two focus group interview sessions were held as the number of individuals willing to participate called for this. It also became evident that the data gathered from the two sessions was similar in many respects and saturation point (Morgan, 1997:43) was therefore thought to have been reached.

In addition to that mentioned in Chapter one, Schurink *et al.* (1998: 314, 324) and Barbour and Kritzing (1999) reveal some characteristics and benefits of focus group interviews that are conducive to this study. Focus groups are socially orientated by nature and stimulate interaction, allowing for participants to generate their own questions or discuss new concepts and concerns. They can therefore enhance the gathering of qualitative information. Being usually small in the number of members, as well as homogenous in at least one respect, discussion flows easily and in-depth insights can be shared. The participants are however not similar in all respects and offer diversity through their differences.

Focus groups are flexible, yet focused in process and structure, allow the moderators to probe and stimulate participants to respond and build on the comments of each other, revealing a kaleidoscope of perspectives. This lends itself to the interpretative paradigm of understanding meanings through interaction and acknowledgement of subjective experiences.

In comparison to participant observation, the focus group interview is able to observe a lot of interaction in a short space of time, increasing efficiency (Morgan, 1997:9). It is however not as naturalistic as participant observation and attempts should be made, as was done in this study, to make the interview setting as physically and psychologically comfortable and safe as possible.

Although individual interviews can boast having a higher degree of control and more time to share per participant than in focus groups, the latter has the advantage of flexibility to encourage greater involvement and interaction between group members and thus assist in research exploration. Focus groups can sometimes offer more rigour to a study as sharing is often easier in the safety of numbers in a group (Greenbaum, 2000:19). Novel and refreshing ideas are readily born in a group milieu and, unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups have the benefit of team dynamics, so crucial to this study.

Focus group interviews have potential weaknesses (Schurink *et al.*, 1998:324), some of which have been addressed in the comparisons to participant observation and individual interviews. In addition to these, focus groups are sometimes not able to recruit enough or as varied a group of participants, as was the case in the second interview conducted in this study. This resulted because participants were not available.

Although the typical size of a focus group is between six and ten individuals, Morgan states (1997:42) that it is not a fixed rule and greatly depends on the predicted activity or contribution of the participants, as well as level of manageability. Although a small size of the group runs the risk of being less productive, it can work well if participants show respect towards each other and are interested in the topic. The two focus group interviews conducted in this study consisted of five and three members respectively. Although typically small, all participants showed immense interest in the topic at hand. Most were acquainted with each other to a greater or lesser degree and felt comfortable to challenge each other with respect and express value for each other's role and

contribution. Each group was also moderated to ensure focus, communication, co-ordination and frequent reflection.

Morgan (1997:44) further mentions that the number of focus group interviews, although usually between three and five, decreases with a higher variability of participants and structure of the group. In this study, participants were varied and interviews were efficiently moderated. In the two focus group interviews conducted for this study, participants were familiar with the collaborative project of Early Childhood Intervention and thus to the transdisciplinary and asset-based models. They were diverse in their disciplines and backgrounds, enabling an array of perspectives.

In a focus group, there is also potential for subjectivity and bias in the analysis of data generated from the interviews. In this study, however, an interpretative metatheory is adopted and generalisation or validity is not presumed to be the ultimate goal of the research. In section 3.7 of this chapter the related issue of trustworthiness will be addressed.

Data gathered from the focus group interviews were documented in the form of transcriptions (Addendum E) from audiotape and videotape recordings, as well as field notes written by myself and obtained with permission from the participants (Addendum C). As presented in the previous chapter, data was also accessed through textual analysis.

Applying the work of Silverman (2001), I wish to summarise the mentioned methodologies by highlighting their relevance and applicability from a qualitative perspective. Interviews as a method in qualitative research are characterised with open-ended questions which stimulate interaction instead of being used purely for factual and survey purposes. Should audio or video recordings be made, for example of such interviews, the aim of the recordings is then mainly to understand the discourse and behaviours of the participants involved rather than to merely obtain accurate records. Finally, textual analysis as opposed to content analysis strives not only to identify the categories existing, but primarily to come to an understanding of such categories and attach meaning to them.

It is also worth noting that Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002:134) state that, in interpretative research, the researcher himself or herself is the main instrument for both data gathering and analysis. It is therefore evident from the above, that the aim in conducting this qualitative research study is foremost, to understand, interpret and make meaning of what could possibly be ideal skills to apply in transdisciplinary and asset-based teams, and to thus inform asset-based theory.

3.6.3 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Poggenpoel (1998: 336), data analysis makes use of various reasoning strategies, including analysis, synthesis, inductive reasoning, bracketing and intuiting.

In this study, transcripts were analysed into codes, then built up or synthesised into categories and themes. This was done inductively, starting from vague suppositions, finding relationships and patterns and arriving eventually at a conceptual framework of the data. As far as it could be achieved analysis was performed through intuiting or intense concentration on phenomena and with an open context, being influenced as little as possible by preconceived ideas.

The approach undertaken in this study is based on the qualitative approach of Tesch (1990) integrated into that of Marshall and Rossman (1989:112-120) and is interpreted and simplistically represented in process as Addendum D. Before describing this graphic diagram, a brief discussion of each of these approaches will be presented.

Applied as an overall framework to the data analysis process in this study, Marshall and Rossman maintain that comprehending, synthesising, theorising and recontextualising are important. Transcripts of the interviews, as well as field notes obtained were studied and coded, sensitive to underlying meanings. Categories are analysed, sorted and synthesised to represent relationships and similarities. In theorising alternative explanations are constructed and the perspectives and inputs of others, such as independent coders and participants, are incorporated. Although developing an emerging theory, i.e.

recontextualisation, is not the objective of this study, the conclusions made from the research can, through literature control, be related to other contributions, enabling the development of a conceptual framework.

To supplement the approach of Marshall and Rossman (1989) and Tesch (1990) provides detailed suggestions on how to analyse and arrange the emerging themes. These were applied in this case in order to reach coherent categories. Transcriptions were read first from a holistic point of view and ideas noted. The first interview was then studied in detail and a list of possible topics compiled, clustered and placed into columns arranged into major and unique topics, as well as leftovers. Topics are coded and written at the appropriate places of the transcript texts. Some new categories emerged although the aim was to ultimately reduce all categories into succinct groups and show any interrelationships. Categories were then abbreviated and codes alphabetised. As final control to determine any possible recoding needed, segments of the transcripts are arranged according to the categories and analysed once more.

Therefore, in the graphic diagram of Addendum D mentioned, data gathered from the two focus group interviews is clustered, coded and categorised, moving from a holistic to analytic perspective as Tesch (1990) purports. Two independent coders, making use of Atlas-Ti software analysis and manual searching of emerging themes, offered other alternatives and controlled this. Hereafter, the categories were forwarded to the participants of the focus group interviews for verification and comment (see Addendum F). Categories were compared and related to information in terms of literature control, complementing Marshall and Rossman's testing of suppositions against alternative explanations and theories. The final stage relates to that of Tesch where relationships and patterns are found and created respectively. Although final categories can be identified, the pattern is always open to change and adjustment from the interpretations of others.

As will become evident and as explained in section 3.7, the afore-mentioned process acts as an effective measure to ensure rigour in the study, improving its trustworthiness.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations regarding ethics are made based on the work of Strydom (1998:24-33):

3.7.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND DECEPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants were provided with information, via electronic mail in the form of an invitation letter and form, as well as through hard copy of the said form at the onset of the interview. They took cognisance of the fact that the proceedings would be recorded and did not object. Participants were therefore never deceived with regard to the purpose, process and consequences of the study.

3.7.2 PRIVACY

The identities of the participants who took part in the focus group interviews were not disclosed in this study. Any information obtained from them, through the audio and video recordings and/or field notes, was managed in confidence and with their consent.

3.7.3 COOPERATION WITH COLLABORATORS

All participants were directly or indirectly involved in the collaborative project on early Childhood Intervention and were therefore already collaborators with the Educational Psychology department. This research study formed part of the creation of the elective module of the MSc course to which all of the members, except for the parent, were also contributing.

3.7.4 ACTION AND COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHER

Although not trained in the facilitation of asset-based transdisciplinary teams, since, *inter alia*, facilitation skills in this specific context are being explored in this study, I do consider myself competent to conduct the research. I am a Masters student and registered intern in Educational Psychology and formed part of the team that was commissioned to compile one of the elective modules in the new MSc course in Early Childhood Intervention. I monitored my own competence in

this study by means of reflections. Based on this and on my experience, though limited, of facilitating groups both in professional and amateur capacity, I believe my experience is adequate for this task. In addition, a senior lecturer and doctor in educational psychology constantly supervised the study and focus group interviews.

3.7.5 RELEASE AND PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS

Provisional categories induced from the transcripts by myself and two independent coders were e-mailed to the participants for verification and/or comments (Addendum F). It is also envisioned that findings from this study may be published in an article for the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Should this occur, all participants will be notified.

3.7.6 FEEDBACK

Stake (2000:227) mentions that offering feedback to participants is important, especially in the form of “drafts revealing how they are presented, quoted and interpreted”. In this study transcripts of the focus group interviews were made available to the participants and they will be informed of any possible future publication regarding this research.

3.8 MEASURES TO ENSURE RIGOUR IN STUDY: QUALITY CRITERIA

3.8.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Guba’s model of trustworthiness is widely used by qualitative researchers (Botes, 2000:188-197) and is applied using the four criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Poggenpoel, 1998), which, within an interpretative paradigm, are described below.

3.8.1.1 Credibility

Perhaps the most important criterion of qualitative research, credibility challenges the confidence of the researcher with the truth of the findings based on the

research design, participants and context. It is subject-orientated and in this study is reflected through the various realities and subjective experiences of the participants involved. Strong credibility was ensured through the method of data analysis applied, in which multiple perspectives were considered. This included respondent validation, in which findings were interrelated with and supported by literature control.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe several techniques that can increase the probability of credibility, i.e. an isomorphism between the constructed realities of the participants and those attributed to them by the researcher. These techniques include peer debriefing, member checks and progressive subjectivity. Peer debriefing, “the process of engaging with a disinterested peer in extended and extensive discussions of one’s findings, conclusions [and] tentative analyses” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:237) was made possible through the use of two independent coders who compared findings with those I made (using Atlas-Ti software analysis). I also presented my provisional findings at the 2003 Research Indaba of the faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. This challenged my values and role in the research and helped test any working assumptions. By providing feedback of the provisional findings to the participants, assumptions, data and categories were also tested. This enabled me to assess the intent of the participants in the transcriptions, correct any errors of interpretation and receive any additional information from the participants which may be important to the study.

Progressive subjectivity was realised by reflecting the way I viewed the study and developing constructions. Included in this was the recording of my expectations or “piori constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:238) before the study commenced and continuously reflect on these during the research process. (Addendum G)

3.8.1.2 Transferability

As mentioned before, this study does not aim to generalise the findings of the research to larger populations, although it does attempt to inform the asset-based theory. This, however, does not make this criterion irrelevant to qualitative

research and consequently to this research study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in Poggenpoel (1998:349) note that transferability is attained if there is sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison. Through two focus group interviews, in which participants from various disciplines offered input during and after the focus group interviews, insights from two independent coders, as well as an abundance of literature references, I believe that enough was presented in this study to offer comparison and stimulate further investigation. This is mentioned in the recommendations of the final chapter. Furthermore, Berg (2001:232) states that, in case studies, if one accepts that human behaviour is predictable to a large degree, then that research has “scientific value” and can be transferred to an extent.

Guba and Lincoln (1989:241) state that for generalisability, the “burden of proof is on the inquirer”, whilst for transferability, it is “on the receiver”, i.e. the participants and readers. Through extensive descriptions of the study and transcripts and input from independent coders as well as, most importantly, the participants themselves, the claim for transferability in this study can therefore be made.

3.8.1.3 Dependability

This depends on whether the findings would be the same if the study was replicated with the same participants or in a similar context and is based on a quantitative approach that assumes a single reality. Apart from the fact that this study may have consistency and applicability being based on that mentioned in the previous paragraph, qualitative research assumes multiple realities, thus making the notion of reliability not as relevant to this interpretivist study.

3.8.1.4 Confirmability

Freedom from bias, contradicts the interpretative approach where the motives and values of the researcher play a part in the research process. However, I strove to make findings mainly a function of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives. I also believe that my influence on this study was not prejudiced to the point of making the

findings and conclusions unacceptable. If not in the researcher, confirmability in the data itself is at least possible when the credibility and transferability are strengthened. It is also relevant to include at this stage the sentiments of Weber, a sociologist as cited in Silverman (2001:270), who believed that all research is “contaminated” to some extent by the values and beliefs of the researcher and that only through those very values can problems be identified and implications deliberated.

3.8.2 DESIGN SHORTCOMINGS

The limitations of the research design and process have been intermittently mentioned throughout this chapter. In overview, however, they concentrated mainly on the trustworthiness of this study as an interpretative and qualitative study, as well as on the number and structure of the focus group interviews.

With regard to the rigour of the study, this has been explained in the previous section, mentioning that, because of its nature, this research assumes multiple realities and considers subjective experiences to be trustworthy.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter reiterated the purpose and philosophy of the study and continued to describe and explain the research design and methods of gathering and analysing data. Ethical considerations were discussed and the trustworthiness of the research was challenged.

In the following chapter, the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations will be elucidated.

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CHAPTER FOUR DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

If I hadn't believed it, I wouldn't have seen it.

Lyle Lloyd (Purdue University)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results of the research and presents them within the context of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the facilitation skills conducive to asset-based, transdisciplinary teams. The subsequent units of meaning derived from the exploration will therefore be discussed and interpreted as findings with the aid of excerpts from focus groups and in terms of literature control.

4.2 CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH UNDERSTANDINGS AND SOLUTIONS EMERGED

As has been mentioned this study was driven by the aim to inform asset-based theory with regard to the facilitation of transdisciplinary teams. This can be especially relevant within the health service professions as has been remarked in Chapters One and Three.

Literature cued me with possible skills and principles needed in facilitating teamwork. However, valuable data was collected from focus group meetings consisting of participants who had in-depth knowledge and/or experience of transdisciplinary and asset-based teamwork.

Due to my involvement in the formation of the MSc course in Early Childhood Intervention, I was able to network among persons from various disciplines and backgrounds who are familiar with and involved in the afore-mentioned teams. Drawing on their experience and expertise, and comparing it with literature I was

able to procure, I felt confident that trustworthy information concerning the facilitation of such unique teams could be obtained.

4.3 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Information was gathered mainly through the use of focus group interviews and field notes. By applying purposive selection in my research design I ensured that individuals relevant to the purpose of the study participated.

Attempts were made to include an even greater variety of disciplines in the focus group meetings. However, because of practical and time constraints, not all members invited were able to participate on the set dates. The size of the focus groups, five and three members in the first and second groups respectively, was relatively small. At least an hour of constructive discussions for each of the two interviews was obtained. Through the viewing of video and listening to audio recordings, these interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The approach of Marshall and Rossman (1989) was applied as an overall framework to the data analysis process in this study, whereby the four steps of comprehending, synthesising, theorising and recontextualising, as mentioned in Chapter Three, were integrated into the more detailed procedure of Tesch described in the following section.

The data analysis approach of Tesch (1990) was used. The transcriptions of the two interviews were first read to obtain an overall understanding and to jot down ideas. Categories were then identified and written in the margins of the transcript documents, where after they were transferred into two columns on a sheet, one column for each interview. Similar categories were clustered and relevant labels created. These were then again transferred into three columns, showing major topics, unique topics and leftovers. Using codes to represent the categories, the data from each interview transcript was again read and then coded. This helped reorganise and reword the categories and subcategories compiled until then. Recurring themes and topics were noted and similar topics were again linked. Data material belonging to each category was assembled and analysed for

possible commonalities, confusions and contradictions. (See Addendum H for example of data analysis).

Transcripts of the two interviews were also given to two independent coders who studied and categorised the topics. One coder used the Atlas.Ti software analysis programme while the other worked through the transcripts manually, using emerging themes. All three sets of interpretations were discussed and agreement was reached as to what the most appropriate categories could be.

In addition to the afore-mentioned, I studied and integrated my own field notes as well as those of the participants (see Addendum C) and was continuously monitoring myself on what I had experienced and observed, as well as on the research process itself. Based on this and on the theoretical knowledge acquired while researching literature on this study, patterns began to emerge and I concluded that the categories could be clustered into three themes.

Inductive reasoning is characteristic of qualitative research where concepts are eventually linked to a conceptual framework and/or supported by literature or theoretical perspectives (Botes, 2000:102-115). In this study inductive reasoning was used to infer constructs from particular empirical observations in the transcripts and field notes. However the application of deductive reasoning cannot be denied in this process. Since this study follows the interpretative epistemology, it implies, as has been mentioned, that I interpret the findings in the context of my and others' perceptions, background, personality and experiences. This includes my experiences in reviewing literature, as well as the influence of interacting with the participants and being exposed to their interpretations. I therefore approached the data with certain preconceptions, which influenced the manner in which I reached conclusions about the categories and themes. The process of reasoning inductively as well as deductively is not uncommon to research. It is in fact purported that the essence is "...its process of thinking and that process entails systematic inductive-deductive reasoning" (Graziano, 2000:37).

The themes, categories and subcategories discussed in the following section continuously overlap and could be integrated into one unified set of characteristics possessed and utilised by a facilitator. For the sake of clarity, however, these will be examined separately. It should also be mentioned that, although these characteristics pertain to the facilitator of a team, in a transdisciplinary team, such a person could be any stakeholder of the team and so these qualities could and are applied to all team members.

A synoptic view of the themes which emerged is represented in the Figure 4.1 (p.82).

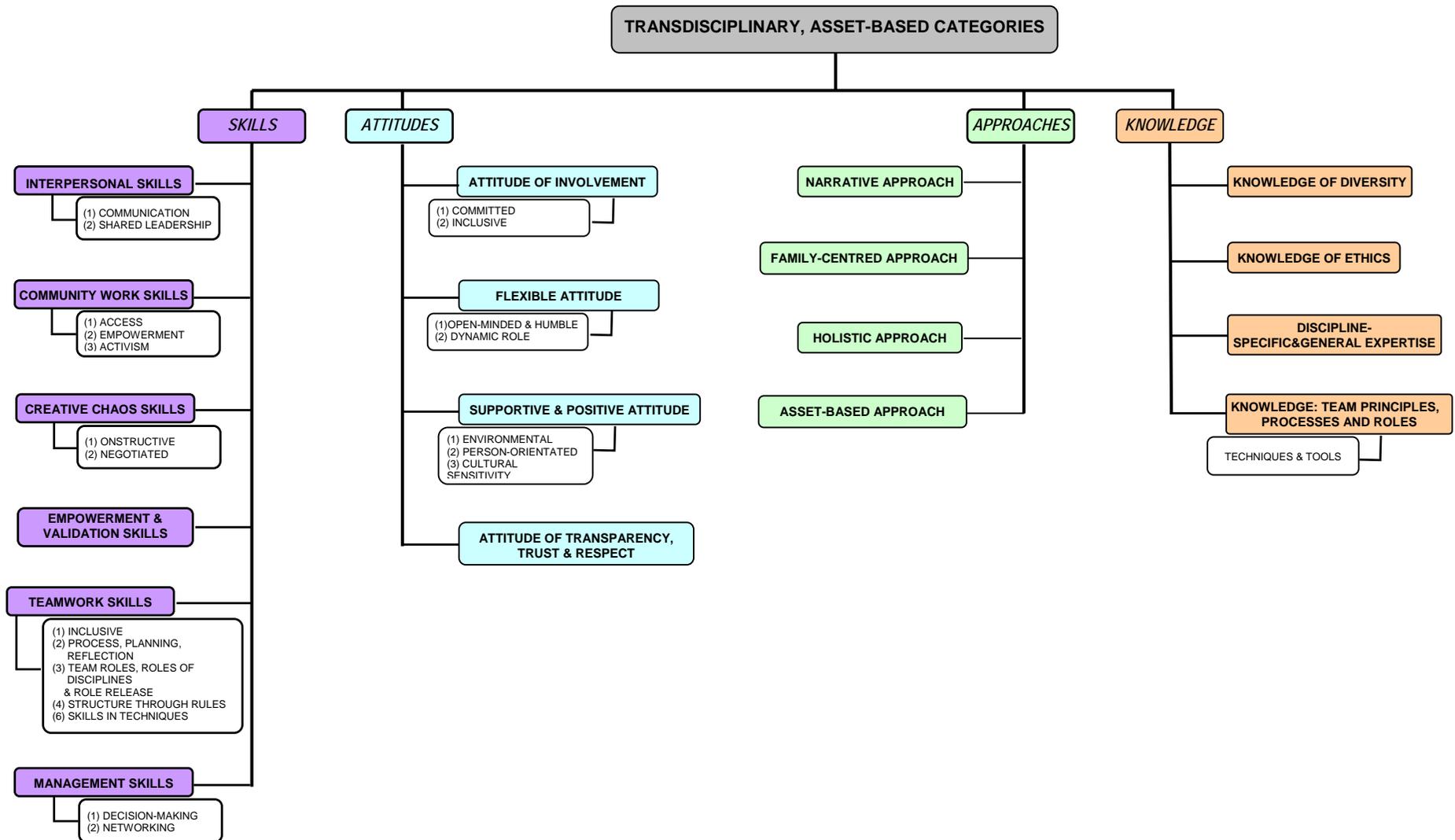
4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study will be discussed according to the categories of skills, attitudes, approaches and knowledge, which it appears a team member needs to facilitate a transdisciplinary, asset-based team. Key concepts are placed in bold print and quotations from members of the focus groups are included as support for the suggestions and conclusions made. Results will be highlighted by quotes from participants. Subsequently each resulting theme will be interpreted as a finding by means of literature control.

4.4.1 SKILLS OF THE ASSET-BASED, TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATOR

This category seems to indicate that attitudes, approaches and knowledge need to be transformed into practical skills and applied tactfully.

FIGURE 4.1: SYNOPSIS OF EMERGED THEMES



4.4.1.1 Interpersonal skills

This category of skills is so vital that the functioning of a team could cease and the effectiveness of a team could be inhibited without it (Ramirez, 1999). This skill is divided into two subcategories of communication and shared leadership, where the communicating of a common vision and the guiding of the team through decisions and challenges enables each member to acquire and apply leadership qualities. Although sharing similar characteristics, the term 'shared leadership' is used instead of 'guidance' so as to accentuate the empowering quality of the facilitator and the fact that all members in a transdisciplinary team are leaders in their roles and responsibilities.

Communication as a skill is reflected in participant statements such as, "one thing that is core is communication skills...what kind of questions should you ask", "avoid professional jargon" and "we teach our learners...a lot about the narrative approach".

Although overlapping in many aspects, communication as a skill is needed to convey the correct message and ensure that misunderstandings are avoided in a team. Guidance is the underlying interpersonal skill of a facilitator ensuring that steps are taken so that the communication and exchange of ideas, requests and resources amongst members takes place conveniently and clearly.

The second subcategory of shared leadership is identified in transcripts with participants commenting, "you need someone who's going to take you and guide you in the right direction", "you also don't want them to go into avenues where you know it's a pitfall...as a facilitator you'll be able to guide them through that", "working towards a common goal" and "keeping the enthusiasm alive".

Rees (2001) incorporates the idea of leadership into the role of facilitator by explaining that such a person needs to guide the team with a clear purpose and set boundaries in order to structure the team process. She states that a facilitative leader is one who "does not do for others what they can do for themselves", but who is at the same time "firm about goals and flexible about the

process". Ray (1999:19), however, brings the concept that leadership is meant for all members of a team and not only for a single individual since it involves, amongst other aspects, creating a clear vision for the team. He also mentions some characteristics of a facilitative leader, some of which will be mentioned directly in this chapter and others indirectly, such as, giving feedback, identifying opportunities (asset-based), caring, listening, validating, being able to teach problem-solving and conflict-resolving skills and using humour.

Transparency, open-mindedness and cultural sensitivity (knowledge of diversity), which will be discussed in sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.4 seem to be essential for effective communication and shared leadership. For accurate coding and decoding of messages in communication, a level of honesty and transparency is needed in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings. This could mean excluding certain terminologies and being open to including alternative ways of communicating. Possessing knowledge of the diversity in the team and having an attitude of cultural sensitivity could facilitate communication within a diverse team. This could mean using something as simple as gestures or something as complex as first accessing a community through mediators in order to exchange thoughts and ideas.

Salisbury and Dunst (in Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997) support these statements by mentioning that one of the obstacles in parent-professional relationships is problems and differences in communication, such as the use of jargon. Lamorey and Ryan (1998) agree in stating that team barriers include ineffective communication. Briggs (1993, 1997) mentions open communication as one of the qualities of an effective team, whilst Fisher and Ury (1991) encourage clear and consistent communication.

Communication cannot proceed successfully in a team if the members do not feel comfortable and unified by some common element or purpose. A supportive environment encourages openness and trust. In coding and decoding messages in communication, misunderstandings can be avoided when all stakeholders have an appreciation of and validate each other's cultures and fields of work. In one respect, effective communication can be viewed as the overall skill needed

by a facilitator and indeed by all members of a team who are potential facilitators and therefore potential leaders (Ray, 1999:1). In the context of a community, the concept of shared leadership could imply that an asset-based approach is employed as the personal resources and character traits of every member are utilised for the common good. Indeed, very few decisions can be made, common visions created, conflicts resolved, planning organised, reflections shared, rules agreed upon and validation given without effective interpersonal skills through communication and shared leadership.

4.4.1.2 Community work skills

Skills in this category include the subcategories of being able to **access** communities appropriately by following the correct channels and conversely increasing and encouraging access of community members into the team, as well as facilitating development and **empowerment** of communities, even in the form of **activism** through legislature.

Access to and by a community implies interaction and an exchange of ideas and possibly roles and functions. Community members who are part of an asset-based, transdisciplinary team will inevitably take on roles of influence that may not be like their roles before. For example, a church minister may be asked to take on some of the functions of a social worker in order to assist the community. It is evident, therefore that the skill of accessing is integrated with the transdisciplinary approach as communication and interaction are needed.

Empowering a community involves much the same skills as empowering and validating individuals, as will be discussed in section 4.4.1.5. In this context, however, the emphasis tends to be on sustainability and guiding a community to eventually be self-sufficient by recognising and utilising its assets. Only with an asset-based approach are members of a community and team able to empower each other and themselves to the point that they can act as activists for change and development.

Numerous statements made by group members relevant to this category and subcategories include “... provide people with the opportunity to gain access into the group”; “... different ways of entering into a community”; “... facilitate that the whole community buys into this whole concept of the group...raise awareness”, “... trained in the working of communities and doing community development”; “facilitate groups in a community“, “advocate on behalf of the family sometimes if they’re disempowered”, “programme of community empowerment...first awaken the community... then you go through the process of conscientiation... make them conscious of what they already have” and “you are in this community... even go further and facilitating change in legislature for that matter...especially in a transforming society such as ours”.

Literature is also boundless in its emphasis on being adept in transactions with communities. In the spirit of community capacity building (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and the asset-based approach, Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) maintain that professionals could support communities to acknowledge and use their resources. Smith, Littlejohns and Thompson (2001) similarly believe that, if the emphasis is on building the community’s capacities, such a community has a better chance for desired change. Briggs (1993, 1997) and Jones (2002) mention that all members need to be empowered equally and, within an asset-based approach, this could lead to empowerment and capacity-building of communities. Even on a legal front, Rainforth and York-Barr (1997) mention that legislation is a motivator for including families in necessary programmes.

As stated before, an asset-based approach implies one that is holistic and systemic. Once access is gained into a community, it follows that networking will take place and that the strengths and needs of all the members will be recognised. In addition to this, an attitude embracing trust, support and flexibility, as well as a working knowledge of the relevant cultural aspects are essential to accomplish successful exchanges with and within communities. Communities will seldom cooperate with persons who are not accepting of them and who have ulterior motives. Leadership in the community needs to be respected, but also used in cooperation with the team for the benefit of the whole community. It is here that being skilled in interpersonal skills is imperative. Each team member,

as a potential facilitator, seeks to communicate clearly to avoid misunderstanding and strives to create a spirit of shared leadership where mutual accountability is emphasised. A sense of ownership amongst the relevant stakeholders, within and without the transdisciplinary team, needs to be promoted so that a spirit of support and collaboration can exist.

Caution is needed not to view communities with which one works as always only one body with set characteristics and expectations. Within every community there are individuals with their own personalities and cultures and validating each of these is just as important as ensuring a sustainable empowerment of the whole. This point is analogous to that made in the theme of holism in section 4.4.3.2.

4.4.1.3 Creative chaos skills

It could be stated that a synonym for creative chaos from a deficit-model is conflict resolution. From this, two subcategories are derived, namely resolving discord constructively and resolving it through negotiation.

Discord or conflict as a phenomenon is perceived mainly as **constructive** and necessary for the growth of a team. Statements maintaining this view are, “you want a bit of conflict... because then you always come to better solutions” and “creative chaos”.

Ways to manage and **negotiate** the discord are reflected in statements such as “handle the conflict”, “search for common ground”, “... how do the other people feel about this?”, “... not to attack the person, but maybe the problem specifically”, “negotiation type of skills ... to defuse a situation”, “you have to work on some sort of compromise” and “... brainstorming for different solutions”.

The various attitudes, approaches and skills play integral roles in creating creativity out of chaos rather than conflict. Discord or conflict can only become creative chaos if seen from an asset-based approach where strengths and resources are shared, rather than weaknesses exploited. Members need to be

committed to confronting challenges in a way that evokes trust and encourages an attitude of support and collaboration among all involved. Being knowledgeable of and skilful in the team dynamics and acknowledging the various perspectives at play amongst the members are all imperative for reaching an amicable and consensual conclusion.

Acknowledging the value of discord is also illustrated in literature with Rees (2001) stating that an environment for constructive conflict resolution is important and enriching for a team. As mentioned previously, White and Nair (1999) also assert that every team member could become a catalyst communicator who believes that conflict is constructive. In finding ways to elucidate discord, Fisher and Ury (1991) coined the term 'principled negotiation' as a method to assist facilitators to resolve disputes by possibly focusing on mutual gains or a higher purpose.

It seems therefore that constructive conflict is not an oxymoron containing contradictory concepts. Communicated effectively and aimed at utilising the strengths of the parties or issues at hand, discord can prevent the stalemate of groupthink and be a means to growth and progress.

4.4.1.4 Empowerment and validation skills

From a supportive environment, in which the facilitator tries to ensure empathy, trust and collaboration amongst the team members, the skill to validate and empower relevant stakeholders arises. The importance of this is clear in phrases and words used by participants in the groups such as, "if they're not empowered they don't feel they don't feel they can contribute", "... be able to validate everybody equally so that everybody is equally empowered in being part of the process", "make people feel comfortable, validated", "everybody in the team... should feel that they're getting something out of it", "you actually feel I'm worth something when I'm there", "sustainability" and "what is the expertise that each person brings into the team".

One of the qualities of effective teams, according to Briggs (1993, 1997) is empowerment of all and Jones (2002) maintains that, in the transforming phase of teamwork, all members could be informed and empowered equally. The asset-based approach is synonymous with the empowerment and validation of people, organisations and situations and the building of capacities of communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The approach aims to empower the disempowered and to promote a spirit of participation on equal footing.

Similarly to its association to the asset-based approach, a team cannot profess to follow a transdisciplinary approach if it does not validate its members and empower them to share and engage in role release. Empowerment and validation enables people to contribute their expertise and knowledge more openly and to experience that the team values their input. A threatening environment surfaces when individuals become disempowered by the fear of expression. Equal empowerment is important so that every member believes that he or she benefits by being part of the team.

Ultimately, empowerment could lead to sustainability, as is mentioned in section 4.4.1.2, where individuals and communities apply the approaches, knowledge and skills necessary to empower themselves indefinitely. This could be made possible if the team members ascribe to and practise the principles of the categories that have emerged in this study. This includes sharing expertise and knowledge in an asset-based approach, supporting and trusting one another, being committed to the team, its goals and its purpose in a community and allowing for role release in the spirit of collaboration.

4.4.1.5 Teamwork skills

According to Rees (2001:17) a team is “two or more people who work collaboratively to make something happen.” Since this definition implies a focus and togetherness of a group, the word ‘team’ and consequently ‘teamwork’ is preferred in this study to ‘group’ and ‘groupwork’, with the exception of well-known concepts, such as ‘groupthink’ and ‘focus groups’, as well as direct quotations or references made otherwise in literature. A team denotes by its very

name a sense of cooperation, cohesion and a common focal point, all of which are essential among members in asset-based and transdisciplinary teams.

Knowledge of the processes and roles of teamwork seem to be just as important, as will be mentioned in section 4.4.4.4. Transforming this knowledge into skills, through application, is important to the effective facilitation of a team, and more so of a transdisciplinary team.

Being skilled in teamwork is described with regard to the process of planning and reflecting, the application of norms and role allocation and transition. Four subcategories are subsequently specified to describe this category, namely knowledge pertaining to all-embracing or all-inclusive grouping, team process (planning and reflection included), team roles (including role release) and team structure through rules.

An **inclusive** team emphasises the fact that all members could be included from the beginning. This is reflected in statements such as, "... everybody should be involved in the team from the beginning... otherwise you'll always get people that feel like add-ons", "... who's going to be included in the group and from the start you should know" and "it shouldn't actually be an option, everybody should be involved".

Related to the all-embracing concept is the **planning, process and reflection** of teamwork. In this instance the following excerpts seem relevant: "... involved from the beginning... not a process that's already started", "... starting before the group... link to preparation", "in your group process you will have your contract which you will close...in the end you have this closing where you will have... reflection", and "after every 12 kids we assess we have a little discussion to say 'how did you experience this?'".

It seems to be evident that being skilled in the workings of a team means that one starts facilitating even before the actual formation of the team. Preparation seems to be essential and, as far as possible, all members should participate in its every step. An attitude of commitment and involvement, as mentioned earlier,

seems to be expected. Just as it is important for everyone to be on board from even before the team's official inception, so it is important for everyone to periodically evaluate and reflect on their experiences as individuals and as team contributors.

Bruns and Steeples (2001) assert that parents could be involved in the planning, as well as implementation and evaluation phases and are therefore members of equal status in the team and should not be consulted halfway into the process. Rees also mentions that team facilitation begins before the team gets together, thereby implying that planning and early preparation are crucial. Concerning reflection, Briggs (1993, 1997) again states that one of the qualities of effective teams is the continuous evaluation of roles, values, norms and performance. Jones (2002) also claims that regular reflection is already part of the initial grounding phase of teamwork.

When examining skills for dealing with **team roles, roles of disciplines and role changes**, statements include, "know...how to handle...those roles", "realistic expectations... of the different professions", "... clearly state that they [parents] are the experts of their child, that is their definition of their role", "... feel safe enough about your own profession in order to get to the point when you can do role release and when you can share", "multiple roles", "... we should take over the role of another discipline sometimes" and "... you have to be in control and by bringing them on board, it diminishes your role as a professional but it gives them a bigger responsibility". The concepts of a supportive environment and flexibility in role change are clearly reflected here too.

In literature, facilitation is called for in not only knowing about different roles, but also being able to identify typical behaviours and styles associated with the roles (Robson & Beary, 1995; Lamprecht, 1990; Briggs, 1993). Hart (1992) describes the various helping and hindering roles in groups that a facilitator should be skilled enough to use to the team's advantage. Jones (2002) further explains that enabling team members to know the purpose of their efforts creates motivation and a positive attitude.

One of the components of a transdisciplinary model is overlapping roles. This **role release** is one of the changes needed to achieve an enhanced and sustainable health service (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001).

Just as important as the dynamic process of a team is its **structure** and stability. **Rules** are imperative to the meaningful functioning of a team and could be reached consensually and democratically. From the second group interview this is specifically mentioned in the statement, "... need to have a set of rules for the team members". One of the first issues team members could address, according to Robson & Beary (1995) is to establish norms or rules by which to abide. Many of these norms are implicit amongst the members of a team, while others need to be specifically verbalised and even notarised. It is perhaps advisable to include the evaluation of rules in the reflection process that a team could periodically undergo. It is probable that this activity could contribute much to the efficient resolution of conflicts.

What is implied here and discussed later in section 4.4.4.4 is the skill of facilitating teamwork through an understanding and practise of team techniques and tools. These techniques could include certain tools, such as ecomaps and genograms mentioned in the focus group interviews, but also include skills, attitudes and approaches acquired, such as sensitively approaching parents and people from diverse backgrounds. As an effective facilitator, one knows the various methods and tools one can use to facilitate decision-making, communication and resolving differences. Possessing appropriate attitudes and implementing certain approaches also involves techniques about which one needs to be knowledgeable. It is for this reason that I mentioned earlier that, although separately classified, each of the categories and sub-categories inevitably overlap and sometimes appear to be the same concept.

Having knowledge of the fields, styles and cultures of the individual members of a team facilitates the skilfulness in managing the processes and dynamics of a team. With agreed upon roles and rules to structure the team development, whilst simultaneously encouraging creativity through flexibility, a team's successful functioning can be secured.

4.4.1.7 Management skills

Another umbrella term that could be used to encompass all that has been mentioned is management skills. Effective management of approaches; acquiring and applying knowledge and resolving conflicts and decisions within teamwork is in essence what has been discussed until now. In this section the skill of management is divided into two subcategories, namely the skill of facilitating decision-making in the team and managing the interaction and networking of members within and without the team.

In the heart of teamwork is the action of continuously **making decisions**, from minor preferences to life-changing choices. In the focus group interviews, decision-making as a skill is not considered an option, but automatically presumed and discussions revolved rather around the method and process of deciding. This is apparent in statements such as “... decision based on the consensus that the group must reach”, “... executive power of actually implementing that decision is not with the group... parent needs to decide” and “... put all the options on the table and let the client make the choice... must be an informed choice”.

Robson and Beary (1995) and Ray (1999) incorporate the issue of groupthink, mentioned in the section of creative chaos, by referring to the fact that it impedes team performance and leads to the making of unreliable decisions. This links to the fact that possessing knowledge about and being skilled in teamwork involves not only facilitating what is constructive, but also knowing how to avoid what is destructive to a team. Attitudes of support, commitment and cohesion should not be so excessive that they undermine attitudes of open-mindedness to change and new possibilities.

Rees (2001) states that for effective functioning of a team, there must be power or, as Turnbull, Turbiville and Turnbull (2000) mention, collective empowerment within the team to make decisions or influence circumstances. This implies taking on an asset-based approach where not only resources and strengths are acknowledged, but also shared as a collective whole. Within a transdisciplinary

model or team, making decisions and choices could be consensual (Briggs, 1997), implying that the power is shared, just as the expertise and strengths are shared in an asset-based approach.

Controversy arises with regard to who the decision maker should be. As reflected in one of the focus groups discussions, the question arose as to whether the facilitator, the team or the client relevant to the situation could have the final say. In a transdisciplinary team using an asset-based approach, all viewpoints in the decision-making process need to be validated and considered through equal empowerment. Decisions made should always aim to be consensual. This does not mean that the team is unanimous, but that everybody's views have been reflected in the decision-making process (Robson & Beary, 1995:61). In a supportive environment, eventually, the client, an equal member of the transdisciplinary team, is respected for how or if the decision is implemented.

Making decisions and choices influence, but are also influenced by various other categories described in this chapter. Knowledge of the case and relevant disciplines is imperative to the beginning of a prudent decision-making process, for without it, choices made are merely based on speculation and guesswork. In addition to this, and as will be mentioned later, empowering people is a skill and one that can be employed efficiently on the decision-making field. It functions in collaboration with all of the skills, especially those pertaining to communication, management and conflict resolution. A facilitator needs to ensure that each member's viewpoint is heard and communicated accurately and without conflict so as to reach a decision. A holistic approach takes cognisance of all the parts and members of a decision, but ultimately strives for wholeness and the reaching of the purpose to which the team initially subscribes.

The need to **manage and network** effectively is reflected in the numerous associations of the facilitator with the role of a case manager, as well as the transcriptions, "management styles or management skills", "you have to have good management skills and know how to network" and "facilitate the group to prioritise".

In literature Briggs (1993) actually makes use of the concept of a case manager or coordinator who integrates the team decisions into a programme and helps the client integrate them too. As mentioned before, Robson and Beary (1995) warn that the majority of difficulties experienced in teams originate with the ignorance of team dynamics as well as the lack of knowing how to manage the team process.

Management can mistakenly be interpreted as control or exclusive supervision. In a transdisciplinary team that strives to be supportive, adaptable and asset-based in its approach, such an interpretation becomes redundant. Instead, the art of managing, if executed appropriately, could be synonymous with the art of facilitating. It implies a facilitation that guides rather than directs and denotes a spirit of stewardship as well as of ownership.

As inferred earlier, all categories and themes considered in this chapter should be understood systemically and as an integral whole since each has an influence on the other and enables the other's optimal realisation. In this context and in addition to the skills deliberated above, therefore, I should mention the ability of the facilitator in being skilled in the techniques, tools, knowledge, approaches and attitudes discussed in this chapter. It is thus implied that in order to reflect the attitudes, implement the approaches and possess the knowledge conducive to an asset-based transdisciplinary team, one needs to be skilled in applying them. Conversely and interrelated to this is the fact that the mentioned attitudes, approaches and knowledge have to be already at play to a certain extent in order for a team member to be skilled to use them and be skilled in them. Thus, here too, the ideas of holism, inclusiveness and overlapping boundaries are strongly at play.

4.4.2 ATTITUDES OF THE ASSET-BASED TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATOR

It became apparent that a facilitator's personal qualities and attitude are deemed as important in order for knowledge and skills to be applied with integrity and effectiveness.

4.4.2.1 Attitude of involvement

This attitude seems to filter through many of the other skills as can be seen in the statements below. Commitment and involvement are frequently mentioned with the skill of applying the team principles of planning and role release and subsequently of empowerment. It seems that if all stakeholders are involved from the onset of a team in an all-embracing or all-inclusive manner, even possibly before the actual team is formed, this could promote greater cohesion and willingness to share each other's expertise, thus strengthening and empowering the team and its members. This category has therefore been subdivided and specified into **committed** and **inclusive** attitudes.

Excerpts from the interviewees revealing both subcategories include: "... everybody should be involved in the team from the beginning", "... it shouldn't actually be an option, everyone should be involved", "I always have a problem with these teams that are almost like a professional team, including the parent. It's almost as if the parents are regarded as the add-ons", "... to share and be part of this team, because if you're not committed, you're not going to have role release" and "insisting that the parent should be there and that way you're really empowering the parent".

Commitment to process and outcome and continuous interaction are some of the qualities, which Briggs (1993, 1997) mentions for effective teamwork. It is clear that if the facilitator of a team does not project that sense of commitment and is not involved on all levels of the team process, it is difficult for the members of the same team to show loyalty and willingness to contribute.

Salisbury and Dunst (1997) place responsibility for meaningful interaction and decision-making on the shoulders of both parents and professionals, thus including all stakeholders. However, although involving or **including** all members is clearly essential for the success of a team's purpose, "insisting" that members and especially parents be involved, impinges on their rights of freedom. Force may subsequently lead to fear and anger, which then paradoxically disempowers the member, creating other possible problems for the team. A non-

threatening environment, which will be mentioned later, is therefore essential for members to feel they can and want to contribute to the team and to its purpose.

4.4.2.2 Flexible attitude

The category of flexibility is a broad one and for this study has been divided into two subcategories. Flexibility refers to a willingness of being open not only to other points of view, but also to the possibility of changing one's own role and function.

The former subcategory of **open-mindedness and humility** is reflected in statements by participants in the groups such as, "... be open-minded to all the other disciplines", "open to alternative medicine", "if they do identify a knowledge gap, they must be able to read up on it very quickly", "Don't close it and say 'No, because I don't know about it, this is not worth it' "and "not to be patronising".

One could be open to the fact that the perceptions of the clients will most probably be different to that of the professionals of the team. Briggs (1996) names such facilitators who can accommodate differences, "change leaders" (coined as "change masters" by R.M. Kanter as cited in Briggs). They anticipate and tolerate ambiguity and are flexible. White and Nair (1999) also stress the importance for every person belonging to a team to be open-minded.

A spirit of **humility** is presumed within an open-minded facilitator. This subcategory arose already during the collaborative project in Early Childhood Intervention when a senior member of the group mentioned, during my research proposal to the project members, that humility in a facilitator, and especially a facilitator engaged in the health profession, is of paramount importance.

Literature, although limited, offers support for this too. Robson and Beary (1995) warn that opting for "self-aggrandizement", or placing one's views above those of others, is always a temptation and will lead to the downfall of a facilitator. Jones (2002) also agrees that humility is one of the characteristics needed to advance a team.

One of the statements made during the focus group interviews however held that, as a facilitator, one could “reflect that you are an authority – even if you don’t know, but that’s a skill that you must project”. The question lies in whether that contradicts the spirit of openness and humility or whether it can somehow be assimilated into what has been said. Team members could evoke trust in order to interact effectively and share their expertise sincerely. This calls for a self-assertiveness which will instil confidence in the other members. However, one’s limitations could always be acknowledged and addressed accordingly through the help of the team.

In a world where self-sufficiency is encouraged, being open-minded and admitting one’s shortcomings may seem unfashionable. However, the search to find the associations amongst the concepts “asset-based”, “transdisciplinary” and “facilitation”, as mentioned in the sub-questions related to the research question in section 1.4 of Chapter One, could culminate in this subcategory. An unassuming nature is called for in facilitators for them to be able to appreciate the strengths (asset-based) of others and to admit they can learn from others. This is also necessary for facilitators to appreciate the strengths in themselves and release these assets through sharing (role release and transdisciplinary). Humility has been described as “not thinking less of yourself ... [but] thinking of yourself less” (Warren, 2002:148) and so it is in a team where so many facets and disciplines could be considered and employed.

The second mentioned subcategory refers to **dynamic roles** and accommodating and effecting changing roles in a team. This attitude is also implied in section 4.4.1.5 as a required skill as it forms part of the essence of a transdisciplinary team. The need for this type of flexibility is highlighted through the words of participants in the focus groups, “... the main facilitator in that group might change according to the needs of the family”, “facilitation does not necessarily fall on the professional, I’ve seen parents doing an excellent job” and, referring to the same context, “it changes constantly”. Mittler and McConachie (1983) support this in stating that parents and professionals need to sometimes switch roles and not only understand each other’s point of view, but experience it too.

A distinction should be made however between engaging in role transition in a transdisciplinary team where boundaries can become vague. It is necessary to ensure that the roles of each team member are clear and demarcated. A team is efficient when everyone knows what they are supposed to do and are clear about the functions of the others. However, in a transdisciplinary team, where flexibility is called for, these principles seem to contradict each other.

Again it seems that a balance is required. Members are called not only to use the expertise from their distinct disciplines, but also be open to sharing this with others so that they can learn certain skills and techniques. Designated roles do not therefore have to change in entirety but could be accommodating enough to admit a need to know and learn more.

4.4.2.3 Supportive and positive attitude

A supportive attitude is deemed important by participants, especially in the contexts of people and the environment, which obviously overlap at certain stages.

A **person-orientated approach** in support is reflected in statements such as, "... be almost an ally to the parents", "... guide them through that", "... motivating or keeping the enthusiasm alive"; "the emotional support". It is also recommended that facilitators possess an understanding of psychology, such as appreciating the various stages of the grief process that a caregiver could experience, in order to support all the stakeholders appropriately.

Briggs (1993, 1997) again includes trust and support as qualities for effective teams. Likewise Bruns and Steeples (2001) mention supporting and respecting parents as ways to facilitate parent-professional partnerships. Empathising with members increases trust and encourages loyalty and commitment amongst the team.

Inseparable from experiencing support as an individual is a **supportive environment**, which promotes this experience. The following statements testify to this: "... even your surroundings or your physical environment in which you do the groups... can't be a cold, formal situation", "I don't want to go into a group where I don't feel welcome", "... creates a very supportive environment... to emphasise the positives".

Authors associate a supportive environment with other team skills and procedures too. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) associate problem solving with an environment that is wide and collaborative and Berry (1999) states that a safe physical and psychological environment encourages risk-taking and critical appreciation (Berry, 1999).

Jones (2002) as well as Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) however also promote the idea of sustainability where team members leave and seemingly stop supporting communities so that the latter can develop and become self-reliant. Support is therefore not to be equated with control or associated with complete dependence, but rather seen as an aid to interdependence and empowerment.

4.4.2.4 Attitude of transparency, trust and respect

Although very closely linked, it is worth distinguishing the attitudes of transparency, trust and respect. For successful communication and interaction within a team, all three categories are essential and to a large extent dependent on each other.

The need for a **transparent** and honest facilitator who can be **trusted** is reflected in the statements by members of the focus groups, "can be trusted as a facilitator", "build trust with the other professionals" and "if you're not transparent you're not really doing an assessment or sharing that information the way it could be".

The issue of respect is highlighted in the participants' statements: "In a team approach that's something one has to be very sensitive about if the caregivers

are included as well... It's just that respect", "You can disagree as well in the team but you respect their choice... have respect for their decision", "They have to realise that whatever they make, whether it differs from opinions, it will be respected, because they are the ultimate".

Briggs (1993, 1997) states that an effective team is characterised with clearly stated and understood goals. St. Anne (1999) also believes that trust is the means to develop a team and ensure its productivity. Incorporating again a former category, Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) mention that the asset-based approach is most effective when expectations are realistic and clear.

Respect is also valued by Ray (1999:15, 45) as he mentions that the facilitative leader is also a "respectful communicator" and that the indiscriminate use of jargon is impolite in a diverse team. Rees (2001:35) also states that "each member has to take responsibility for acknowledging and respecting the needs of others", emphasising that a non-threatening tone needs to be set in order for team members to feel safe and trusting in airing their differences.

The threat experienced by many, of others intruding into their territory of expertise, is one alluded to in the section on flexibility and implies a need for interdisciplinary trust and regard. Here again, being transparent about one's goals and perceptions in a team means that one becomes vulnerable to others' criticisms and unwillingness to cooperate with those goals. The following extract from one of the focus group discussions touches on this:

IS: Would the involvement of the parent not inhibit the different members to really, you know...very often when we assess a child, we're almost personal, I mean personal perceptions in the discussions. Don't you think that might inhibit...?

B: Why I say no so very quickly because we've been into this parent thing and we think that if you're not transparent, you're not really doing an assessment or, you know, sharing that information the way it should be.... It's a tough thing for the parents and it seems that in African

cultures, the Africans want to be recipients because they have respect for professionals and you have to be in the control by bringing them on board...

IS: We just find that, you know, very often...we have a very passive mother, I mean very passive to the point of not protecting her own child... one could never call her passive and that's the kind of language the other professionals will use, so its, um, I have to win her over to bring her to my side and to encourage her strong points, whereas labelling and terms by other people might just, you know, we might just lose her.

Clearly, inappropriate language and labelling, although perhaps honest in ones' perceptions, disempowers members and can create destructive conflict. Transparency could be used so that every team member knows what to do, what others are doing and how the various processes within the team are being developed. It does not imply indiscriminate usage of language, but does imply that one is more discerning and respectful of what one thinks, says and does.

Practising, let alone possessing, these attitudes is difficult especially when dealing with the realistic scenarios of participants and clients who are not seemingly transparent or trustworthy. Cliques can automatically develop in a team, followed by partiality, secrets and ulterior motives. It seems therefore important for the facilitator to be knowledgeable and skilful of team dynamics and to prevent anything that could hamper the team process.

4.4.3 APPROACHES FOLLOWED BY THE ASSET-BASED TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATOR

Approaches and attitudes are tightly interwoven as both refer to perspectives and ways of behaving. In this section the holistic and asset-based approaches will be reiterated, but attention will also be given to the fact that potential facilitators need to hold the client, and in a health-services context, families, as their focal points. This can successfully be attained through the use of techniques involving the narrative approach.

4.4.3.1 Family-centred approach

In the context of health professions services, the participants of the focus groups emphasised the importance of recognising, including and learning from the family. The focus seems to be not only on the client who needs guidance, but on the family system affected by and affecting the situation.

Transcripts referring to this include, “we don’t see the family as a whole”, “advocate on behalf of the family”, “make the client and then the family part of the planning process... because our perceptions of what the problem is may be totally different to what the client and the family sees as the problem” and “change according to the needs of the family”.

Literature supports this view through authors such as Bennett, Zhang and Hojnar (1998) who emphasise collaborative partnerships with families by focusing on family structure and characteristics and encouraging family-centred principles. Mittler and McConachie (1983) also recognise and respect the need to value the uniqueness of each family while Turnbull et al. (2000) described the evolution of the family-professional partnership to the current or ideal stage in which families are empowered to become active members in the team.

The transdisciplinary model advocates for all relevant stakeholders to be equally involved in the team process and often makes use of a family member as the core person to implement team decisions (Briggs, 1997). This complements the categories of shared leadership and empowerment mentioned in sections 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.4 respectively through mutual accountability and building of existing capacities and strengths. In contrast to other service delivery models, the transdisciplinary model plans according to the needs and assets of the family first, rather than according to the dictates of the professionals.

A family-centred approach cannot be beneficial if it is not propagated with all-embracing, committed and supportive attitudes and an approach that encourages strengths and resources of each team member to be shared and validated. The family-centred approach is also very much aligned with the holistic approach

where the client is not viewed in isolation, but in an all-inclusive system. This approach enables diversity to be appreciated and facilitates the identifying of assets and opportunities in a family system, empowering families to become sustainable in addressing their needs.

4.4.3.2 Narrative approach

This approach is introduced with the statements from members of the groups, “we teach our learners... a lot about the narrative approach” and “... that technique in the African context is great because they’re story tellers of note and that’s the way they communicate. So the family story is a nice technique to use”. Although mentioned in only one of the focus group interviews, this approach is considered important by the independent coders and me as it relates strongly to the asset-based approach, the recognition of diversity and the empowerment of team members.

In the narrative approach, problems and needs are externalised and clients are empowered to construct their own life stories and meanings (Eloff, 2002). Language and therefore diverse cultural elements of members are used as tools to enable these processes to take place. This approach can be optimally used by utilising the assets and experiences of team members familiar to this approach and guiding the team through the process of meaning construction. Facilitators knowledgeable of the diversity of their team members and encouraging of open communication can guide members to take ownership of their roles in the team through this approach.

4.4.3.3 Adopting an asset-based approach

Despite the fact that the asset-based approach is already implied in the research question, it seemed important that this point be emphasised in the intent of the facilitator to use the strengths and resources of the team and of the situation. This is reflected in statements such as “... asset-based approach... what’s the strengths of each discipline and then share that with the rest of the transdisciplinary team” and “If we think about the asset-based approach, it’s one

of the key things that a professional needs to do, is they actually become a connector of people and institutions and resources and support”.

Kinlaw (1993) supports this view in stating that a resource-based approach is essential for developing self-sufficient teams. In discussing the effective partnership between parents and professionals, Bruns and Steeples (2001) emphasise the need to have a strength-based perspective. Although it is obvious that the problems and limitations of the team and case at hand cannot be ignored and could be addressed applying effective problem-solving or conflict resolution skills, it is clear that the asset-based approach, although new in formal literature, is an integral part of successful teamwork.

In accordance with asset-based theory, one cannot ignore nor deny the importance of recognising the needs and limitations of events and people. Focusing on strengths alone becomes pointless if there is no intent to use these resources to address the problems and needs that exist. A balance is therefore required whereby problems and shortcomings are used as challenges that need to be overcome through the use of existing and potential assets.

Adhering to this approach seems important not only for the validation of the individual members of the team, but also for finding solutions to challenges experienced by clients and empowering them to be sustainable in their development. These elements will be discussed as skills in a later section.

4.4.3.4 Approach of holism

Another category and approach, which emerged, is that of taking cognisance of the gestalt of the situation and understanding the interrelations therein. This is mentioned and implied in the statements, “... the whole sense of everybody knowing about everything and linking people to each other”, “we’re only interested in this child and we don’t see the family as a whole”, “... the whole thing... holistic approach and everybody has got to do that”. Mention was also made of techniques such as “ecomaps and genograms” which structure family and situational information into a totality. The words “your whole life is shaken”

spoken by a parent of a child with a disability also allude to the fact that events and experiences do not happen in isolation and that the aspects of a situation addressed by a team are therefore always multifaceted.

In the literature, Jones (2002) states that a holistic approach needs to be integrated in the initial or grounding phase of teamwork. Briggs (1993, 1997) agrees that systemic thinking is an essential part of an effective team. In the context of health services, which acts as the backdrop for many transdisciplinary teams, research has shown that parents generally perceive holistically (Winton, 1988) and could therefore more easily interact in teams using the same approach.

The asset-based approach mentioned earlier is, according to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003), holistic in perspective itself. Therefore, incorporating said approach could automatically be incorporating the other. By perceiving situations systemically rather than partially it is easier to identify and utilise the strengths and capacities of the constituents of a team and empower individuals and communities.

Again one needs a balance between appreciating the gestalt of a situation and recognising the elements comprising the whole. A transdisciplinary approach strives not only for a spirit of partnership, but acknowledges and realises the individual differences of team members. Collaboration is achieved through individual commitments to a shared purpose.

4.4.4 KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE ASSET-BASED TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATOR

On the topic of discernment mentioned in the previous paragraph, arises the need to have and apply appropriate knowledge of certain issues and so facilitate the team prudently.

4.4.4.1 Knowledge of diversity

The first mentioned category pertaining to knowledge is that of knowing about which elements create diversity. These can range from the perceptions, customs, beliefs and expectations of an individual to that of a community or nation. This is echoed in the statements, "... being sensitive to the culture", "it's so important to look at the cultural aspects", "you've got to have that cultural sensitivity" and "... terminology... team members aren't always sensitive enough about that... it's just that respect".

Bennett, Zhang and Hojnar (1998) believe that, for collaborative relationship with clients, it is important to have knowledge of their values, beliefs, practices and perceptions and to be a culturally competent professional. White and Nair (1999) encourage every team member to eventually become a catalyst communicator who is culturally sensitive.

The discussion extract quoted in section 4.4.1.7 and used to indicate fear of being "too transparent" as a professional, could also possibly express fear due to lack of knowledge of a culture. Obviously knowing or understanding everything about other people is impossible. What is possible is an attitude of open-mindedness and an approach, which seeks to find the worth and strengths in diversity. Knowledge of cultures could be integrated with an attitude of sensitivity and skills to apply the knowledge wisely.

In order to acquire adequate knowledge about the diversity of people, one would first need an attitude of flexibility and open-mindedness, acknowledging the fact that all perceptions deserve to be valued and respected. Team members holding different views need to know that the facilitator can be trusted and will be supportive of them, psychologically and in their environments. Exhibiting sensitivity towards diversity could be facilitated by using an asset-based and holistic approach. Strengths could be sought in differences and a spirit of collaboration and networking therefore be encouraged.

Certain skills could also be applied in order to fully appreciate this knowledge of diversity. Accurate and relevant knowledge could be acquired only through effective communication and community-related skills. Just as important is the ability to access and empower communities through knowledge of their diversity. It is therefore evident that no category or subcategory can stand alone, but instead needs to be integrated into a functioning whole.

4.4.4.2 Knowledge of ethics and rights

Facilitators should be knowledgeable of the ethical codes and legal rights of individuals. This view is indicated in transcriptions such as, “what is practice, best practice” as well as “... knowledge about human rights and what are the rights of the patient... to make an informed choice”.

In discussing ethical client management, Olivier (2002) includes the following points that need to be recognised and upheld by professionals: confidentiality, informed consent and avoiding unorthodox professional procedures and dual relationships with clients. According to Egan (1998), helpers-to-be could make ethical responsibility part of their professional development programme. This operates in line with the attitude of transparency where nothing of value to the team should be concealed and where all members are kept abreast of the doings of the team and its work. In the context of decision-making, the issue of informed choice is imperative to making sound resolutions and ensures freedom, respect and commitment amongst the members.

4.4.4.3 Discipline-specific and general expertise

This category calls for facilitators to be well versed in their own disciplines, as well as to acquire adequate general knowledge of other disciplines and fields represented in the transdisciplinary team.

In the focus group interviews this category of knowledge was suggested in examples such as “... thoroughly based in their own knowledge base”, “... not only your own profession... have a knowledge ... of the team”, “each one has got

to know what the other does” and “... realistic expectations... of the different professions”.

Knowledge of the various fields in a team is essential in a transdisciplinary team, whose purpose, according to Briggs (1993) is to expand knowledge while increasing competencies. As part of the role transition process of a transdisciplinary team, members begin by improving their own **discipline-specific** knowledge and then learning and applying that of other disciplines (Child Development Resources, 1991 as cited in Briggs, 1993; Woodruff & McGonigel, 1988).

A divergent process in this regard seems therefore to be necessary. As team members are expected to become increasingly committed to researching and learning about their own specific disciplines, moving figuratively more inward, so they need to move more outward by discovering the essences and **general** expertise of different disciplines and sharing their expertise to the other members of the team.

Focus has traditionally been to start broad and extensive in learning about one's discipline, but then gradually gaining more depth and insight knowledge. Currently, however, this process is changing so that from one's discipline-specific area, one reaches outward and explores the knowledge bases and expertise of other disciplines, even if not directly linked with one's own. In a transdisciplinary team, this is essential for role transition to be successfully accomplished.

None of this acquisition of knowledge is possible if members are not committed to share, be open-minded and humble to learn and supportive enough to allow role transition to take place in a non-threatening environment. Effective communication is required and continuous reflection should be encouraged if the team is to remain informed with the most up-to-date information.

4.4.4.4 Knowledge of team principles, processes and roles

This broad category encompasses knowledge of the principles, processes and roles of a general team, not specific to that characterised with transdisciplinary or asset-based approaches.

Statements alluding to this include, "... basic principles of group handling skills", "I think there's methods and techniques that you can do", "know the different types of behaviour that you can get in a group... those roles", "... team dynamics before you get to the techniques" and "you should know which roles that every discipline plays in the treatment or in the approach".

Robson & Beary (1995) maintain that almost all problems in groups arise from a lack of understanding team dynamics and how to manage team process. They assert that a higher level of knowledge and skill regarding teamworking is needed for effective team membership.

Again by implication, knowledge is required too of the various techniques and tools of teamwork so that one can be skilled in using them. Such tools could include ecomaps and genograms in facilitating the narrative approach or more effective communication. It also involves knowing about the possible techniques for problem-solving, such as the nominal group and brainstorming techniques, decision-making, such as plus-and-minus and priority analysis (Kinlaw, 1996) and many more alluded to in Chapter Two.

Knowledge alone of the elements of a team and its functioning is however not sufficient to facilitate efficiently. Again attitudes of flexibility, transparency and commitment are vital to make any use of this knowledge. Being open to the changing of one's roles and functions, as the teams needs demand, is of vital importance to the development of the team. It is also necessary to be able to convert this knowledge into skills one can apply.

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

It seems that to address the exploratory and descriptive research question of what the facilitation skills are in transdisciplinary teamwork that could inform asset-based theory compels one to dig deeper than at first imagined.

It has been found that participants view internal attitudes of commitment, personal flexibility, humility and transparency, as well as approaches that are asset-based, holistic, environmentally flexible and supportive in nature as paramount to the performance of an effective facilitator.

Possessing proper and adequate knowledge of culture, ethics, teamwork and various disciplines and fields are also considered essential elements of the trade.

Applying these attitudes, approaches and knowledge seemed to constitute skills. These included being skilful in communication; accessing and empowering communities; resolving conflict through a constructive approach and negotiation; facilitating decision-making; empowering and validating; facilitating the process and role changes of a team and; managing discerningly.

It seems therefore that the concept of “skills” needs to be amplified to include knowledge, attitude and approach and could perhaps be reworded as “competencies” or “facilitative essentials” to create a more comprehensive perception. Referring to facilitation skills in a broad sense therefore needs to be partnered with knowledge, attitudes and approaches.

In the following chapter a summary of the study will be presented as well as an examination of the strengths, shortcomings and consequent recommendations that arise.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploration will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

(T.S. Eliot)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter a synopsis of the study, its conclusions, limitations and subsequent recommendations are provided and discussed. This is to be read in the context of the research question or statement of intent, as outlined in the first chapter, namely, the exploration of the facilitation skills conducive to teamwork that is transdisciplinary and asset-based in approach.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

In the first chapter the purpose of and paradigmatic context and motivation for the study were established. An interpretative paradigm was followed with qualitative exploratory and descriptive research approaches because of the social context of the study. The instrumental case study was selected as the research design and represented groups of transdisciplinary team members. Data was collected through self-reporting, transcripts and field notes obtained via two focus group interviews. Measures to ensure rigour in the study, as well as ethical considerations of the study, were supported and expounded.

The aims of this study incorporated not only the identification of facilitation skills conducive to asset-based transdisciplinary teams, but also the reasons for needing to identify these skills in such teamwork. Other sub-questions of the statement of intent, as stated in chapter one, are aimed at investigating associations among the concepts “facilitation”, “transdisciplinary” and “asset-based” and discovering a theoretical framework for facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teamwork which could inform asset-based theory.

In justifying the need to identify facilitation skills, one need only look at the motivation to this study. The need exists primarily because it has not been addressed before. Transdisciplinary teams and the asset-based approach are novel concepts which have only formally been put into practice in the last two decades. Since such teams are unique in their conception, structure and process, adequate attention must be given to running them effectively. In short, the need to identify facilitation skills lies in the fact that it has not been specifically done before.

Associations or comparisons which can be made among the concepts “facilitation”, “transdisciplinary” and “asset-based” are illustrated in the table below:

TABLE 5.1: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CONCEPTS

Facilitation (team)	Transdisciplinary	Asset-based
Sharing strengths	Role release and sharing	Dynamic (mobilising) and sharing resources
Flexible	Open-mindedness	Open-minded to paradigm shift from deficit model
Managing and communicating	Networking	Community networking
Facilitation (team)	Transdisciplinary	Asset-based
Using diversity in personalities and team roles	Exploiting diversity in disciplines and functions	Appreciating diversity in assets
Empowering team members	Empowering equality in differences	Empowering communities
Holistic – gestalt (sum greater than parts)	Mainly in health services: family-oriented	Community-oriented: for benefit of whole

The above-mentioned three concepts are clearly interlinked and similar in many ways. Effective facilitation complements the spirit of the transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches and therefore needed to be clarified and specified through skills, knowledge, attitudes and approaches in this study.

Henceforth arises the theoretical framework for facilitation skills, namely that these skills include and are inevitably connected to attitudes, approaches and

knowledge. The theoretical framework that could inform asset-based theory subsequently includes the proposition that identified attitudes and approaches are needed to realise the asset-based perspective and its ideas and skills are required to implement the approach practically.

Much of the emerging themes mentioned in Chapter Four are supported by the asset-based theory. The asset-based approach implies a holistic approach which includes and embraces all role players and supports both the individual and the system in a committed and sustainable manner. It is adaptable to different situations and dynamic in sharing strengths and mobilising assets. The asset-based approach is also cognisant of the dynamics of people and teamwork since it is used mainly amongst communities. It also recognises the importance of understanding diversity and having information of what is needed for each specific situation. In dealing directly with people, the asset-based approach supports skills in effective communication, decision-making and networking. Knowledge of the dynamism of people must be converted into practical skills and techniques of teamwork. These skills should be used to access and empower communities.

Apart from these emerging themes I found that some categories, however, seemed novel to the asset-based theory. These were the implied attitudes of transparency and trust. The narrative approach is also a new perspective in this theory, although complementary to the changing life stories effected by an asset-based approach in a community. Analogous to being trustworthy is the knowledge base of ethics and promoting a spirit of professionalism and integrity. Finally, although a natural occurrence and subsequently a necessary skill when dealing with individuals and communities, conflict and conflict resolution, when viewed from an asset-based approach can become 'creative chaos'. What is potentially destructive, namely conflict, can become constructive, through an open and positive attitude.

The research questions asked in the first chapter are therefore answered through the study, although they in their own turn stimulate further exploration and enquiries.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

The aim of the literature review in the second chapter was to study, in discrete components, the conception of *facilitation skills in an asset-based transdisciplinary team*. This enabled me not only to know what previous and current research maintained, but also to identify what findings from the data could confirm or contradict this and what could hopefully throw new light on asset-based theory.

The asset-based approach in itself was found to be novel and was compared to the needs-based or deficit model, which has especially been applied in the health professions. The transdisciplinary model was also found to be one of the most recent in the development of service-rendering models, especially as it introduces a unique perspective on the role of caregivers and on the benefits of sharing and temporarily exchanging roles among people of seemingly dissimilar disciplines.

Since the purpose of the study was to explore the facilitation skills needed in asset-based and transdisciplinary teamwork, facilitation was described with regard to general teams. Team dynamics and development were investigated as well as the various roles and principles that are at play within a team. The main facilitation skills that seemed to arise were those pertaining to communication, decision-making, problem-solving, conflict resolution and management of team processes, change and cultural diversity.

A personal conceptual framework was provided towards the end of the chapter and described from holistic and systemic perspectives. Roles, interrelations and contexts were graphically represented in an attempt to integrate the information that had been researched.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS

Based on the research design and plan of research explained in the third chapter, two focus group interviews of eight participants in total were employed to investigate the purpose of this study and compare it to the literature study.

Apart from a parent, all participants were from health professional services that had knowledge and/or experience of working in transdisciplinary teams and were attempting to integrate it with the asset-based approach. Data was analysed according to two established qualitative approaches and an independent coder was used to verify the findings.

Results were classified according to four main factors or themes with their respective categories and subcategories. The themes that emerged pertained to skills, attitudes, approaches and knowledge, which a facilitator could possess and apply in the unique teamwork investigated in this study.

In the literature control process, I established that existing literature supports the emerged themes. However, I also found that the themes included new categories not directly mentioned in literature, as well as fresh outlooks on existing ones. Fairly novel themes were those of the narrative approach and possessing knowledge on the ethics of each case. A different outlook was offered to the category of being skilled in accessing and empowering communities by referring to the role of the facilitator as an activist in facilitating change of legislature too. Another new perspective was cast on the skill of conflict resolution in that it was viewed positively as 'creative chaos'.

In literature, skills seem to be emphasised in preference to that which is needed before such skills can be acquired and implemented, namely, knowledge of the context and content of the situation and the possession of effective attitudes and approaches. It was found that skills alone do not suffice to adequately equip a facilitator for the challenging work of managing a transdisciplinary and asset-based team. A willingness to be supportive, committed, flexible and transparent seems to be vital, as well as ensuring that strengths are shared and that the

purpose and vision of the team is maintained. Furthermore, I also found that the skills already mentioned in literature need a foundation of knowledge of various disciplines, diversities, ethics and team work itself. Additional skills I discovered in the data included those relating to communities and equal empowerment.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In many ways limitations and contributions can seem to be different sides of the same coin, depending on how and why they exist and are applied. This section will focus on limitations and will then be followed by a section on the contributions and implications of this study.

The limitations of the research design and process revolved around the already mentioned limited body of knowledge on certain concepts, the number and structure of the focus group interviews and the time frame of this study.

Although one of the aims of this study was to inform asset-based theory and obtain new insights into transdisciplinary teamwork, a **more comprehensive body of knowledge** could have allowed for more control and inquiry. I would have liked to challenge more literature so as to enrich my study. However, I found that this study would have to be part of the research ground for other researchers to examine.

Although, as mentioned, smaller focus group interviews offer benefits, obtaining a **greater number of participants** per group, as well as scheduling more interviews, could have lead to more productive findings. The focus group in itself lends to homogeneity and less control of participants, as well as more subjectivity by the researcher than other forms of data gathering. It could also have been of greater research value to obtain members who were more diverse in their disciplines, age, race and gender. This would have been more reflective of the diversity of South Africa.

A **variety of disciplines**, especially from outside the health professional services would have allowed for possible comparison of the facilitation styles employed in

different fields. The issue of role release specifically could possibly have been an issue of contention with other professionals and members of society who have not been exposed to the evolution of service models.

Although the **ages** of participants did vary from those in their thirties to those in their fifties, I believe it could have enhanced the study to have the impressions voiced by those studying and who have recently entered various professions. Such input could have possibly indicated if new approaches of transdisciplinary and asset-based perspectives could be maintained and encouraged.

Especially in a diverse country such as South Africa, it may have been important to include viewpoints of people from a **variety of nationalities and cultures**, especially concerning the issue of knowledge of cultures and skills to access communities. Similarly, although this country has a larger percentage of women, a **male perspective** on all the issues discussed in the interviews may have been immeasurably valuable. The fact that I was able to procure only white and female participants is also perhaps indicative of the situation in the health professions and in the country at large. Possibly the new approaches broached in this study have not been promoted among all groups of people, leaving the work of the facilitator to be an even more challenging one.

This study was initiated with my participation in the Early Childhood Intervention project mentioned previously. This started in the year 2000. For various reasons, although the interviews took place in the year after this, the study could not be followed up until this year. Change in perspectives and greater knowledge and experience from the participants and other stakeholders could have therefore been obtained had **follow-up focus group interviews** taken place with all original participants or else with new participants to obtain fresh perspectives.

The choice of an **instrumental case study** as the research design has potential limitations. These were, however pre-empted, and through thorough planning, combated before they occurred. Case study designs demand reflective researchers and in this study, I continuously deliberated, challenged and, when necessary revised my impressions. I referred my interpretations to two

independent coders (using Atlas-Ti software analysis and the process of emerging themes) as well as to the participants for appraisal.

The **interpretative epistemology**, although stated earlier as a contribution to this study, has been criticised for its lack of objectivity and ability to generalise to other contexts. However, I decided to choose this approach for that very reason, i.e. that reality cannot be predicted or controlled and that instead multiple realities exist and can be legitimised.

The core of this study, i.e. the facilitation or facilitator, has in itself also been challenged. **Justifying the need for a facilitator** was questioned by Berman et al. (2000) when team members were so adequately trained in holistic assessment and intervention that they were able to manage a clinical case without any assistance from an outside facilitator. In fact the study found that “meetings without the presence of a facilitator are more characteristic of the transdisciplinary approach” (Berman *et al.*, 2000: 629).

It is perhaps necessary here to distinguish between the facilitator of this study and that of the research study mentioned above. The latter is an external person who is not responsible for providing direct services to the client, but who enters the team to administer a holistic assessment and provide feedback. The description of some parts of this research was indeed so clinical that I was surprised the authors felt justified in naming it the transdisciplinary approach.

In my study, the facilitator can be any member of the transdisciplinary team and this role can rotate spontaneously as the need arises. The facilitator is therefore present from the beginning and does not leave the team until the end, wherever that may be. The facilitator is most likely a family member, community member or someone from the professional disciplines that can work within and co-ordinate with the client. It is a role that is sometimes taken in addition to functioning in another role, such as a nurse and it is a role that constantly rotates among the team members. Such a person does not only have the technical expertise needed for that particular situation, but possesses vital knowledge, abilities and skills in team dynamics and processes.

If one is to adhere steadfastly to the principles and indeed creed of the transdisciplinary and asset-based approach, then the role of facilitator as one whose assets are used to enable sharing and exchanging is inseparable to the team.

In the following section, contributions of this study will be discussed with reference to their implications on theory-building, practice and research.

5.6 CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.6.1 INFORMING ASSET-BASED THEORY

The greatest strength of this study, I believe, lies in its purpose to inform asset-based theory. A limitation exists in the body of knowledge surrounding asset-based theory and facilitation skills in asset-based and transdisciplinary teams and I believe that this study helped address this limitation to some extent.

Asset-based theory was informed by emphasising the importance of facilitation skills, as supported by literature. Emphasis also seems needed, however, on the necessity to acquire appropriate attitudes, approaches and knowledge in order to ensure successful implantation of those skills. The facilitator therefore not only needs certain skills, but needs to be skilled in the techniques, tools, knowledge, approaches and attitudes discussed in Chapter Four. Therefore, to effectively apply the attitudes, approaches and knowledge in an asset-based transdisciplinary team, one needs to have skills to do this.

Facilitation skills in asset-based, transdisciplinary teams differ from those studied and applied generically, although there are obvious commonalities. The inclusion of role release underscores the need to facilitate networking and encourage shared leadership, rather than a system of one-sided control or even guidance. In its inclusive approach, it strives to empower all equally and is community, as well as family-focused. By taking on an asset-based approach, perspectives are altered so that strengths are emphasised, not weakness; challenges are faced,

not problems; and conflict is replaced by a creative chaos, prolific in what it offers, rather than in what it removes or destroys.

The narrative approach also presented itself as a possible addition to asset-based theory. Eloff (2002) mentions that the narrative approach, in narrative therapy, rejects the deficit model which emphasises problems and encourages rather externalising and seeking the strengths of the problem situation and people. This therefore complements the asset-based approach and can be a useful tool in facilitating the changing of life stories for team members.

In practice, this could imply that especially health professional courses include student training in facilitation of teams and in the new asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches. Even on secondary levels at schools, such modules could be incorporated in the subject of Life Orientation.

Where research is concerned, greater attention could be given to studying the application of the asset-based approach in interdisciplinary circles and not only mainly in communities.

5.6.2 CONSIDERATION TO ETHICS

As mentioned previously, the interpretative epistemology aims to understand reality and not predict or control it. This can be made possible through the use of observation, interpretation and reflection. In this study the interpretative perspective allowed me to subjectively experience the meaning of facilitation skills in transdisciplinary and asset-based teams. It also allowed me to verify my interpretations against the views of others.

Due consideration was given to the ethics of this study. I was able to monitor my representation of the study through continuous reflection of the research process as well as reference to and control by members of the Early Childhood Intervention collaborative project, knowledgeable participants and two independent coders of the data transcripts, each using a different method of data analysis.

This has implications in that the contributions to theory, practice and research mentioned in this section are founded on sound ethical principles.

5.6.3 INTERPRETATIVISM COMPLEMENTING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A final aspect which I find satisfying is the fact that the epistemology selected for this study, namely interpretativism, complements the theoretical framework being explored, namely the asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches. In both instances, the value of multiple perceptions and subjective experiences were acknowledged.

For theory building this implies that an interpretative perspective can be integrated into the theoretical frameworks as an important starting point. The fact that multiple realities exist due to the differences in perspectives supports the belief that all views need to be valued in a transdisciplinary team and that these perceptions therefore act and can be used as assets. Consequently, in practice, these standpoints can be applied and promoted, especially among professional people who may not realise the value of non-professionals on their team.

5.6.4 EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION PROJECT

As mentioned before the collaborative project in Early Childhood Intervention Project which spurred this research has benefited from the provisional findings of this study. Interpretations from focus group interviews as well as research in literature were used for the Masters degree in Early Childhood Intervention (MECI) in the Educational Psychology elective module as was compiled by the Department of Educational Psychology of the University of Pretoria.

This study has therefore contributed to the theory and practice of the mentioned course in that it looks at the facilitation of transdisciplinary and asset-based teams. Such teams will become increasingly common in early childhood intervention cases because of the diversity of disciplines involved and, in especially rural South Africa, will be of vital importance in community work.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

As I mentioned previously, this study was limited in the variety of participants represented in the focus group interviews. This influenced the quality and richness of the findings and prevented me from comparing viewpoints. I believe that the asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches, although fairly highlighted recently and not evenly exposed amongst all the peoples of South Africa, could possibly already be in application in certain communities and cultures, not represented in this study. The use of the narrative approach in South Africa, for example, was mentioned in one of the focus group interviews. Furthermore the majority of South Africans are community-orientated and open to capacity building.

5.7.1 RESEARCH

Further research could be performed in the subject area of this study to include a **wider sample and variety of participants**. In the South-African context, investigation could also be carried out regarding the possible differences to be found among teams representing **diversity**. The influence of cultural differences on the effective functioning of a team can also be explored. These recommendations in research are made to obtain a relatively representative reflection of the possible issues that will need to be addressed and appreciated within South African teams that are transdisciplinary and asset-based in approach.

As a subject of interest, reasons can be investigated for why the asset-based and transdisciplinary approaches, as formal perspectives, have **not been communicated to all groups of people**, or why these approaches, if found to already have been in practice amongst non-professionals, were not revealed and formalised earlier. The findings of such investigations could point to loopholes or obstacles in the communication of information, education and support to all relevant people.

I also recommend that further research be carried out on the **interrelationships among professionals** and how the asset-based approach can be applied beneficially in these situations. The **role of the caregivers** as a professional function can also be investigated. This is important as the global tendency is towards involving all stakeholders in any given situation. This would imply that, especially within the health profession, caregivers and educators be given voice and that communal assets be realised.

Where further research of facilitation in asset-based and transdisciplinary teams is concerned, I recommend that this could be expanded to include not only necessary skills, but also the knowledge, attitudes and values accompanying them. It became clear in this study that skills alone do not suffice in the making of an effective facilitator, but that adequate and relevant knowledge and approaches, as well as an attitude of open-mindedness and concern are imperative to its function.

As example, this became evident in the issue of decision-making where controversy arose concerning who the ultimate decision-maker must be. Consensus does not mean all make the same choice. It implies a willingness to have every voice heard and a spirit of flexibility to concede to what the team deems important. I propose that this can be ensured if necessary knowledge is made available, transparent processes and communications are applied and views can be expressed in a non-threatening environment. Facilitators, and by implication, every member of a team, cannot make final decisions, but are made accountable as they ensure that all the correct procedures and approaches are applied and facilitate the group to make the necessary choice. Ultimately, however, in a supportive milieu, the client, who is also an equal member of the transdisciplinary team, is respected for how or if the decision is implemented. This is indeed ultimate empowerment of team members, allowing them to make decisions in their best interest.

Another example of the need to have sufficient knowledge and appropriate attitudes and approaches, in addition to skills, arose in the discussion of empowerment and validation skills, the transdisciplinary approach and a

supportive attitude. Teams cannot be truly transdisciplinary if there is little or no validation and empowerment of their members to experience worth, contribute their expertise and eventually partake in role transition. A threatening and fear-invoking environment can lead to disempowerment.

As was mentioned in section 4.3 and became clear in section 4.4, the themes, categories and subcategories discussed continuously overlap. It is in this that I hypothesise examples of combination categories for future research.

- **Holistic and Asset-based (Approaches) Community Work (Skill)**

In accessing, empowering and activating a community, the facilitator may need to have a holistic approach, promoting efficient interrelationships between the members of a community and helping them to access and mobilise their assets.

- **Flexible (Attitude) Creative Chaos (Skill)**

In order for “chaos” or conflict to be constructive, an open-minded attitude seems to be required where each team member’s needs are recognised and where there is willingness to live “in each other’s shoes” through role transition.

- **Management (Skill) of Specific and General expertise (Knowledge)**

Through networking, the facilitator could encourage transdisciplinary and asset-based team members to become well versed in their own fields and those of others. In making decisions, the facilitator could guide members, especially those taking on a different discipline role at role release, to have first-hand knowledge and experience of relevant expertise and so make informed choices.

5.7.2 TRAINING AND PRACTICE

Students and younger participants were not included in the focus groups of this study. The theory of transdisciplinary and asset-based approaches has also not been a common one in the lectures and textbooks of tertiary institutions. In practice, therefore, current and prospective facilitators could receive **pre- and in-service training** so as to acquire and practise the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to manage a transdisciplinary team with an asset-based

approach. Students, especially in the health professions, could be made aware of these novel approaches, as well as the pitfalls when facilitating multifarious teams. It seems therefore important for the facilitator to be knowledgeable as well as skilful in team dynamics and to prevent anything that could hamper the team process, especially when attempting to implement certain attitudes in a team where members may not hold or practise those attitudes and approaches.

Although seemingly contradictory to the spirit of asset-based theory, the challenges and possible pitfalls of facilitating asset-based, transdisciplinary teams must be acknowledged. In order for such teams to function optimally, all members need to be trained in the skills, attitudes, approaches and knowledge discussed in this study, prompting the question of practicality where availability, finance and competency are concerned. Resistance to such novel approaches, especially due to ignorance or feelings of being territorially threatened, is unavoidable and needs to be sensitively addressed.

It is consequently recommended that a programme be developed to focus on these important aspects. In the M(ECI) course mentioned earlier, this programme could form part of or as an elective module to the degree.

Besides training, it is also suggested that **health professionals** be encouraged through their affiliate bodies to incorporate the mentioned approaches in their practices and be open to including and exchanging various roles and perspectives for the benefit of the assessments and management of their clients.

5.7 FINAL COMMENTS

As a researcher, I found that this study offered me eventually much more than I had expected. The purpose was to explore the skills that could facilitate a transdisciplinary and asset-based team. What resulted were much wider and more complex perspectives.

I found that the title of this study needed to be expanded to include knowledge, attitudes and approaches in facilitation and not only skills. New themes were

provided to possibly inform asset-based theory and fresh outlooks arose from existing themes in literature.

The richness of the findings may also spur interest in other research and practical fields and will hopefully stimulate others to investigate and explore further.

I therefore hope that this study has not only been enriching and enlightening for me as researcher and future psychologist, but that it has added value to the body of knowledge of the academic and professional worlds.

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WEBSITE REFERENCE

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EXPLORING FACILITATION SKILLS IN ASSET-BASED TRANSDISCIPLINARY TEAMWORK

ADDENDUMS

- Addendum A:** Example of invitation letter to participate in focus group interview
- Addendum B:** Form presented to participants of focus group interviews
- Addendum C:** Field notes of researcher and some participant
- Addendum D:** Research analysis diagram
- Addendum E:** Excerpts of transcripts of focus group interviews
- Addendum F:** Participants' comments on provisional categories reached during data analysis
- Addendum G:** Priori constructions – Excerpt of prior expectations and reflections
- Addendum H:** Drafts of data analysis in progress

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ADDENDUM A

EXAMPLE OF INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

[Date]

Dear ****

My name is Judy Ferreira and I am a MEd student in Educational Psychology. Like you I have been part of the Early Intervention seminars led by Dr Erna Alant.

As part of my Masters course, I will be submitting a dissertation on the theme of: "How to facilitate a transdisciplinary team in early intervention which uses an asset-based approach".

Since you have been a part of these seminars and understand the concepts of "transdisciplinary" and "asset-based", I would highly appreciate your participation in my project.

The core of the research will be based on information derived from two focus group interviews. One has already taken place and I would love it if you could be part of the second one.

This will hopefully take only one morning of not more than hour, unless the group deems it necessary to discuss further or in greater depth. The main question to be discussed will be what you as professional and person consider to be effective facilitation skills necessary for a transdisciplinary team focusing on assets rather than needs. Much can be said too about such a team in a South African context. For your convenience a form to be handed out at the meeting is attached.

If you agree to participate please indicate two of the following days for which you will be available. Once I have everyone's response I will notify each of you on what seems to be the common date: *[Various dates provided]*

I look forward to your positive response and am convinced that all of us will benefit from this experience.

Kind regards

Judy Ferreira
MEd student: UP
Educational Psychology
Cel: 082 254 8580

ADDENDUM B

FORM PRESENTED TO PARTICIPANTS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

MAIN QUESTION:

What should a module theme in TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATION in an Early Intervention programme consist of?

EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE

Participants in the focus group need to take the following into consideration:

- I. This theme would form part of the **Educational Psychology** module
- II. An **asset-based approach** to early intervention is assumed
- III. Students taking this module would have already taken modules in the following when they commence with this specific theme module:
 - (i) A generic module in Assessment and Intervention in Early Intervention
 - (ii) A generic module in Family-centred intervention.

Thank-You

ADDENDUM C

**FIELD NOTES OF
RESEARCHER AND SOME PARTICIPANTS**

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

22 MARCH 2001 (10:00 – 11:00)

Ed/Law Building – Child Guidance Clinic, Room 2 -151

MAIN QUESTION

What should a module theme in TRANSDISCIPLINARY FACILITATION in an Early Intervention programme consist of?

Members? → Also in community (not necessary prof. team.)
Not all at same time..
Bridges between parents + prof. like bridge things.
Diverse giving support? → **EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE**
Participants in the focus group need to take the following into consideration:

Collaboration → Skill sharing
→ Role expertise
Cultural issues.
Consensus building
Models like not → don't include teachers. (for the others.)
Blend major partners
Difference → multi Trans Inter

- Goal setting → parents from beginning.
- What if there are no parents?
- This theme would form part of the **Educational Psychology** module
 - An **asset-based approach** to early intervention is assumed
 - Students taking this module would have already taken modules in the following when they commence with this specific theme module:
 - (i) A generic module in Assessment and Intervention in Early intervention
 - (ii) A generic module in Family-centred intervention.

Where do you start??

Dyer back from Glen + Westling + Jac.
♥ Thank-you ♥

Access → schools?
+ Distances

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

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 - (ii) A generic module in Family-centred intervention.

- Differs between Trans, inter-, multi
- Parent involvement → Part of the team
→ differ in a committee

- ♥ Thank-you ♥
- Def of term "facilitation"
 - Psychological effects of disability in family/com
 - "Skills" - when alone in community

Focus Group Interview 22/3/2001

- Communication Skills - free group discussion (open/closed) no of people
- Choosing members - who roles / members
puff-puffs & canny (accommodate both)
- ally to parent - knows setup is fairly, get involved
- difficult if 1 participant disempowers Empowers + validate all equally
- Inherent from beginning for all. Not optional for parents.
- know members from start..
- Group Leader Essential part - how well feel
- Facilitator starts before getting together - create atmosphere } Preparation for facilitation
- Physical environment of house is parent
- Avoid quiet trip parent ~~gets~~ gets. (Disempowers)
- Conflict NO - indicator if every man feels safe "Group Think" problem
= each agreeing to be polite. Mem. feel free to air
- Conflict Principles: negotiation skills, find common ground,
thoughts = pool + then draw out anonymously (AC) - Problem must not be person-specific.
- Diff types of behavior in group eg. noise, quiet, clown } Roles
- Each have thorough knowledge of group process, group work
- Fac. skills to go beyond group
→ asset based - ∴ being connector with others, resources
→ like case manager
- * - Know our field well in order to be transdisciplinary? Rather be good manager?
- Management skills. Networking skills.
- Facilitator role alternate because have to dep. on case so because "facilitator" is not doing job.
- Parent often case manager - difficult in beginning when mom finds out about child's disability - denial in parents

- Facilitator:
 - : open-minded to other disciplines
 - : well-read! of parent might be that a master prof.
 - : ^{emotional} supportive role to parent - is
 - : + open-minded to know + learn more.
 - : sensitive to culture of each member of prod. bodies
 - open to all types but with discernment.
- Knowledge about human rights
- 10 is what period of parent ready to be facilitated.
- be advocate - negotiate on behalf of s'else for of parent + child.
- Decision making
 - consensus of group
 - f. ability to prioritise
 - final decision = parent to one.
 - group process so not as of fac-ilitator.
- Seek common ground
- Compromise
- Brainstorm
- Conflict management
- * Access to group
 - as no parent, how make community to group ^{critical, what resources to group}
 - Common can make w/ break
 - Facilitate community - make them aware } all group members
- Facilitator chose in legislature.
- Creative Chaos - not through process.

Focus Group (Judy) (22 March 2001)

Judy
Imide
Natale
Kaiten
Kitty
Juan

- * Communication skills ← Questions
Group discussions
- * Members of the group
- * Who? Cover both.
- * Involvement
- * Disempowered
- * Basic principles of group work
- * Emotional component
- * Physical environment
- * Facilitation starts before the group;
- * Equality
- * Groupthink - want to prevent
- * Handle the conflict ← Common ground
Various solutions
- * Know different group behaviours;
- * Know the resource
- * Be well read
- * Supporting
- * Reflect
- * Project that you are an authority
- * Be open to alternatives
- * Knowledge of human rights
- * Be an advocate
- * Accessibility
- * Access to the Group
- * Everybody buying into the concept
- * Disability Awareness
- * Motivation
- * Perseverance
- * Creative Chaos

~~Group~~ ^{Team} members - dynamics in personality
Group roles
Each knows their role / function in group
Reassess every now + again - reflection
Each give ffb
Vague bodies
Non-threatening environment
Commitment to share + be part of team
Rules for group
Value each expertise in sharing - each verbally formulate own expertise
↳ assets of each discipline *

Challenge views, challenge if necessary.
Need leader - dep on problem + person through whom client came
- some parent

Family part of planning phase

S.A. = Africans want to be recipients - want prof. as in control.

Cultural awareness + sensitivity
Holistic approach to family - background of client
- economy + generational

Strong - personality clashes, diff. parents.

Find out what primary caregiver wants - Narrative approach
esp in African context.

* Realistic assessments of diff professions (counsel workers)

Working with community (community development)

- ↳ go through correct channels
- ↳ physically getting to know people
- ↳ know when to leave
- ↳ be where they are
- ↳ make aware they can help themselves

Paulo: Frère - Brazilian - make comm. aware of assets.

Sustainability dep on empowerment.

Explai procedures to parent; why you as prof are knowing less.

Professional jargon not. Terminology sensitivity - person with a...
Not patronizing.

Positive + supportive with each in group esp parents
↳ emphasize ⊕

Remember details esp what parent says eg things ^{other} going on in family.
other kids

Validate, personalise

Management styles.

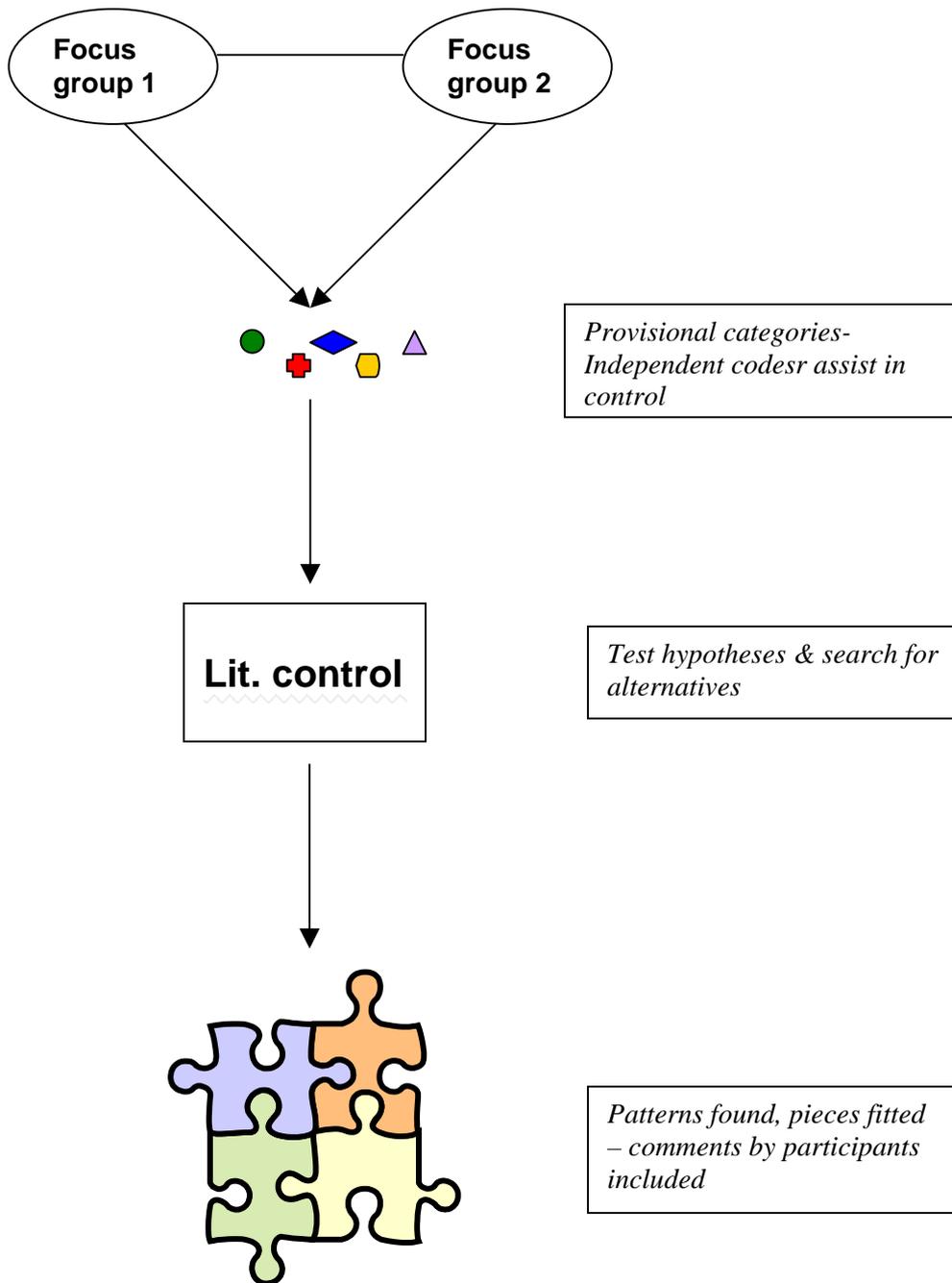
Communities: skills

Decision - options available - client chooses - informed options!!
- tell all & medly.

Each can have a say incl. parent. Once decision made, parent
will be supported. Respect choice.

ADDENDUM D

RESEARCH ANALYSIS DIAGRAM



ADDENDUM E

**EXCERPTS OF TRANSCRIPTS OF
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS - SESSION 1 : 22 MARCH 2001

.....

K: And this is just for psychologists?

I: No, this is actually for everybody.

K: Is it a core module?

I: No, it's not a core module.

K: It should be.

I: It will be embedded in the Ed Psych module. But the thinking was that students can move in the modules also. That was in the beginning of the qualification we said that, so that even students from other disciplines will have access to this.

K: But, basically now, it's for the educational psychology students.

I: That's where it's going to be written into the module.

K: So it's what's the element to facilitate in a transdisciplinary approach. Is that what it actually is?

C: What's confusing to me is that trans-disciplinary for me is when some of the team members are not there and you must take their role over. Is that part of it? So it's not multi or interdisciplinary.

I: Yes.

J: You'll notice I'll be keeping quiet for most of the time. That's the nice rule of a focus group.

I: She needs to bring everything together and get it in line with the literature of facilitation. Any thoughts?

K: Well one thing that is core or is communication skills and how to facilitate a small group discussion. What kind of questions should you ask? Um should it be open questions, closed questions? That sort of thing. How many people should be in a group, initially?

JA: Even before you start talking about the whole issue of the communication skills, this whole issue of the members, who should we include?

C: Yes and what are their roles?

JA: Of each of these people.

K: Let's come back to members and when what you want to do with this. We are actually working with the parents of disabled children out in the community. I should ask who are to be the members: should it be the professionals, uh, plus the parents or the people in the community, um, working with this specific child with the disability?

C: I would think that this thing should cover both because you must be prepared for whatever, your situation needs. Sometimes it will be parents, sometimes professionals, sometimes a combination of the two.

JA: I've always wondered and, Nicky, you'll be the one to answer that really:- I always have a problem with these teams that are almost like a professional team, including the parent. It's almost as if the parents are regarded as the add-ons and not really seen as

K: As the key figure.

JA: Shouldn't there be somebody to be almost an ally to the parents. I don't know, like a neighbour or the granny, or...

N: You're not always likely to have someone like that but somebody that helps you on a continuous basis-- someone who's involved and who knows the whole family set-up. Not just what the child needs, but what the whole family needs. It's really very important. Because very often it's, like you say, many times it's like the parent just sitting there on the side and everyone is saying this child needs this and that and the other thing and nobody really understands what the whole family is going through. That there is somebody else.

K: Because sometimes the parents also are not involved as we discussed earlier. In institutions, for instance, um...

JA: What if there is no parent?

N: Parents also sometimes just want to hand over everything to the professionals. They don't want to have to be involved. They want somebody else to come with a solution. [*General agreement.*]

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- JA: I think it's particularly difficult in a team if you sit with really disempowered parents. How to facilitate a group so that you're not disempowering those parents more and more as the group continues.
- I: So in terms of facilitation, the person doing the facilitation must be able to validate everybody equally, so that everybody is equally empowered in being part of this process.
- JA: And another thing that I really feel very strongly about is that everybody should be involved in the team from the beginning—that it's not for instance the professionals always start the team and then for the second get-together, then the parents come with, or then someone...that everybody buys in from the start. That it's not a process that's already started, otherwise you'll always get people who feel like add-ons.
- K: But that's also one of the basic rules of a group – um- who's going to be included in the group and from the start you should know who's the members of the groups and they should carry on. If you have a specific case, that those people involved in this specific case should buy in from the beginning and that shouldn't change much. But that's basic principles of group handling skills and so I really think we should really look into those skills and um incorporate that.
- N: And also by getting the parents there from the beginning. If you've got parents for example that are a little bit reluctant to get involved, you...it shouldn't actually be an option – everyone should be involved. *[Kate nods: Ja actually]*. You will be there from the first meeting and you are involved. I mean it's your child. And so if you bring them in on the second meeting, it's almost like – oh no, If you want to- you know- this is the date- you are there.
- K: But that's also part of what Jane said is empowerment. 'Cause some parents are empowered and others are not and if they're not empowered they don't feel they can contribute something to the session. No, I'm not coming, and so I think the empowering of parents of disabled children are so important. This is one thing that can be addressed in the group situation.
- JA: But I also think – Ja- within a group like that – to- have –everybody, how, how do you go about to really go about to make people feel equal? I think that's a very important thing. One of the assessments which I found was so nice, was half way through, the dad looked at me and said, "Do you have to study to do this?" *[All laugh]*
- I: Ja, because you make it look easy.
- JA: And I think that really says it because then I think then he also felt he could relate. 'Cause then he thought he can also so what I was doing. And I think one has to really think about do you go about getting that done.
- K: And that's something that a group leader should do. One of the main tasks –uh- a secondary goal, not a primary goal – *'n onderliggende, 'n tweeded orde doel* – what's that in English – a second order goal – that other people don't know about, but as a group leader that will be the function as to make the people feel comfortable – um – validated- but that's something that she should facilitate without them knowing.
- I: It's almost like an emotional or affective component of facilitation because – yes- we want everybody to be involved from the beginning, but if you don't give them something to come to,...I don't want to go into a group or somewhere where I don't feel welcome or where there's not some warmth or involvement. So there's almost...
- C: To me that also highlights and it's also in connection with what you've said [looks at Nicky] that the facilitation process actually starts before the group gets together and how to prepare and invite and so that you're also doing that in an empowering way.
- K: Even your surroundings or your physical environment in which you do the groups is very important – um – maybe in a house of one of the parents or um- but it can't be a cold, formal situation, 'cause then they feel, "Oh these professionals, they know everything and this is a cold, an emotionally cold setup".
- N: It's very intimidating
- K: That's things you said Chris- that's things is actually coming before you start with the group. It's the planning of the whole thing.
- JA: And I think the other thing is that everybody in the team or in the group should feel that they're getting something out of it and not – sort of, "Ag just now I'm going to have to go and listen to that mother carrying on about she's so busy all the time, so what's new?" Or the mother saying, "These professionals have anyway decided what they're going to do". So...

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- K: Ja, well, that for me, comes back to the group process. Because you have in your group process you will have your contract which you will sluit [Afrikaans for: close] and you go through the whole thing and in the end you will have this *afsluiting* [Afrikaans for: closing] where you will have the *napraat* [talking after] ...[Laughs]
- I: *Refleksie* [Afrikaans for: Reflection]
- K: Ja, and that's where everybody will say, "I've learned this today- I've learned this today. So that for me is so important to get the whole group process.
- JA: But what I'm saying is that this is also almost a mindset so that also goes to how your mind is set before you enter that group. 'Cause if you go into that group thinking, "Okay I just have to get this over and done with", it's different than when you go in and say, "You know I really want to gain something from this group".
- K: So how will you do that?
- I: Prepare?
- K: No, per person – the members in the group- 'cause the different members- like you for instance [looks at Jane] – you come into the group and think, "Nag, this is just a group I'm not going to gain anything from this". But it's your attitude- so you'll have to change your attitude.
- JA: Ja, and how do you do facilitate that?
- I: I think it links up also with what you said about the facilitation process: actually starting before the group and uh alluding to the fact that there's something that happens before. Doesn't that link to preparation for facilitation, because people think it's something you do by the seat of your pants. You go in and you facilitate – but you must be aware of your own thinking.
- K: How to prepare all the members?
- I: No, yours as the facilitator- but yes, the point that you are raising is how do you prepare all the others?
- K: Before they come to the group.
- JA: Before they come, Ja
- K: That's also one of the, uh, in the planning phase. You're coming into this group for this and this reason and this is what you're going to get out.
- N: And from the parent's point of view - if somebody phones you and says, "Ok we're having his meeting about Clarissa", um, your immediate feeling is, "Oh it's all these professionals –they're going to tell me what else to do; they make me feel guilty about what I'm not doing and what I should be doing". Because it is a constant guilt that you...everybody's bombarding you with these things: your child needs this; you should be doing that. But if you approach from the point of view, say for example, you say, "Well your input –we really need the professionals really need your input to make a decision" – then you feel like I'm actually worth something when I'm there. I'm not just going to be told.
- K: But that's a very important point you're raising. This guilt things, this guilt trip- because all the parents are going through a guilt trip.
- JA: You're not only going through guilt with your disabled child, but also with your normal child because now you're thinking...
- N: Neglecting
- JA: "now I'm neglecting these ones because I have to do all of these things".
- N: It's something that you live with permanently - like I'm not doing enough –um- you need to make the parents feel okay, now I need to do something!
- JA: Because guilt is quite disempowering hey?
- N: And it's something, it doesn't ever go away. Hopefully you learn to deal with it better, but it never goes away.
- I: Is it a parent thing or a woman thing?
- N: [softly] Parent thing. Well, in my case a parent thing.
- I: Mmm, okay..something that I would like to ask is um, in terms of facilitation – if everybody is kind of getting along, then the need for facilitation is not that big. But when the conflict comes into the process, what does facilitation need to be then?
- JA: Do you know what? Sometimes I think that the whole conflict issue is a very important part of the group because groups where there's no conflict also always scare me in terms of, isn't everybody then sort of scared to rock the boat that they just try go with the flow and then when they're alone again they anyway don't do what was suggested in the group. That they didn't have the openness

to almost say it in the group. So I sometimes think that the whole of issue of if there's conflict in a group is also an indicator of all the members feel safe enough in the group to really, really raise their own...

I: And it can be very constructive.

JA: It can be.

C: Ja, one should actually - in organisational behaviour, they have a term for that – groupthink – that the moment that the group is so cohesive - that then they...Ja, you feel so loyal to the others and you're too polite, so I think groupthink per se is something that must – that must know how to prevent that.

K: Prevent it –like Jane said, do you want to prevent it or do you want to open it up. So you actually...

C: No, groupthink means you don't want to say what you really think- you're very polite. You want a bit of conflict and opposing views because then you're always come to better solutions.

JA: What's that saying: If we all think the same, then it means that nobody is thinking. [*Laugh, all agree*]

I: Ja, that's true.

K: So the members should feel comfortable in the group to air their problems that they have.

I: But if there is problems, what must the facilitator be able to do?

K: Well handle the conflict. I think there are certain principles um

I: Searching for common ground?

C: Ja, it's also negotiation type of skills. What is 'om 'n situasie te ontfont?' [Afrikaans for: to defuse a situation]

JA: What we've done sometimes in groups like that is have everybody write their thoughts down without your name attached and put it into a pool and then just draw from it and then everybody just discussing it – saying my piece of paper says, "whatever" and then having everybody just talk around that. Because then it's not as if, "oh, it's you that fingered in the pie". That's the problem because then it just comes out.

I: In our department we will have to type it because we know each other's handwriting. [*Laugh*] Then we can say it's you.

K: Ja but it can be intimidating. Then you don't want to say...

JA: But something like that so that the problem isn't person specific.

C: Obviously what will also be important – I don't know if that's covered in another area – is just to know the different types of behaviour that you can get in a group. You know, the one person that's moaning all the time or wants to dominate the group all the time. How to handle that –it's part of the communication of the group..or one that doesn't say something or the wet fish that criticises everything.

I: And the clown.

C: And so on – those roles.

K: Ja, that's very important because you always get that.

N: Somebody goes on a tangent that's actually not really relevant, but it becomes a big issue.

I: Okay, perhaps I should just take a minute to reflect on what we've covered so far in trying to address this central question. We started off by saying that facilitation needs to focus a lot on the communication skills, asking the right questions, being able to facilitate group discussions. But then we said that we must actually go one step back in thinking about the members of the group - who is it that's going to be part of that process?; Who are the people who's going to be involved? And then we talked about the whole relation of equality, of everybody being equally empowered to take part in the process. We talked about the basic principles of group work – the group work theme seems to come up a lot – so that that indicates that the students must actually have a very thorough knowledge basis of what group work is about: the principles, the process, the skills, etcetera. We also talked about the emotional component – about how people feel – feeling validated, feeling welcomed. We talked about the physical environment of where will it be and then we said that facilitation should be starting before the group gets together. We wanted to prevent groupthink. We talked a bit about conflict management as a facilitation skill and also that they should know the different group behaviours. At this point what I would like to ask is – should we be thinking of facilitation purely in terms of a group or is facilitation as a skill, as a professional, something that can go beyond the boundaries of a particular group. And is it something that we want in the course?

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- K: Give me an example 'cause how would you facilitate if you don't have a group to facilitate?
- I: Um, Jude was doing some facilitation when she was inviting you to become part of this group. Ja, not necessarily having the forum of the group, but talking. If we are taking an asset-based approach, talking to a librarian and saying – I'm going to be referring a parent to you- would you please help her to find books on these and these topics. That's a facilitation skill – linking people together. If we think about the asset-based approach, it's one of the key things that a professional needs to do, is they actually become a connector of people and institutions and resources and support. So what I want us to do in the group is to think about facilitation a bit broader than purely in terms of group work. Do you understand?
- K: So you should have enough knowledge on different resources – will that be – when it's a case manager – something similar to a case manager?
- I: Mm? It can be.
- JA: I also think that's one of the things – if you think of transdisciplinary work in that manner – how um knowledgeable you almost have to be about your own field because if you don't know your field so well, you're not going to be able to do this facilitation and to actually be a bridge between the diff...
- K: But not only your field – you should know about the other resources or methods
- JA: Yes, but you have to be a very good OT before you can start working transdisciplinary. If you're just a sort of mediocre OT, you're not going to ever be able to feel safe enough about your own profession in order to get to the point when you can do role release and when you can share and when you..
- K: Shoo, I wonder.
- I: Do you disagree?
- K: I wonder. If I'm not a good OT, but I'm a good manager...
- I: And a good networker.
- K: And a good networker, I don't have to be a good OT. I can.. "Yes my dear come, that physio is the best, go to her" [Laugh] I don't need to be an expert in my own field as long as I can manage it or know all the networkings or know the different resources.
- JA: Ja, but then you're not going to be able to ever be the OT resource to that family necessarily.
- K: I can refer *mos* to another OT [Laugh]. What I think is, what I want to say is, you have to have good management skills and know how to network.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS - SESSION 2 : 24 April 2001

.....

B: So we need to find – and actually you know if we're getting to techniques, what we've experienced - because now for the past two years every Wednesday we do a transdisciplinary assessment and with kids nought to two years old - and what is really dependent on the techniques you use is the group members. Because we've changed one of our group members and the whole dynamics have changed. So to me that's something, you know, before you get to the techniques you use.

IS: What sort of disciplines are there?

B: Um, a speech therapist, audiologist, nurse, occupational therapist, psychologist. So it's very varied because we work on a specific group of kids, but the dynamics. You know the one profession we've changed and we've got somebody totally different and just there the personal dynamics of the one team member last year. I mean I must admit she was very domineering and she wouldn't listen to, you know, we're all very strong personalities and we all have a lot of experience, so obviously you know, I was assessing, I would say, "Okay, this is it", and for somebody to say it's completely the opposite...you do do that, but to get to actually decided what it is and you know she was so domineering. We would almost be hesitant to say what we thought. So if that's of use, I think that the team dynamics before you get to techniques.

S: Ja, now talking about the dynamics I think with a transdisciplinary team that the members should know which roles that every discipline plays in the treatment or in the approach that you're going to use when working with the client. Definitely.

IS: Personalities definitely I agree with because you know, personalities are extremely important. You know why would you, for interest sake, um, maybe be scared to, when she was so domineering.

B: Ja, we worked through that too you know because what it was..

IS: to protect the equilibrium, to not have a nasty, uh..

B: Yes and the fact is that we're doing this in front of 4th year students behind a one-way mirror. You're doing a training session.

IS: So you're on your best behaviour, Ja.

B: Exactly and you want to give them the model on what to do and you don't want to end up with this bickering and you know, sort of um...

IS: look like a lot of fish wives

B: Something like that, whereas you actually feel very strongly about it. Maybe a technique that flows out of that is what we've decided to do is, you know, this year it has really been working well – is like Sonja was saying, we've got our little way in which we do – each guy has got his role - when we meet every six weeks, so that means after every 12 kids we reassess, we have a little discussion to say "how were you experiencing, how did you experience this?" and we actually make changes. I mean we've made changes based on that.

S: Can I ask you, what's the role of the nurse in a team like that?

B: Sonja, we have two community nurses because many of the kids we see have cleft palate and they work with us on a team at the hospital, so primarily, they're the ones that do the follow-ups, they do the house visits. And two, we have a need for somebody who knows about the nutritional needs and also because they work in that specific clinic, they're also very, um, in touch with genetic disorders because we see many syndromes. So they've got multiple roles and they're there for the family, they're there for the nutrition or they're there for the genetics.

S: Because I always think what's the role of the nurse in a transdisciplinary work when working with Early Intervention because to me, me coming out of the community background or I'm teaching community-based nursing, we have a big role in the prevention promotion.

B: Ja, but remember this is a tertiary-level assessment.

S: So do you still do..?.

B: Yes, they do, um, when they go out they've got a mobile clinic that goes out and they identify cases who need sort of a specialist assessment. So yes they are very much into prevention and identification of kids for us. But we also use one – I didn't mention the role of the nurses that we see very strongly in terms of development, because they have a very good input to say but, "this child is okay in play" or you know normal-wise.

S: So I suppose you do a lot of referrals?

- B: Yes, they help us a lot.
- S: Which hospital is this?
- B: Pretoria Academic, but it's part of the university's cranio-facial disorders unit. It's a very big clinic.
- IS: Is it, is it mainly Black babies?
- B: No, white and babies from all over the country. We have very many Black babies.
- IS: So there's no specific community where they come from?
- B: No, because they come from that one, but the one we work in is at the university clinic with the transdisciplinary approach. It's also a team with the other one but there is consultation – you know, the experts and the clients on a Friday and each of the other team members sees the child, but there the community nurse is very important...but we're going off the topic.
- JU: It's alright. But can I just ask, what is the difference, you call this group a transdisciplinary one. How do you differentiate that from interdisciplinary? Because interdisciplinary is where you have all the disciplines and they do each have their different roles too. But the transdisciplinary, how do you facilitate that?
- B: Okay, um, as I think, the structure is two speech therapists do the assessments behind a one-way mirror. But we have all the team members sitting behind the mirror and then each one contributes as to what they think what they saw or what they want us to elicit. So it's a sort of a Rina-based assessment in a sense where only we have two facilitators working one with the child, one with the parents and then the other team members. You know, the nurse would say, "But you know you didn't ask enough about feeding" you know for instance.
- S: With transdisciplinary, it's where the disciplines flow little bit...
- B: Our roles are very – our *grense is baie* [Afrikaans for: boundaries are very]
- S: Ja, there are a lot of grey areas- we overlap
- B: And I think it's very difficult to do there because in all the stuff you've been reading about, role release is the most important part.
- S: 'Cause people can feel threatened by another discipline.
- B: Well, the occupational therapist we have is extremely experienced and works with very, uh, example, um, *erg gestremdes* [Afrikaans for: severely disabled] – oh, my English – kids I mean – she allows us to go into the children and she prefers not to come in unless she wants to do a follow-up with the children. So we actually do that part of the occupational therapy assessment, guided by her and in the feedback, they have the choice of coming in to speak to the parents directly which they often don't. We do the feedback for the team and we would say, you know the occupational therapist feels this.
- S: I think that is very important especially you've talked about the South African context. If we look at the rural areas, there's not always people of every discipline available there so I think we should know each other's roles and that grey area I think is very, very, very important. That we should take over the role of another discipline sometimes. And if we can't do it as thoroughly as they would have been doing it. And I think there the nurse is a very important role because she's usually the first contact of entry into the house system, sometimes the only contact that the patient has with a health system. Very often.
- IS: They are of utmost importance in social work also because not many areas have social workers. They're just too far and the nurses are there and they often have to be the social worker, to assess the family situation, socio-economics, applying all the grants, see that it gets to them and that kind of thing. So, personalities again comes back to feeling threatened if you think somebody else is trying to take over your role.
- B: And I also think not just personalities, Jude – that is important too, 'cause I mean that's all stuff that's in the literature anyway – is this commitment, because that's one thing we find and that is to share and to be part of this team. Because if you're not committed, you're not going to have role release. But Jude I was trying to think now, 'cause what you really want are the techniques and the skills are I feel, the first one I think upfront is that you want, sort of need to have a set of rules for the team members. As Sonja said, each one has got to know what the other does. But you've got to commit yourself to say, you know, we will do role release 'cause I won't mind if a nurse had to go in and do something. And how we got to that, we said, what is the expertise that each person brings into the team? And I think that's a nice technique because in writing the module, we've just been through that because you know our module has got to be in now and what we said is you know, we've been working in Early Intervention and there's so much. I mean we assess motor

skills or whatever –I'm a speech therapist - but we said is what we've got to focus on in, "what is it that your profession - as educational psychologist, social worker, nurse – what is it that you bring to the team that nobody else can do?" and to get to that core function and that's not very easy 'cause Early Intervention, the whole thing is, you know, holistic approach and everybody has got to do that. But we found if you use that and say if each one could formulate in short, in five to ten minutes, what expertise does Sonja have that I can't acquire that makes her a special team member and then you get to what are the skills that she has that I can also apply, without having to go through the twelve years of study or whatever. You know, so that's just a very practical one that we've found.

JU: Would you like to say something? [asked to Sonja who seemed to want to comment]

S: I'm just thinking of the word, *asset-based approach* 'cause I think these are the assets of these disciplines, what's the strengths of each discipline and then share that with the rest of the transdisciplinary team.

JU: If we take that situation that you had where somebody was very dominant and then you replaced them with someone else or another discipline. What would, now, you were able to do that because there were people watching. What do you do in a situation where you can't do that? How would you facilitate that?...I'm not just asking you [to Bridget], I'm sorry, I'm opening it up to the group.

IS: How would you address...?

JU: How, well, how would you address it? How would you facilitate a transdisciplinary approach, a team-work approach?

S: With the person that's very dominant.

IS: If you can't replace that very dominant person, um, you have to challenge her or him. If you cannot replace that person, I suppose if it can become so negative to the rest of the group functioning, um, it calls for extraordinary measures. You know, to call almost a meeting, nothing to do with the functioning of the group, but to address this.

S: Ja, what I think you must do, is not to attack the person, but maybe the problem specifically. Tell the person, "Yes we would like your views, but how do the other people feel about this?".

IS: Which of course is extremely difficult.

S: Very difficult, Ja

IS: Because people never see it like that and...

B: And then, Jude, anyway, in your transdisciplinary approach, that you always need a leader because you can't do this if there's not a designator that does the facilitation because that was part of the problem. The facilitator should, you know, if this person's dominant, say something like, "Okay, what does the nurse feel about it?"; shift the emphasis a little and even when you give feedback to the parents and everyone is there.

IS: Sharing the role.

B: Yes, because she saw a very specific problem in terms of motor planning which we feel there wasn't, so this was the topic and then the facilitator could have said, "Okay, you didn't think it was that, why didn't you think it?". So to directly address another group member to get it, but she didn't and that's why the problem arose. But you definitely do need a facilitator.

JU: Is this a facilitator or leader that will stay permanently in the group or will that alternate and change as things go on?

B: I think that depends on the team and on the cases- what the primary problem is. Because we feel, that depending on the primary problem of the child, determines the facilitator. If it's a communication problem, we think the speech therapist should be; if it's a health problem, then it's the nurse.

S: Or maybe the person through which the client entered into the deal can be the facilitator – maybe with the first group maybe.

JU: Would there be maybe a stage when the parent might be the facilitator, might be the leader in a transdisciplinary group? 'Cause as you say, we use the word *transdiscipline*, but it's very difficult to say *discipline* because the parent is just as important.

B: Yes, I think especially for you, what we've seen happening – I mean I'm not involved in that, but I have seen what happens – um, when for instance, children with Downs Syndrome have been mainstreamed, then the parents actually is the facilitator, 'cause they've got to get the other professionals to the teachers to get this situation working for the child in the mainstream. So they sort of do the advocacy for that.

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- S: I think something that Bridget's mentioning now, that's very important, that we also put a lot of emphasis on when we teach our students these days is that you must make the client and then the family, part of the planning process – that's very, very important. Because our perceptions of what the problem is may be totally different to what the client and the family sees as the problem. It's very, very important, for me, very, very important. So, as you mentioned, to make the parents or then the family part of the transdisciplinary team.
- B: But, once again, from the planning phase, because I just read up on stuff, "What is practice, best practice" and what happens in therapy. They did questionnaires and asked therapists and what was interesting is like what I said, perceptions of what the parents want and what the professionals do, but if they're not pulled in as a team member from the planning phase, you're not going to get them on board.
- IS: Would the involvement of the parent not inhibit the different members to really, you know...very often when we assess a child, we're almost personal, I mean personal perceptions in the discussions. Don't you think that might inhibit...?
- B: Why I say no so very quickly because we've been into this parent thing and we think that if you're not transparent, you're not really doing an assessment or, you know, sharing that information the way it should be. So, for instance, we write only one report and that goes to the parent and to all the professionals. And you know in the olden days we used to do a report for the parents and one for the professional and you know, you say, it could inhibit, but it's going to depend on the parents because Jude says "African situation". There's a lot of stuff in the literature that says Africans want to be recipients – they don't want to... 'cause it's a tough role to be part of a team and it's your child and people are going to discuss and say, you know, you could have done this differently. It's a tough thing for the parents and it seems that in African cultures, the Africans want to be recipients because they have respect for professionals and you have to be in the control and by bringing them on board, it diminishes your role as a professional but it gives them a bigger responsibility and it's a cultural thing so one has to be very careful with that. I don't have experience in that because you know, the African cultures have been very sophisticated that I've worked with. But maybe if you go in to the community...
- S: Ja, what we experience and um I'm looking from now a teaching role, is that the students also sometimes don't understand that it's so important to look at the cultural aspects. And actually with a holistic approach, when you approach the client and his family and that's what we do in the medical faculty, we have a community-based education committee where people of different disciplines get together and we then we also have transdisciplinary team discussions at Hammanskraal. Our students go there and then one of the disciplines has to present a case and then the other disciplines have to say that their role will be. And then usually the discipline who present the case has to do the lecturing and what I've really experienced is that the students also don't look at the background of the clients and they give this first-world advice and it doesn't suit the client.
- B: Absolutely.
- S: So I feel very, very strong about that: that you have to put that point, that you have to include the client in the team. And then like she says that you have to know about the culture. That's very important.
- B: And, I think this is social work, but with the ecograms, I mean ecopmaps and genograms, you know, I've decided that's a nice technique, to promote techniques, if you're talking about parents because you get them on board right from the beginning. 'Cause that you're going to use at your initial interview anyway; to get to know the family and to find out what their assets are. And that's a very nice way and that's social work role.

ADDENDUM F

PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS ON PROVISIONAL CATEGORIES REACHED DURING DATA ANALYSIS

----- Original Message -----

From**

To: Judy Ferreira <judite.f@freemail.absa.co.za>

Sent: Friday, May 28, 2004 1:32 PM

Subject: Re: Feedback on 2001 focus groups please

Judy

> Of course I remember you! Thought that you had finished already! Good luck as this
> sounds exciting. I enjoyed reading through the transcripts of my group(session 2) and
herewith my suggestions for adaptations based on what I gained from reading through
the transcript of my group:

> 1. ATTITUDES:

> -we clearly emphasized 2 other aspects which I do not feel any of your points

> cover in this section, namely:

> -respect/regard for the client

> -positivity/positive attitude of professional

> 2. APPROACHES:

> based on our discussions feel that "Sharing strengths' is inappropriate and would
replace it with Adopting an asset based approach

> 3 KNOWLEDGE:

> Would like to see inclusion of our points made re:

> -SA contexts is much more specific than diversity

> -would replace field specific with discipline specific because the field is ECI and the
same for all(semantic!)

> -NB we included a lot on techniques/tools and it is crucial to have knowledge of these
as well e.g. ecomaps, genograms, approaching parents,caregivers from diverse cultures

> 4 SKILLS:

> -I would replace accessing communities with community work because we addressed
> the issue in a broader context as well

> -Group work is a misnomer specifically discussed teamwork NOT group work

> -Under teamwork we also paid attention to the roles and functions of disciplines

> e.g. prevention, promotion so I think you need to add that

> -skills in techniques could also be placed under skills although we had techniques

under knowledge - but we did allude to professionals being skilled in doing what they do!

> -you could also include skills in applying approaches e.g. asset based approach as we
mentioned that theoretical knowledge alone was not enough -under management skills I
would include decision making based on the content of the discussions

> Hope this will help

> Good luck

> Bridget

>(Communication Pathology)

----- Original Message -----

From: ***

To: Judy Ferreira <judite.f@freemail.absa.co.za>

Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 3:43 PM

Subject: RE: Feedback on 2001 focus groups please

> Hallo Judy

>

> Thanks for the feedback.

>

> In terms of what you've sent:

>

> Concepts:

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- > Perhaps "Ethics" instead of "ethical" (compare to diversity, group work etc
 - > which are nouns; ethical knowledge implies that the "knowledge" acts
 - > morally)
 - > Diversity: "Cultural sensitivity" would be more positive than the current
 - > "cultural differences". To be sensitive you must "know" the differences.
 - > "Cultural sensitivity" was used by one of the participants.
 - > No clarification for Management, but not in my understanding of the term the
 - > best "category" for "networking"
 - > A concept that I miss is the skill of Leadership that involves setting a
 - > vision, aligning team members, directing within a changing context etc.
 - > Quotes that support this are:
 - > "one person should just lead the group"
 - > "working towards a common goal"
 - > 'keeping the enthusiasm alive"
 - > "we" reference to a changing environment and "new legislation"
 - > Hope this is of help.
 - > Success with your studies
 - > Kind regards
 - > Christine
 - > Physiotherapy
- > p.s. What I forgot to add is that "relationship management" is now used at e.g. business schools for "conflict management"

>----- Original Message -----

From: ***

To: Judy Ferreira <judite.f@freemail.absa.co.za>

Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 11:16 AM

Subject: Re: Feedback on 2001 focus group please

Hi Judy,

Unfortunately didn't have time to read the transcriptions, but it looks quite impressive - can't believe that we came up with so many good ideas! It is interesting that so many things were mentioned under skills and that knowledge has much less. The one thing I would like to stress is that although field specific knowledge is obviously very important, a more general knowledge base is also necessary. In the past the whole focus was to start broad and then gain more depth and insight knowledge and currently much has also been written on turning this process around. In whichever way one looks, I think the important part is that both aspects should be included.

> Good luck!

> Jane

>CAAC

----- Original Message -----

From: ***

To: Judy Ferreira <judite.f@freemail.absa.co.za>

Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 10:56 AM

Subject: Re: Feedback on 2001 focus groups please

> Dear Judy,

> This is brilliant! I am very comfortable with what you have done here!

> All the best with writing up!

> Kind regards,

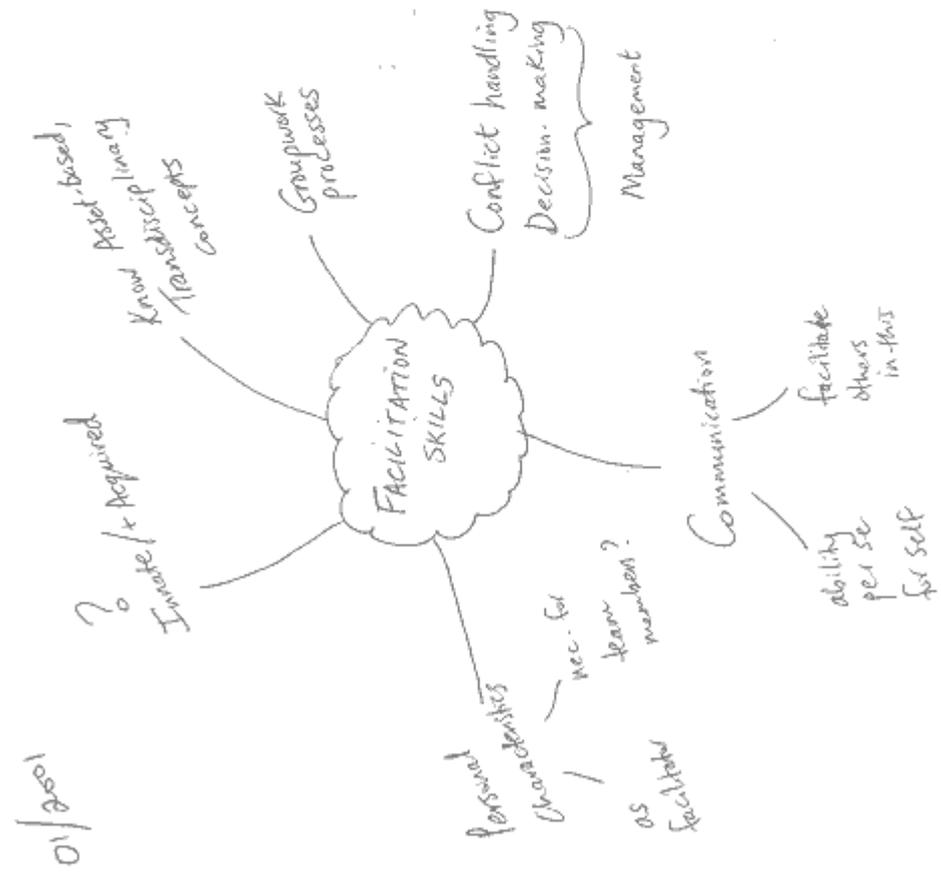
> Irene from Educational Psychology

ADDENDUM G

PRIORI CONSTRUCTIONS

EXCERPT OF PRIOR EXPECTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

- INTERVIEWS**
- Need people:
- * Who know/have experience in A-B/T-D approaches, in TD teams
 - * Health professions - Social workers, psych, med physios, OT, speech etc
 - * Educators, policy makers
 - * Community leaders
 - * Parents, family, kids?
- ?
- May discuss challenges, burden in facilitation, not just assted-based
 - Logistics - getting all together @ same time
 - Neutral meeting venue
 - Incentives? sheet of paper
 - All must participate / focus
 - + Members to share successes
 - + challenges in groupwork



ADDENDUM H

DRAFTS OF DATA ANALYSIS IN PROGRESS

Handwritten notes:
 Why I say no so very quickly because we've been into this parent thing and we think that if you're not transparent, you're not really doing an assessment or, you know, sharing that information the way it should be.

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B: Why I say no so very quickly because we've been into this parent thing and we think that if you're not transparent, you're not really doing an assessment or, you know, sharing that information the way it should be. So, for instance, we write only one report and that goes to the parent and to all the professionals. And you know in the olden days we used to do a report for the parents and one for the professional and you know, you say, it could inhibit, but it's going to depend on the parents because Jude says "African situation". There's a lot of stuff in the literature that says Africans want to be recipients – they don't want to... 'cause it's a tough role to be part of a team and it's your child and people are going to discuss and say, you know, you could have done this differently. It's a tough thing for the parents and it seems that in African cultures, the Africans want to be recipients because they have respect for professionals and you have to be in the control and by bringing them on board, it diminishes your role as a professional but it gives them a bigger responsibility and it's a cultural thing so one has to be very careful with that. I don't have experience in that because you know, the African cultures have been very sophisticated that I've worked with. But maybe if you go in to the community...

S: Ja, what we experience and um I'm looking from now a teaching role, is that the students also sometimes don't understand that it's so important to look at the cultural aspects. And actually with a holistic approach, when you approach the client and his family and that's what we do in the medical faculty, we have a community-based education committee where people of different disciplines get together and we then we also have transdisciplinary team discussions at Hammanakraal. Our students go there and then one of the disciplines has to present a case and then the other disciplines have to say what their role will be. And then usually the discipline who present the case has to do the lecturing and what I've really experienced is that the students also don't look at the background of the clients and they give this first-world advice and it doesn't suit the client.

B: Absolutely.

S: So I feel very, very strong about that: that you have to put that point, that you have to include the client in the team. And then like she says that you have to know about the culture. That's very important.

B: And, I think this is social work, but with the ecograms, I mean ecograms and genograms, you know, I've decided that's a nice technique, to promote techniques, if you're talking about parents because you get them on board right from the beginning. 'Cause that you're going to use at your initial interview anyway; to get to know the family and to find out what their assets are. And that's a very nice way and that's social work role.

IS: What do you do when you get a very dysfunctional family? You know in Mamelodi where I work, the families are so dysfunctional, um, that to bring them on board during the first discussions would be so destructive for the relationship because the kinds of facts that we discover, you know, I mean the incest, the...

B: Ja, but I don't think you would bring the whole family on board, I think we were told – it's in our module now – you know, we sort of thought, "how do you go about deciding who it is from the family that you're going to do and if we're working from an asset-based approach, I would say the one who is the caregiver..."

IS: The primary caregiver.

B: Ja, not even always the primary caregiver, but the concerned caregiver. You know, who's the one that's really worried about this child and wants this child...

IS: The stable factor in the child's life.

B: The stable one, but you know, I hear what you're saying.

IS: I would love to sit in on one of those and just, um...

S: I think it depends on what the problem of your client is.

B: Ja, 'cause I hear what you're saying. If it's a father that's abused a child, you don't want him on your team. But in that family, form an asset-based approach, there's going to be a granny or aunt or somebody that is worried about the child who wants something better done and that is your biggest ally as a professional.

IS: We just find that, you know, very often, we've had to, um, for example with incest, we have a very passive mother, I mean very passive to the point of not protecting her own child and um to get her to grow or to have any hope that this situation will change. One could never call her passive and that's the kind of language the other professionals will use, so its, um, I have to win her over to bring her to my side and to encourage her strong points, whereas labelling and terms by other people might just, you know, we might just lose her and there would be no hope of reconstructing that family. That's why I'm concerned about that parent, but I suppose it depends on...um

S: If you work with a child with a cleft palate, okay, it depends...

IS: On the problem

S: One should also do a very good assessment of the client and the support systems – to do that before you decide on how you're going to approach this situation.

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Major	Unique	Etc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comm. skills ✓ Mang. skills ✓ Conflict man. skills - non-threatening ✓ Decision making Networking Emotive - validate ✓ - empower ✓ - quality - needs of parents ✓ ✓ Groupwork knowledge - roles etc. - plan Negotiation Negot Knowledgeable K 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Narrative ✓ Asset-based Holistic ✓ Reflection ✓ Cultural sensitivity ✓ Adaptable ✓ Comm. responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, prep. Ethics - rights Commitment CT ✓ involvement Fac. legislative leg.
<u>Popular</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comm. Non-threatening Mang. Conf O-m Validate Empower) E needs of client Groupwork knowledge + roles G Commitment / Involvement Reflection Cultural sensitivity Community © 		

①	②
<p>Communication skills Negotiation skills Groupwork - roles - membership - rules - process, principles Ally, supportive, advocate - fac. legit.</p>	<p>Comm. skills management skills Supportive, positive, acknowledge (A-B) Groupwork - dynamics, personalities - membership - roles - clarify! - rules!</p>
<p>Validation, mutually beneficial Empowerment - equally Opening, planning Commitment</p>	<p>TD structure/process - 2 assess, other support Overlapping roles, role release Asset-based, acknowledge each's expertise & Equality, not patronising, and beyond Planning - client present from start, then review Commitment - share, role release</p>
<p>Non-threatening environment Reflection Emotional needs of parent, stages of grief</p>	<p>Non-threatening environment Genuinely interested in client's life, warm in in reflection Caregiver's needs, wants, perspectives</p>
<p>Constructive conflict, creative chaos Avoid groupthink Networking, knowledge of own, others, resources Case manager</p>	<p>Conflict management - confront problem or not person, delegate, other mins considered Transparency Realistic expectations, assessment - ! - in depth knowledge of role / functions</p>
<p>Adaptable - Δ fac as needs / group Δ's Parent as facilitator Involvement of all esp parents Open minded - not tribal</p>	<p>Fac Δ as case / team / contact person Δ's Sustainability - real empowerment Validation Client involvement esp in trad. african ex</p>
<p>Trustworthy Ethical - rights, informed choice Decision-making - consensus, compromise, respect, negotiate, bridge</p>	<p>Community responsibility - process of assess, en, motivate, needs, empower, awareness Asset-based D-Model + informed choice, respect. I.D. support systems, primary caregiver Narrative approach to them Holistic approach, ecology, generations</p>
<p>Community responsibility - assess, awareness, etc Cultural sensitivities</p>	<p>Cultural sensitivity - understand background</p>

EXAMPLES, USING Atlas.Ti

Code: Conflict {6-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:37 (433:450) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

JB: Do you know what? Sometimes I think that the whole conflict issue is a very important part of the group because groups where there's no conflict also always scare me in terms of, isn't everybody then sort of scared to rock the boat that they just try go with the flow and then when they're alone again they anyway don't do what was suggested in the group. That they didn't have the openness to almost say it in the group. So I sometimes think that the whole of issue of if there's conflict in a group is also an indicator of all the members feel safe enough in the group to really, really raise their own... I: And it can be very constructive. JB: It can be.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:41 (477:482) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

Kit: Well handle the conflict. I think there are certain principles um I: Searching for common ground? Kar: Ja, it's also negotiation type of skills. What is 'om 'n situasie te ontlont?' [Afrikaans for: to defuse a situation]

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:42 (483:501) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

JB: What we've done sometimes in groups like that is have everybody write their thoughts down without your name attached and put it into a pool and then just draw from it and then everybody just discussing it - saying my piece of paper says, "whatever" and then having everybody just talk around that. Because then it's not as if, "oh, it's you that fingered in the pie". That's the problem because then it just comes out. I: In our department we will have to

type it because we know each other's handwriting. [Laugh]
Then we can say it's you. Kit: Ja but it can be intimidating. Then you don't want to say... JB: But something like that so that the problem isn't person specific.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:79 (1082:1094) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

J: How would you go about getting consensus if there's a bit of --going back to the conflict we were talking about before. How would you get through that conflict and get to that consensus where there might be radical I: differences.
Kit: I think there's methods and techniques that you can do...What!?! [Laugh] I: The first thing would be to search for common ground I would say and then to spend some time on that and to work from there.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:80 (1095:1103) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

N: From a parent's point of view, say, for example,

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everybody in the group is saying, "Your child should have this and this and this at this stage" and you're saying, "That's not going to work", then you have to work on some sort of compromise between yourself and the parents, for example. Kit: Negotiation..

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:81 (1122:1127) (Super)
Codes: [Conflict]

Kit: Strategies that you can use, but...[Laugh] J: But in a transdisciplinary group, there's not going to be a person that's going to be an expert in the negotiation, so this is all coming from..

Code: Considerations and skills: {1-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:25 (279:290) (Super)
Codes: [Considerations and skills:]

Kit: And that's something that a group leader should do. One of the main tasks -uh- a secondary goal, not a primary goal - 'n onderliggende, 'n tweeded orde doel - what's that in English - a second order goal - that other people don't know about, but as a group leader that will be the function as to make the people feel comfortable - um -validated- but that's something that she should facilitate without

them knowing.

Code: Decision making {6-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:73 (963:986) (Super)
Codes: [Decision making]

Just looking at ...a decision has to be made and the role of the facilitator is changing, depending on the situation, how are we going to go about making that decision? I: That 's a very good question because that's the danger of - um - Facilitation by definition is very flexible. J: Yes I: So that's a good question. Kit: But one of the...traditionally one of the functions of a case manager will be that - um - to make a decision on what does this child need at this point of time? Uh, is it speech therapy and speech therapy can handle the positioning of this child or whatever when she is in that session. But, uh, that will come out in the case discussion where everybody is present. That's traditionally how it happens. Kar: But one thing I must say is to me the onus is with the parent. I mean the group can give her all the information, but..

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:74 (987:999) (Super)
Codes: [Decision making] [Empowerment]

JB: But I really think that a decision is based on the consensus that the group must reach because if you have one person - the one that in the end you make the main decision - then we're getting to people being um being on a higher level than some of the other people in the group. I think that's being counter productive to empowering the whole group and really working in a transdisciplinary manner. I really think that's something that one debates until you reach consensus.

Code: Dynamic roles {8-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:51 (663:685) (Super)
Codes: [Dynamic roles]

JB: Yes you see because the other thing that for me is quite important is - case managers is a term I sometimes wonder about. If we really think practically, in terms of a group- a transdisciplinary group. Because I feel that the person who is the main facilitator in that group might change according to the needs of the family. Because now when *** goes to school [looks at ***], suddenly the teacher's role becomes much more important than the other people's roles and I think that is also something that we need to think about if we're talking about facilitation. Is, how do we actually, when we talk about the roles and this and that - how to objectify it within the group so that now the parents can become the case managers for a period and then we move again because then...so that they.. Kit: So it will change as the needs of the child changes.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:52 (686:710) (Super)
Codes: [Dynamic roles] [Empowerment]

Kar: Ja, I was just also thinking that one of the skills is to facilitate the process when you're not the facilitator. Because you might be in a situation like that as well - where the facilitator is actually not doing his or her role properly. I: Yes Kar: That you are a team member. I: And the point raised by both of you now is that facilitation does not necessarily fall on the professional. I've seen parents doing an excellent job of facilitation. Kit: They should actually be the case manager. JB: Isn't the parent the only consistent member? The parent is the only team member that will remain consistent in that child's life. N: Ja, I mean we are 9 years down the line and the people involved in the beginning are not involved anymore. I: Exactly. Kit: And other people come aboard. N: It changes constantly.

Code: Emotional support {1-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:86 (1213:1219) (Super)
Codes: [Emotional support]

Kar: That also stresses what you've just said now is also a motivating or keeping the enthusiasm alive, because the process - it's a bumpy road. Kit: That's very important, the emotional support just to carry on with this thing. N: Just to persevere.

Code: Empathy {2-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:35 (384:402) (Super)
Codes: [Empathy] [Preparation]

N: And from the parent's point of view - if somebody phones you and says , "Ok we're having his meeting about Clarissa", um, your immediate feeling is, "Oh it's all these professionals -they're going to tell me what else to do; they make me feel guilty about what I'm not doing and what I should be doing". Because it is a constant guilt that you...everybody's bombarding you with these things: your

child needs this; you should be doing that. But if you approach from the point of view, say for example, you say, "Well your input –we really need the professionals really need your input to make a decision" – then you feel like I'm actually worth something when I'm there. I'm not just going to be told.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:36 (403:425) (Super)
Codes: [Cautions] [Empathy]

Kit: But that's a very important point you're raising. This guilt things, this guilt trip- because all the parents are going through a guilt trip. JB: You're not only going through guilt with your disabled child, but also with your normal child because now you're thinking... N: Neglecting JB: "now I'm neglecting these ones because I have to do all of these things". N: It's something that you live with permanently - like I'm not doing enough –um- you need to make the parents feel okay, now I need to do something! JB: Because guilt is quite disempowering hey? N: And it's something, it doesn't ever go away. Hopefully you learn to deal with it better, but it never goes away. I: Is it a parent thing or a woman thing? N: [softly] Parent thing.

Well, in my case a parent thing.

Code: Empowerment {9-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:18 (205:215) (Super)
Codes: [Empowerment]

JB: I think it's particularly difficult in a team if you sit with really disempowered parents. How to facilitate a group so that you're not disempowering those parents more and more as the group continues. I: So in terms of facilitation, the person doing the facilitation must be able to validate everybody equally, so that everybody is equally empowered in being part of this process.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:23 (253:262) (Super)
Codes: [Cautions] [Empowerment] [Inclusion considerations]

Kit: But that's also part of what Juan said is empowerment. 'Cause some parents are empowered and others are not and if they're not empowered they don't feel they can contribute something to the session. No, I'm not coming, and so I think the empowering of parents of disabled children are so important. This is one thing that can be addressed in the group situation.

Code: Flexibility {3-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:60 (816:827) (Super)
Codes: [Flexibility] [Knowledge prerequisites]

I: If they do identify a knowledge gap, they must be able to read up on it very quickly. Don't close it and say, "No, because I don't know about it, this is not worth it". N: And doctors are wonderful at doing that. Kit: Oh yes N: They just shut the door. No. And then three years down the line they say, "Have you ever considered this and this and this" and like three years ago you actually suggested it to

them. [Chuckle]

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:62 (834:845) (Super)
Codes: [Flexibility] [Guidance]

N: Parents will try a lot of things and the facilitator maybe has to ..'cause you also don't want them to go into avenues where you know- you know it's a pitfall - you know that it's going to be a disappointment because there are so many things out there, so many promises and, um, things that draw you in and make money out of parents. And as a facilitator you'll be able to guide them through that but you can't say to them, "You can't do that".

Code: Group process {3-0}

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:30 (330:343) (Super)
Codes: [Group process] [Reflection]

Kit: Ja, well, that for me, comes back to the group process. Because you have in your group process you will have your contract which you will sluit [Afrikaans for: close] and you go through the whole thing and in the end you will have this afsluitin' [Afrikaans for: closing] where you will have the napraat [talking after] ...[Laughs]
I: Refleksie [Afrikaans for: Reflection] Kit: Ja, and that's where everybody will say, "I've learned this today- I've learned this today. So that for me is so important to get the whole group process.

P 1: Transcript.focusgroup1.txt - 1:44 (502:519) (Super)
Codes: [Group process]

THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	FOCUS GROUPS	LITERATURE
ATTITUDES / APPROACHES	Asset-based		<p>“If we think about the asset-based approach, it’s one of the key things that a professional needs to do, is they actually become a connector of people and institutions and resources and support” (1I)</p> <p>“what is the expertise that each person brings into the team?”(2B)</p> <p>“asset-based approach... what’s the strengths of each discipline and then share that with the rest of the transdisciplinary team”(2S)</p> <p>“encourage her strong points” (2B)</p> <p>“recognise their strengths” (2B)</p>	<p>Resource-based approach in order to develop self-sufficient teams (Kinlaw, 1993);</p> <p>Strength-based perspective for forming effective partnership between parents and professionals (Bruns & Steeples,2001);</p> <p>Capacity building emphasis (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993)</p>

	<p>Commitment/ Involvement</p>		<p>“everybody should be involved in the team from the beginning” (1JA) “to share and be part of the this team. Because if you’re not committed, you’re not going to have role release”(2B) “insisting that the parent should be there and that way you’re really empowering the parent” (2IS)</p>	<p>Commitment to process and outcome; Continuous interaction- Qualities of effective teams (Briggs, 1993, 1997) True commitment part of grounding phase of teamwork (Jones, 2002)</p>
	<p>Flexible</p>	<p>Open-minded</p>	<p>“our perceptions of what the problem is may be totally different to what the client and the family sees as the problem” (2B) “you’ll have to change your attitude” (1K) “be open-minded to all the other disciplines and also to be well-read about things” (1N) “open to alternative medicine” (1C)</p>	<p>Change leaders who tolerate ambiguity and are flexible (Briggs, 1996) Every team member must eventually become a catalyst communicator who is open-minded (White & Nair, 1999)</p>

		<p>Role change</p>	<p>“the main facilitator in that group might change according to the needs of the family” (1JA) “facilitation does not necessarily fall on the professional, I’ve seen parents doing an excellent job” (1I) “it changes constantly” (1N) “depending on the primary problem of the child, determines the facilitator”(2B) “maybe the person through which the client entered into the deal can be the facilitator”(2S)</p>	<p>There is a need for parents and professionals to sometimes switch roles (Mittler & McConachie, 1983).</p>
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	<p>Holistic</p>		<p>“facilitate ...between the various disciplines...also...between parents and the school or the community...the whole sense of everybody knowing about everything and linking people to each other” (1I) “your whole life is shaken” (1N) “the whole thing is...holistic approach and everybody has got to do that”(2B) “ecomaps and genograms... that’s a nice technique” (2B) “we’re only interested in this child and we don’t see the family as a whole” (2IS)</p>	<p>Systems thinking - One of the qualities of effective teams (Briggs, 1993, 1997) Asset-based approach is holistic in perspective (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003) and synergistic in paradigm (Trivette et al., 1997) Parents perceive generally more holistically (Winton, 1988) Integrate holistic approach in grounding phase of teamwork (Jones, 2002)</p>
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<p>SKILLS</p>	<p>Interpersonal: *Communication *Guidance</p>		<p>“one thing that is core is communication skills...what kind of questions should you ask” (1K) “you need someone who’s going to take you and guide you in the right direction” (1N) “you also don’t want them to go into avenues where you know it’s a pitfall...as a facilitator you’ll be able to guide them through that” (1N) “communication skills”(2S) “we teach our learners... a lot about the narrative approach” (2S)...“that technique in the African context is great because they’re story tellers of note and that’s the way they communicate. So the family story is a nice technique to use.”(2B) “avoid professional jargon” (2J)</p>	<p>Open communication - One of the qualities of effective teams (Briggs, 1993, 1997) Communication needs to be clear and consistent (Fisher & Ury, 1991) One of problems in parent-professional relationships is problems and differences in communication, such as use of jargon (Salisbury & Dunst in Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997) Team barriers include ineffective communication (Lamorey & Ryan, 1998) Quality of an effective team includes open communication</p>
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	<p>Community</p>	<p>Access/development</p>	<p>“provide people with the opportunity to gain access into the group...facilitate that the whole community buys into this whole concept of the group...raise awareness” (1JA) “trained in the working of communities and doing community development”; “may facilitate groups in a community”; different ways of entering into a community”; “the perception of what this community needs” (2S)</p>	
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		<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>“advocate on behalf of the family sometimes if they’re disempowered...negotiate on behalf of someone else” (1C) “programme of community empowerment...first awaken the community...then you go through the process of conscientiation...make them conscious of what they already have” (2S)</p>	<p>A community has a better chance for desired change if the emphasis is on building the community’s capacities (Smith, Littlejohns & Thompson, 2001) The professional in the asset-based approach should help communities to acknowledge and use their resources (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003) Capacity building of communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993)</p>
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		Legislature	<p>“you are in this community...even go further and facilitating change in legislature for that matter” (1C)</p>	<p>There are <i>inter alia</i> legal motivations for promoting inclusion of families in educational programs (Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997:60)</p>
	Conflict resolution		<p>“you want a bit of conflict...because then you always come to better solutions” (1C) “handle the conflict” (1K) “search for common ground” (1I) “creative chaos” (1JA) “If you can’t replace that very dominant person...challenge her or him...calls for extraordinary measures...how do the other people feel about this?”(2IS) “not to attack the person, but maybe the problem specifically” (2B)</p>	<p>Every team member must eventually become a catalyst communicator who believes that conflict is constructive (White & Nair, 1999) A milieu for constructive conflict resolution is important and enriching for a team (Rees, 2001)</p>

		Negotiation	“negotiation type of skills ...to defuse a situation” (1C) “you have to work on some sort of compromise” (1N); “... negotiation” (1K); “...brainstorming for different solutions” (1I)	Principled negotiation is a method to assist facilitators to resolve conflict by focusing on mutual gains or an independent standard (Fisher & Ury,1991)
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	<p style="text-align: center;">Decision-making</p>		<p>“to make a decision on what does this child need” (1K) “decision based on the consensus that the group must reach” (1JA) “executive power of actually implementing that decision is not with the group...parent needs to decide” (1I) “groupthink...know how to prevent that” (1C) “put all the options on the table and let the client make the choice. It must be an informed choice” (2S)</p>	<p>One of the components of a transdisciplinary model is consensus decision-making (Briggs, 1997). For effective functioning of a team there must be power within the group to make decisions or influence (Rees, 2001). Tendency now is to create collective empowerment where all team members form part of a synergy to make decisions (Turnbull, Turbiville & Turnbull, 2000). Groupthink impedes group performance and decisions made will be questionable (Robson, 1995)</p>
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