

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review relevant literature illuminating issues of power relations involved in participatory knowledge creation and problem-solving for community capacity development and transformative change, which lie at the heart of this study. I first outline the concepts of power, empowerment, partnerships, and Gaventa's (2003a) theory of the 'power cube', all of which contributed to the study's theoretical framework.

2.2 POWER IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (PR)

In the next section, I discuss relevant literature relating to the overview and meaning of power.

2.2.1 OVERVIEW AND MEANING OF POWER

Power relations and power dynamics in research are concepts that have been widely and extensively written about (Gaventa, 2006; Minkler, 2005; VeneKlasen, 2005). In the field of PR, in particular, power and power dynamics are highly acknowledged and actively addressed. In PR, it is specifically recognised that a study of partnerships should analyse the power dynamics within systems (Lister, 2005). Scholars in the fields of anthropology, communication, sociology and psychology, for example, view and regard power as among the fundamental dimensions of interpersonal relationships (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). Power can thus be viewed as an important aspect of all relationships, especially close personal relationships, based on the belief that when people are in close relationships they are likely to depend on one another to attain their goals (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

When people's goals are in conflict, power may be exercised to achieve one's own objectives at the expense of those of the other partner. However, power has important implications in partnership research even when conflict does not occur (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). This study explored how power relations among participants (co-researchers and university researchers) were both revealed and concealed in PRA, focusing specifically on forming partnerships. The framework for understanding power relations and power dynamics is

predicated on feminist standpoint theory as this could potentially provide insight into power, knowledge and social structures (Brookfield, 2001; Jacques, 1992; Ritzer, 1992), which in turn could shed light in the understanding of both the ‘inside’ beliefs, desires, and thoughts of the actor (co-researchers) and the context in which actions that take place are needed to interpret and comprehend experience.

Literature on power is marked by disagreement over the basic definition of power. It is widely debated in social and political theory (Lukes, 2005), and has sparked widespread and seemingly intractable disagreements amongst philosophers, social and political theorists who have devoted their careers to analysing and conceptualising power (e.g. Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1957; Foucault, 1982; Freire, 1987; Gaventa, 2006; Lukes, 1974, 2005). Although the concept *power* is easily used in everyday life, there is no exact definition of what it means. The concept and its definition vary, depending on contexts and situations.

Broadly, power refers to the capacity of individuals to make choices and transform these choices into development outcomes (Chambers, 1997, 2005; World Bank, 2004). Empowerment, in this sense, implies the process of increasing such capacity through people’s learning and ‘capacity building’ (Lister, 2000) allowing people to have freedom of choice and action (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2004). Power is understood as ‘power to’; it is enhanced through gaining new skills by active practice or by gaining access to externally generated scientific information relevant to people’s objectives (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993). In addition, ‘power to’ offers an understanding that social change can be accomplished from an ‘evolutionary’ (Tembo, 2003:25) process of people learning to become aware of power dynamics.

It is imperative for power relations to be analysed as a way to assess contexts in which decisions about capacity development are made (Gaventa, 2006; Lukes, 2005). According to Lukes (2005) power is viewed by some as being held by certain people, of which some are powerful while others are relatively powerless (Lukes, 2005). Others see power existing everywhere and it is expressed in relationships and discourses which affect everyone, and yet no one hold it (Foucault, 1980). Power can also be expressed as a ‘zero-sum’ concept, whereby, for certain people to have power, implies that others must give up some power (Gaventa, 1998). However, the powerful rarely give up power, thereby resulting in conflict and ‘power struggles’ (Gaventa, 1998:17).

Power is not an absolute resource; its form can be altered by different contexts - 'it can be used, shared or created by actors and their networks in multiple ways' (Lukes, 2005:90). For example, power can be viewed from a 'negative' trait – where power can be viewed as exercising control over others; or in a positive action, where power can be regarded as capacity and agency to be wielded for positive action (Lukes, 2005). However, many researchers focus on the definition of 'power over'. Weber (1978:53), for example, defines power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance'. Dahl (1957:202-203) offers what he calls an 'intuitive idea of power' according to which 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.

Therefore, it seems as if scholars from different fields agree that power is the capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular to influence the behaviour of another person (Berger, 1974; Foa & Foa, 1974; French & Raven, 1959; Rollins & Bahr, 1976). It is about the degree to which actions by one person or a group can be shown to have a discernible effect on the behaviour of others (Pfeffer, 1997). For the purpose of this study, I lean towards adopting a definition of power as capacity and agency to be wielded for positive action (Gaventa, 2005). Power is the capacity of individuals or groups to access and control the process by which decisions, particularly those that affect their own lives, are made (Friedmann, 1992). Empowerment, from this perspective, stems from powerless people's access to political space (Clark, 1991; Friedmann, 1992). Powerless people assume an active part in reconstructing the public domain, helping to create a political space suitable for working out the policies that will sustain a development that involves them. Empowerment in this view focuses on 'social changes by structural transformation' (Tembo, 2003:30), meaning that rules and resources have to be achieved in order to change priorities and ensure that the powerless individuals' interests are pursued (Giddens, 1979).

2.2.2 OVERVIEW OF POWER THEORISTS

Since this study is about power-sharing partnerships as experienced by teachers in a PR project, I now briefly explore some major theorists on power as background to the study. Theorists concerned with power can be grouped into two categories. The first group takes a structural conflict approach, such as Lukes (2005), Marx (1959), Giddens (1979) and Gramsci (1957). This position contrasts with that of Foucault (1980), Bourdieu (1986) and Taylor (1998), who view power to some extent in more fluid terms, seeing it everywhere and as

something that everyone can aspire to and grasp by deciding to participate, learning the rules of engagement and becoming empowered. These theorists provide analyses that generally include the role of agency in the overall dynamics of power relations. I next briefly discuss five major theorists who have conceptualised the meaning of power, and on whose theories I relied on in planning and understanding this study. I do not discuss these theories in depth in this section, but merely provide an overview of the main viewpoints of each.

2.2.2.1 Mills (1916-1962)

According to Mills (1916-1962), individuals are naturally subjected to structural limitations in the everyday running of their lives. Individuals live within structural systems that determine their lifestyles. Eloquent explaining the structural limitations to running everyday lives, Mills (1959:3) states:

What ordinary men are directly aware of and what they try to do are bounded by private orbits in which they live; their visions and their power are limited to the close-up scenes of job, family, neighbourhood; in other milieu, they move vicariously and remain spectators.

In particular, Mills (1959) focuses on the idea of ‘powerlessness’. The structure in which an individual finds himself could contribute to rendering him powerless. The existence of powerlessness increases when familiarity with the structural condition is limited. In this view, power is seemingly everywhere and determined by the structures that we live in. I interpret Mill’s view as saying that a lack of power occurs when individuals do not have agency, and cannot control and make decisions about their lives because they are ‘bounded by private orbits in which they live’ (Mills, 1959:3).

2.2.2.2 Foucault (1926-1984)

Foucault, a 20th-century (1926-1984) theorist, can be regarded as one of the most influential theorists on analysing power concepts. His conceptualisation of power, when compared with that of other theorists preceding him, seems to have departed radically from previous modes of conceiving power. As such, I found it rather challenging to incorporate his ideas with those of others. For Foucault, power is fluid and available everywhere and it is not held by a certain privileged, but instead, power is expressed and enacted rather than possessed (Foucault, 1980). Foucault examines power at its core by questioning the extent to which individual action is determined by structure.

Foucault shows the significance of agency to a greater extent than his predecessors (Marx, 1959; Mills, 1959; Weber, 1978). By this, he essentially argues that power is found everywhere and exists on many levels and that the way in which power exists, is therefore influenced by the time and space in which it is being studied.

On social structures and power, Foucault explains that power is not an inherent property of an individual, but should be viewed as gained from a set of forces that influence people's discourse and behaviour, and as a result makes people acquire their social positions (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Foucault (1980) further argues that power is only accepted within society on the condition that a substantial part of it is concealed, hence allowing some amount of freedom. Power can be seen as force relations that may become institutionally crystallised and as a result become 'embodied in the state apparatus' (Foucault, 1980:92). Therefore, power is seen as a form of agency that can take on a structured form.

Foucault's recognition of the dual existence of power, internal and external to the individual, is central to this particular study of power relations in teachers' experience of participating in a PR project. From this perspective, relations could develop from forces within a participatory intervention research project and from forces within the individual, representing the research project. Furthermore, relations are developed through interactions with people inside and outside the research project.

2.2.2.3 Freire (1921-1997)

Freire describes a model of power that falls somewhere set between a Marxist model of economic power and Foucault's view of power as being pervasive. These accounts see power as having transformative properties (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970:47) builds on Gramsci's interpretation of power, 'seeing it as something, which is created by people when they transform their world through collective action, reflecting social struggles of communities of interest'. Freire (1970) encourages a questioning and critical attitude not only to education, but to life in general. It is an attitude that fosters curiosity and progresses to seeking answers. Therefore, Freire (1970) focuses on consciousness, critical awareness and the ability to transform circumstances, thus embracing the politics of liberation and altering power relationships.

2.2.2.4 Bourdieu (1930-2002)

For Bourdieu (1930-2002), ‘power is not a separate domain of study but stands at the heart of all social life’ (Swartz, 1997:6). Bourdieu focuses on the complex relationship between power and culture, specifically locating cultural reproduction of power that is rooted in class-based power and privilege (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu identifies the reproduction of social and cultural power in individuals and groups that strengthen developed powers and norms. Bourdieu examines relations between social structures, systems of classification and language. This correlates Foucault’s idea that power exists at all levels and is everywhere and always presents, and thus cannot be related to one structure. Bourdieu goes on to argue that ‘a cultural field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities’ (Webb, Ackerly, McPeck & Donoghue, 2002:21).

2.2.2.5 Lukes (1948–current)

Lukes (1974) provides a classic distinction between three dimensions of power, in which I include his ‘radical view’ on power. The simplest dimension, derived from the definition by Dahl, is that power is when ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’ (Dahl, in Lukes, 1974:9:10). According to Lukes (1974:15), this is the ‘one-dimensional, pluralist view of power, involving a limited and behavioural focus on overt decision-making about political issues where there is an actual, and thus observable, conflict of interests, often expressed as differing policy preferences. Bachrach and Baratz (1962:952) offered what Lukes defined as the two-dimensional view ‘that extends the scope of power to control over the agenda of political decision-making, that is, to determining which issues can be discussed and which ones are excluded as detrimental to the interests of the powerful’. This is achieved through institutions and the ‘mobilisation of bias’ that is built into them and constitutes a sphere of ‘non decision-making’ (Bachrach & Baratz, in Lukes, 1974:18-19).

However, in Lukes' view, the two-dimensional approach is merely an extension of the one-dimensional view, restricting itself to the exercise of political power by individuals that prevents observable grievances (overt or covert) from entry into the decision-making process. Lukes criticised both the one- and two-dimensional view of power and offered another

dimension in explaining power, which he terms the three-dimensional or radical view of power. The three-dimensional view of power incorporates the first two dimensions but expands on these to include both overt and covert observable conflicts, and those that might be latent (Lukes, 1974; 2005). One of his significant arguments is that power relationships are not just individual acts but those of social forces and collectivities. The other is that power does not only operate through observable conflicts and grievances, but can also be exercised to shape and control desires and beliefs contrary to people's interests (Lukes, 1974; 2005). These could be done through the 'control of information, through the mass media and through processes of socialisation' (Lukes, 1974:23).

2.2.3 POWER AND PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES

PR strives to 'produce knowledge that clarifies and seeks to change the maldistribution of power and resources and can probe the power relationship between researchers and research participants' (Wallerstein, 1999:43). It is therefore the goal of PR to create symmetrical relationships between the researcher and participants where both voices are equal. Gaventa and Cornwall (2006) furthermore contend that the issue of power is central to PR as a relationship of domination in the control and production of knowledge. Knowledge, as an important aspect of power, determines the explanation of what is conceived as crucial in research. Through access to knowledge and participation in its production, use and dissemination, actors can affect the boundaries of power. In some instances, the asymmetrical control of knowledge productions of 'others' can severely limit the possibilities of agency in the process of knowledge production (Van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009).

Since power is inherent in all human interactions, it is apparent that the issue of power will be present when people from different walks of life interact. As Prilleltensky (2005:120) argues, power pervades the way 'we think about and treat the people we work with'. Lack of attention to the inevitable power dynamics of research can easily jeopardise the research process (Chung & Lounsbury, 2006; Johnson & Mayoux, 1998). Power relations and dynamics may create challenging situations in relationships between researchers and communities (Wallerstein, 2005). Not taking cognisance of power relations and dynamics in PR may affect the implementation and utilisation of findings in the research process.

Van der Riet and Boettiger (2009) found that in rural contexts in particular, the relative difference between the knowledge, power, capacity, and access to resources of a researcher

and that of the research participants is always apparent. They further argue that under such conditions, it becomes a serious challenge to truly sustain equal participation and collaboration between researchers and participants. In extreme cases, one might find that community members have little say over the research process, with researchers having ‘power over’ the whole research process (Van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009).

PR is based on the postulation that social change is likely to be achieved and sustained if the process engages the community on which it focuses (Chambers, 1994a). On another continuum, researchers and members of a community work together to define and implement the research process, thus reflecting ‘power with’ others. In a pure PR process, power typically shifts from those who have ‘power over’ the research process to the participants themselves. The PR process emphasises a shift from a monopoly of ‘experts’ who hold ‘power over’ others by controlling the production of knowledge, to allowing co-researchers to take control of the process of knowledge production and to have ‘power with’ others (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006). This shift may ultimately enable participants to have the ‘power to’ manage and control all aspects of their life and development over which they formerly did not have control (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Johnson & Mayoux, 1998; Wallerstein, 1999). The whole process of a shift in power in PR is what Chambers (1994a:80) refers to as ‘handing over the stick’ to the participants, so that they become enabled to be in control and owners of the knowledge production process.

While PR accentuates knowledge, power, capacity, and access to resources as forms of power, power may be exhibited in other forms such as gender, age, level of education, and the ability to speak in the same language as the researcher (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006). It should be noted that groups of research participants are not homogenous (Campbell, 2002; Guijt & Gaventa, 1998; Woodhouse, 1998), and that hierarchies within the research community will generate power differentials. Wallerstein (1999:41) comments that ‘communities are not monolithic, nor can they be idealised’. Some ‘voices’ of the very participants in a research context may be strong and powerful and thus dominate others (Wallerstein, 1999). Within the very communities, it could be easy to relate and engage elite, educated men and articulate groups as compared to working with marginalised members of a community (who at times are not fluent in the language of the researcher). Given this situation, the power in the interaction may be in favour of the more powerful members of the participant group.

Dynamics of power within a research interaction affect who participates in the process, and thus who is active in the research process. As discussed above, power can be in favour of the researcher or those within the communities who are the elite or good at articulating themselves (Johnson & Mayoux, 1998; Wallerstein, 1999). PR creates ad hoc structures through which participants make decisions and are actively involved regardless of their background. By exploring power relations, I hoped to find out how co-researchers make decisions, become actively involved for their voices to be heard, to participate fully in the production of knowledge, and feel enabled to control and manage resources. At a community level, power is participation and participation is power. An early conceptualisation of community level power suggests that power can be studied by looking at who participates and who gains and loses from the formal decisions made within conventional systems and institutions (Dahl, 1961; Polsby, 1963). This idea is based on two questionable assumptions: (1) 'that formal community decision-making processes are open to anyone'; and (2) that the openness of these decision-making processes means that leaders should be viewed 'not as elites, but as representative spokesmen for a mass' (Gaventa, 1998:6).

Power as the extent to which one can control the agenda of political decision-making, that is, to determine which issues can be discussed, as well as power as the capacity to act and have agency, is also affected by participation. VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) eloquently elaborate on how power and participation are related in PR. They distinguish three ways in which 'participation' can affect power relations. First, participation can be viewed through the dimension of visible power, which is the 'ability to influence formal decision-making processes, with power as 'agency' openly held and used by people and interest groups, and empowerment as having a voice and influence in formal processes' (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002:261). Secondly, participation can be analysed from the perspective of hidden power. Hidden power is about who participates in setting the agenda (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). The third lens of participation is referred to as invisible power, which is based on culturally embedded norms (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002).

The presence of multiple, diverse voices are highly congruent with power relations in PR. When stakeholders are included and given a voice in PR for meaningful interaction and dialogue, it can equalise power relations and thus create a situation in which stakeholders have a sense of equal ownership of the project. Through equal participation of both partners, the findings will become more meaningful and useful to them (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Equal participation challenges both partners to share power and decision-making as they

journey with each other. It is important to make sure that participation is authentic, not just rhetorical (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Participation itself therefore challenges existing hierarchies and power relations.

In a grassroots community development project, Uphoff (1991) concluded that when participation is inclusive and recognises the diverse voice of all partners, what is learnt from the discussion and from the process of reaching consensus about questions and engaging with each other is very important. Partners thus have equal ownership of the project and feel in charge. The impact of participation rests on bringing together, on a level playing field with the same agenda, groups of people who have diverse, unique perspectives, and seeing what transpires in an effort to affect change (Uphoff, 1991).

2.2.4 POWER AND PARTICIPATION

I next discuss literature related to power and participation in PR.

2.2.4.1 Participation in PR

PR is increasingly being recognised and adopted as an innovative and effective way to build strong partnerships with communities (Flicker, Savan, McGrath, Kolenda & Mildemberger, 2007). PR aims to produce empowering outcomes such as increased community capacities and broader stakeholder participation in decision-making (Lennie, 2005). Promoting PR as a methodological collaborative approach to research with practitioners and community partners can inform practice, programmes, community development and policy, while contributing to the scientific knowledge base (Small & Uttal, 2005), and facilitating positive social change (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donohue, 2003). The broad concept of community is used throughout this study to describe a geographic unit, or a community of individuals with common problems, issues, interests or goals (Meyer, 2006).

Literature on PR includes sources from multiple disciplines (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Selener, 1997; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003), such as community development, psychology, health, education and anthropology. The common ethos of PR is co-learning, a desire to apply the results of research to practical problems rather than purely scholarly quests to advance the boundaries of knowledge, and a sharing of power among researchers and community members. Mompati and Prinsen (2000) emphasise that PR is a method that seeks to maximise

the equal involvement of all members of a community in planning their collective development. It is purported to overcome cultural, political, and economic barriers to meaningful participation in development planning. In line with this argument, the current study utilised and maximised the participation of teachers as co-researchers in the STAR project.

A key assumption in PR approaches is that accessing the least powerful members of a community, and engaging them in a research intervention, will enable transformation. This prioritising of the ‘last’, the more marginalised and disempowered sections of a community (Chambers, 1994b), is a characteristic of the political and social dimension of PR. Accessing ‘local knowledge’, or the knowledge participants possess based on their everyday practices and experiences, which is essential to their survival in that particular context (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001), is central to PR processes. I agree that it is useful to highlight how this may relate to changing the dynamics of power in a research situation. Gaventa and Cornwall (2006:123), citing work by Robert Chambers (1997), reason that:

... by circumscribing the boundaries of what is knowable and treating other forms of knowledge as if they were mere ignorance, Chambers argues, professionals produce and reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and power that place them in the position of agents who know better, and to whom decisions over action, and action itself, should fall.

This has the potential effect of devaluing and eradicating the knowledge and experience of research participants.

Acknowledging research participants’ local knowledge has two functions. Firstly, ‘development processes designed to bring about social change that are based on what people know may have a higher success rate because they can enable participants to be less dependent on outside resources and knowledge, thus ensuring greater sustainability’ (Metzler, Higgins, Beeker, Freudenburg, Mantz, Sebturia, Eisinger, Fuentes, Gheisa & Palermo, 2003:64). The STAR intervention, which is based on the asset-based approach, subscribes to the principles of mobilising existing assets, strengths and resources. Research participants hold perspectives which are uniquely informed by their daily activities. Participants can express these perspectives through defining the research problem according to their criteria, and through using their own terminology and constructs. This focus on the ‘local’ voice is critical. Participatory processes which focus on contextualising participants’ experiences and on obtaining their ‘meanings’, acknowledge the complexity of human experience (Gaventa &

Cornwall, 2006). The current study subscribes to the guiding principles of acknowledging the complexity of human experience as espoused in feminist epistemology. Secondly, the mere process of researchers recognising the knowledge that research participants bring to a situation may shift power dynamics. If the knowledge that participants possess is the primary focus in a research interaction, and it is valued, participants' distinctive versions and visions are owned (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006). The researcher is no longer in possession of a definitive perspective, because participants have power to impart information in the research process. This 'restores their agency as active subjects' (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006:123), and influences their participation.

Cleaver (1999) illustrates the need for a more complex understanding of issues of efficiency and empowerment in participatory approaches. Two issues in particular are examined: ideas about the nature and role of institutions, and models of individual action. Cleaver (1999) argues that heroic claims are often made about the impact of participatory approaches to development, in particular, claiming that participatory approaches results in efficiency and effectiveness of investment and of contributing to processes of democratisation and empowerment. It is assumed that the conundrum of ensuring the sustainability of development interventions can be solved by the proper involvement of beneficiaries in the supply and management of resources, services and facilities. However, Cleaver (1999), contest that there is little evidence that participation is effective over the long term for materially improving the conditions of vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change (Cleaver, 1999).

The STAR project has been in existence since 2003 and the current study seeks to gain insight into how teachers as co-researchers have experienced power during this time. Again, Cleaver (1999) claims that whilst evidence for efficiency receives some support on a small scale, evidence of empowerment and sustainability is limited, and very much based on the rightness of the approach and process, as opposed to the magnitude of the impact. Therefore, participation is much reliant on an act of faith in development; something people commonly believe in and rarely question. This act of faith is based on three main tenets: that participation is intrinsically a 'good thing' (especially for the participants); that a focus on 'getting the techniques right' is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches; and that considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive (Cleaver, 1999).

Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) conceptualise participation in research as a continuum with various degrees of community control over the process of research and its outcomes. At one extreme, community members have little say over the research process, and researchers have ‘power over’ the process (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). At the other extreme, researchers and community members work together to define and implement the research process, reflecting ‘power with’ others (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). In the PR process, power should shift from those who have ‘power over’ the research process to the participants themselves. The PR process shifts the monopoly of ‘experts’ who hold ‘power over’ others by controlling the production of knowledge, because it enables people to take control of the process of knowledge production and to have ‘power with’ others (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006). This shift may ultimately enable participants to have the ‘power to’ manage and control aspects of their lives and development over which they formerly did not have control (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Johnson & Mayoux, 1998; Wallerstein, 1999). Sharing power with community members can lead to more accurate research results (Viswanathan, Ammerman, Eng, Gartlehner, Lor & Griffith, 2004), a sense of empowerment among community members, and changes in existing power structures that shape decisions and outcomes (Green, Raeburn & Ottoson, 1995).

Participation in research and community development processes is not uncontested. For instance, questions can be posed about the degree of participation, the source of power within the research process, and the researcher’s and participants’ motivation for participation (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Arnstein (1969) conceptualised participation as a ladder with eight levels of participation, each representing increased community power over the final product. Arnstein’s (1969) ladder has been adapted many times and appears in diverse sources, including international literature on development, health, and participatory democracy (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Connor, 1988; Rifkin, Muller & Bichmann, 1988).

Moving along the continuum from left to right on the continuum, the level of responsibility accorded to community participants increases. At the far left is the conventional research situation where the community is involved passively as recipients of the research findings and possibly as subjects. In this case, decisions about the research design are in the solemn hands of the ‘experts’ and community members are only informed of the relevant results. One step to the right, researchers consult with members of the community to improve the efficiency or validity of their work. Here, Chung and Lounsbury (2006) state that the role of the subjects may be limited to evaluate the transparency of consent forms, or suggest changes to protocols

that are more acceptable to subjects. The responsibility accorded to community members is limited, as researchers seek input on specific tasks. Researchers retain control over the research and make all final decisions.

As one moves to higher locations along the continuum, community members become increasingly involved as they assume greater influence and responsibility in the research process. What differ is not so much the tasks in which community participants are engaged, but the way in which they work with researchers. In the state of mutual consultation, community members and researchers develop a more committed, ongoing relationship with the work, using their complementary expertise as a means to enhance its quality and relevance. However, the final decision-making rests with researchers. Yet in contrast with the previous level, community members operate with a greater understanding of the entire project and its goals. Their involvement is less fleeting and is part of an ongoing dialogue with researchers. Citizens' advisory councils in which breast cancer patients and families work with researchers to address issues of mutual concern are a case in point (National Health Service, 1999). Patients may for example help to identify priority concerns for future studies or help to interpret puzzling research findings (National Health Service, 1999).

Finally, at the extreme end of the continuum, viz. empowering co-investigation, researchers and community members are viewed as equal partners in the research process. In this case, power-sharing becomes the norm for decision-making. An example includes a long-term PR project conducted with the Mohawk community in Canada which aimed to decrease Type 2 diabetes in children (MacAulay, Law, King & Steward, 1998). In this case, the community was a full partner in the research, in setting goals, target groups, implementing health nutrition policies and evaluating research results. In other cases, researchers essentially work for the community, empowering them to make final judgments about the course of the research and the use of its products (MacAulay *et al.*, 1998; Travers, 1997).

The proposed continuum provides a compact explanation for the diverse interpretations of 'community-based' and 'participatory' literature. Theoretically, PR is situated at the right-most end of the continuum where power-sharing is the norm. These research situations have the greatest potential for identifying solutions to problems as they acknowledge the power structures underlying such problems. In two case studies conducted in India and Morocco on the effects of participatory development, relative political equality was achieved and a

‘transformative type of participation that used invited spaces to ensure that visible power structures were made more democratic and accountable’ (Pellissbery & Bergh, 2007:298).

Cornwall and Gaventa (2000) point out that not all forms of institutionalised participation are in fact ‘good’, particularly when individuals lack the power to be heard. In such cases, participation can actually ‘reinforce exclusion’. Mercer (2002) affirms this in her study on how women in local organisations can use their social status and financial gains as a strategy. Mercer (2002) concludes that local social, cultural, political and economic conditions may influence people’s agendas and motivations for getting involved or participating. She further indicates that participation may result in unequal processes in which individuals that are better off are able to take the norms and values of dominant development discourses.

These findings and conclusions are similar to those of Goebel (1998) who did a study with rural community members in Zimbabwe on participatory partnership. In practice, the level of participation can vary, even among projects that aspire to more emancipatory goals (Rifkin *et al.*, 1988). Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) maintain that the quality of participation may fluctuate depending on a complex set of conditions. Participation may begin at one level, progress to another as trust builds or dissipates, and end at a completely different level. Despite much of the rhetoric surrounding the discussion of participation, experiences with new forms of participatory governance show participation to be neither straightforward nor easy (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Nonetheless, true participation that is built on equal regard for the partners and the flattening of power relations will result in empowerment. In a later section, I discuss the concept of empowerment and how it is related to partnership.

2.2.4.2 Participation and agents of change

There is increasing global interest in PR for promoting the institutionalisation and spread of participation in society (Taylor & Fransman, 2004). Therefore, by providing space and an enabling environment in which transformative social change becomes integral and valued through participatory processes, and perceiving participation itself as a desirable outcome, community partners have the potential to become key actors or partners in promoting not only transformative change at an individual level, but also at wider social, institutional and discursive change. What stands out in participatory processes is the role of particular individuals who catalyse the process of development in their communities, and the strong base of associations or social networks that are typically mobilised during such a process

(Mathie & Cunningham, 2002). Such leaders are able to stimulate a sense of pride and possibility. They recognise the potential within the community, and share and transfer knowledge with other community members (Mathie & Cunningham, 2002). These catalysts further recognise opportunities available through making connections and linkages with agencies interested in investing in communities that can demonstrate potential (Mathie & Cunningham, 2002). The premise of this argument is therefore that, in power-sharing partnerships, communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilising existing assets, thereby responding to and creating local opportunity. As agents of change, community partners have the multi-layered task of challenging power relations at a variety of levels and with a variety of goals (Taylor & Fransman, 2004). Transformation is thus clearly a powerful and value-laden term and embraces a wide array of types of change (Taylor & Fransman, 2004).

Taylor (1998:5) cites Mezirow (2000) who asserts that at an individual level, individuals can be transformed through a process of critical reflection, and that 'learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action'. The transformative element of 'future action' refers to changes in subjective 'meaning structures' (such as making a decision, revising a point of view, posing a problem or altering behaviour) which develop through one of two Habermasian domains of learning: instrumental and communicative. While the former focuses on 'learning to do', the latter is concerned with understanding the meanings of communicated feelings, values, morals, ideals and conceptualisations. An ongoing process of critical reflection and rational dialogue can facilitate perspective transformation.

Discursive transformation and understanding of the reproduction of knowledge and power was substantially furthered through Foucault's notion of 'discourse' (Taylor & Fransman, 2004). For Foucault, power is 'a multiplicity of force relations' (Foucault 1979:92) that constitutes social relationships. It exists only through action and is available in all spheres, rather than being held and used by one individual over another. Power and knowledge are inseparable. Knowledge gives way to meaning and accordingly, through regulating conduct, exercises power. In other words, knowledge creates a certain structure of meaning or reality or way of life with its own social rules and mechanisms by which power is legitimised and reproduced (Taylor & Fransman, 2004). Thus, action is influenced by knowledge, which solidifies 'discursive practices' and reproduces discourse and knowledge. We act based on

what we know, understand, feel and value. Discourse determines and reproduces what counts as valid knowledge, how communication and participation are differently structured as well as which voices and experiences are affirmed and which are silenced (Taylor & Fransman, 2004). Therefore, in the context of community partnerships, the learning discourse which constitutes the production and transmission of knowledge is constructed by the power structures at play in a particular institution. The introduction of new knowledge into an institution can bring about transformation of a dominant discourse. In this way, genuine participation is an ideal transformer of discourse (Taylor & Fransman, 2004) and has the potential to foster empowerment at personal and collective levels.

2.3 EMPOWERMENT AND PR

Whilst an appreciation of power and partnerships is central to this thesis, the role and nature of empowerment is important for understanding how different people perceive and use empowerment strategies in the context of social relationships and circumstances defined by unequal power.

2.3.1 A PHILOSOPHY OF EMPOWERMENT AS CENTRAL TO PR

The various definitions of empowerment have operational implications. A lack of clarity on the meaning focused on may make partners work at cross purposes, thus undermining partnerships' efficiency and effectiveness. Luttrell, Quiroz, Scutton and Bird (2009:2) point out that 'the roots of thinking on empowerment lie in feminist theory and popular education, which stress the personal and inner dimensions of power'. They further note that Freire and his popular education as well as the feminist movement emanating from the South are the real primary philosophical influences on empowerment thought and development approaches. In both of these philosophical streams, empowerment has been denoted as a radical project of social transformation, to enable otherwise excluded social groups to define and claim their rights collectively (Luttrell *et al.*, 2009).

Empowerment is a participatory process through which individuals, organisations, and communities manage and gain control and social justice (Rappaport, 1987). Luttrell *et al.* (2009:16) conceptualise empowerment as an 'emancipation process in which the disadvantaged are empowered to exercise their rights, obtain access to resources and participate actively in the process of shaping society and making decisions'. To some,

empowerment is a political concept that involves a collective struggle against oppressive social relations. To others (Rappaport, 1987), it refers to the consciousness of individuals and the power to express and act on one's desires. However, some researchers (Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark & Mumford, 2003) have critiqued the empowerment discourse as a palliative, suggesting that the use of the term allows organisations to say they are tackling injustice without having to back any political or structural change, or the redistribution of resources.

Hjorth (2003) sees empowerment as people taking control of the development process, while Corbett and Keller (2005) regard it as a tangible increase in social influence or political power through developing confidence in their own capacities. Narayan (2005) and the World Bank (2001) defines empowerment as the opportunity of the poor and marginalised to participate, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. These definitions highlight that empowerment refers to the actors' ability to make choices, the transformation of those choices into actions, and the fact that there is a process of change which ought to result in some perceivable outcomes (Kabeer, 1999). Smulovitz and Walton (2003) recognise this process as exercising 'agency' with a reasonable prospect of having an influence on development outcomes.

Empowerment is thus a complex phenomenon that holds many dimensions and implies various elements. These dimensions include those directed at the individual, among individuals, and at the community or society level. The work of Carl Rogers and the human potential movement of the 1950s and 1960s emphasised the power of individual persons. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualise empowerment as including self-efficacy (competence), self-determination, and impact. Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) propose that empowerment involves an individual's increased self-efficacy as well as environmental change. In support, Kanter (1977) purports that empowerment is a process that includes the context of a situation as well as what the individual brings to it. Bush and Folger (1994:12) offer similar elements in their definition: 'empowerment means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems'. All these viewpoints underscore the fact that empowerment is contextual and involves individuals' personal outlooks and sense of capacity to act and make a difference.

The notion of empowerment is inevitably linked to the condition of disempowerment and refers to processes of change by which 'those who have been denied the ability to make

choices acquire such ability' (Kabeer, 1999:13). Hence the ability to exercise choice is linked to three inter-related and indivisible dimensions: *agency* (processes of decision-making, negotiation, manipulation etc.), *resources* (material, human and social pre-conditions) that enables individuals to make choices and decisions about their situation, and *achievements* (well-being outcomes) (Kabeer, 1999). This understanding of choice is further qualified by referring to the conditions (the possibility of alternatives and the ability to have chosen otherwise). Findings from a study of youth and adults who participated in one year's participatory evaluations of the impact of reflection, dialogue and voice indicate that the inter-related dimensions of empowerment are threefold. The first is competence, which is referred to as the 'combination of attitudes, understandings and abilities required to play a conscious and assertive role in one's political environment' (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar & McCann, 2005:207). The second is discovering strengths and capacities within oneself and being confident in the ability to communicate; and thirdly taking control of one's life (Foster-Fishman *et al.*, 2005). Findings further indicate that participants were significantly affected by their experiences of having an increased sense of competence to emergence of the awareness of their environment, as they became more knowledgeable about their community and transferred knowledge to others, thereby acting as community change agents (Foster-Fishman *et al.*, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, I view empowerment as a multi-dimensional social process that promotes people to be in charge of their lives and be self reliant. It fosters power as it promotes people to be proactive on issues and also facilitate a spirit of political liberation.

2.3.2 EMPOWERMENT AND POWER

In seeking theories that underpin and inform this study whilst drawing on aspects from different models, I identified some limitations in existing theory. The academic approaches that I examined provide limited explanations of the complex and multi-dimensional manifestations of power and empowerment. They do not yet make sense of that nuanced appreciation and experience of power. Achieving empowerment is intimately linked to addressing the causes of disempowerment and tackling disadvantage caused by the way in which power relations shape choices, opportunities and wellbeing. Rowlands's categorisation of power is of great analytical and practical use here. Rowlands (1997) categorises four types of power relations to stress the difference between power over (ability to influence and coerce) and power to (organise and change existing hierarchies), power with (power from

collective action) and power within (power from individual consciousness). Table 2.1 gives insight into the implications of different dimensions of power versus the implications for understanding empowerment.

Table 2.1: Dimensions of power and implications for empowerment (Source: Rowlands, 1997:142)

Type of power relation	Implications for an understanding of empowerment
Power Over: ability to influence and coerce	Changes in underlying resources and power to challenge constraints
Power To: ability to organise and change existing hierarchies	Increased individual capacity and opportunities for access
Power With: increased power from collective action	Increased solidarity to challenge underlying assumptions
Power from Within: increased individual consciousness	Increased awareness and desire for change

The various shades that Rowlands (1997) attributes to the meaning of power go beyond its traditional construction as the capacity of a social actor to dominate others. It provides an important discursive tool for orienting interventions that can bring about change in a manner that benefits people who are differentially located within a society. Especially noteworthy is the notion of ‘power with’ which integrates the individual locus of power with its social and collective locus and thus heightens the potential for social transformation through the collective effort of people with a shared sense of agency and convergent perspectives in their definition of the issues and problems confronting them. I therefore conceive that in power-sharing partnerships as in the case of the STAR project, the power should be viewed from an empowerment perspective which reveals power as ‘power to, power with and power within’, as an opportunity for empowerment that transforms and promote collective agency.

2.3.3 EMPOWERMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

The concept of empowerment presupposes that an individual or community that has been experiencing challenging conditions of disempowerment is gaining capacity to change its state of affairs towards a desirable state. For disempowered communities, outside forces operating with a more egalitarian vision of society, and aiming at facilitating powerless people to organise and take further action themselves may sometimes initiate the process and

activities of empowerment (Lopes & Rakodi, 2002). There is a linkage that exists between the concepts and processes of empowerment and partnerships involving insiders and outsiders. Lopes and Rakodi (2002:45) identify a key role for external agents as ‘giving powerless people access to a new body of ideas and information, and raising their consciousness and awareness that the existing network of relationships is unjust’. Developing a belief in ‘powerless’ people’s capacity to achieve desired outcomes is beneficial in enhancing people’s self-esteem, raising awareness of the forces shaping their lives and opening up new spaces for collective participation and dialogue.

PR is usually linked to attempts to assist local groups in having a greater say over decision-making, involving a shift in the balance of power. Examples of community-based PR initiatives that involve lay health advisors include the East Side Village Health Partnership in East Detroit (Schulz, Israel & Lantz, 2002) and the Messengers for Health Project in the Apsaalooke Reservation (Christoper, Burhansstipanov, Knows, McCormick & Simonds 2005). The findings of both these studies indicate that encouraging participants to ‘set the agenda’ will also facilitate empowerment (Stringer, 1996). As such, it is important for participants to collaborate throughout the research process. Koch (2002) in their Participatory Action Research (PAR) clinical studies learnt that it was also important to foster ownership of the project and encourage participants to initiate the research agenda. Breda, Huc, Granier and Dreyer (1997) furthermore concur that participants will be inclined to own a project if they have an equal share of the power. These findings are similar to those of a study conducted by Foster-Fishman *et al.* (2005) that revealed that participants will see themselves as change agents when they feel that they have an equal share of power and ownership of a project. These findings are further corroborated by Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Franscisco, Schultz, Ritchler and Lewis (1996:694) who concluded that collaborative partnerships attempt to promote societal change which is consistent with the principle of participation where ‘participants join together to enhance their power to transform the environment through actions that affect the behaviour of others’.

The challenges of undertaking PR can occasionally be underestimated by those wishing to embark on it. The scepticism of local people and a reluctance to take part will affect the degree to which the community participates (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). They (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995) caution about researchers’ exciting a community’s interest and raising expectations of, for example, improved services and greater participation. It can be a disempowering experience if nothing subsequently happens. Therefore, a shared willingness

to negotiate open and realistic agendas from the outset of the research process is important. As Khanlou and Peter (2005) assert, researchers must consider in advance whether research protocols have the potential to be emancipatory and permit such negotiation. Allowance has to be made for the time required for this and for trust to be established (Mosavel, Simon, Van Stade & Buchbinder, 2005). This assertion is further supported by findings from Ellis (2002) in her study on empowerment through decision-making, where she cautions against being too sanguine about the likelihood of empowerment being created through participation in partnerships or shared decision-making.

Stringer (1996) further explains how meanings constructed by people to make their social situations and problems intelligible are not fixed, but rather emerge during conversations as participants make sense of their own experiences. However, he notes that such reflections may stimulate self-awareness and in the process enable participants to find a voice on issues that are important to them. The notion of empowerment through social participation is often used to characterise approaches based on social mobilisation, and stems from the recognition that effective social movements and interventions require empowerment-related processes and outcomes (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Bennett (2002:23) describes this process as ‘mobilisation empowerment’, which builds on the skills, information and linkages needed for livelihood empowerment. Mobilisation empowerment could result in self-discovery, unity and potential for collective action (Bennett, 2002). Helping poor and socially excluded individuals to realise the power they gain from collective action is a key element in most social mobilisation approaches. These mobilisation approaches often operate from below, creating voice and demand for change among socially excluded citizens.

2.4 PARTNERSHIPS IN PR

Lister (2000:228) identifies the core meaning of partnership as ‘a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate’. This definition emphasises the values and principles espoused by those in a partnership endeavour. Additionally, from a range of sources, Lister (2000:228) identifies a number of other elements necessary for a ‘successful partnership’, including mutual trust, mutual support, joint decision-making, reciprocal accountability, financial transparency and long-term commitment. Behind the rhetoric of partnership lies the continued exercise of power. Partnerships take place within a force field of power relations in which conflicts of interest are

revealed. It is the goal of PR to unsettle and change these power relations and structures within partnerships.

However, power relations in partnerships are multifaceted, ranging from redefining power to rethinking the purposes of knowledge creation to reworking the relations of the research process itself (Maguire, 2002). Partnerships in PR are about bringing together divergent values, strengths, perspectives and contributions so that there may be equal participation, decision-making and a sense of ownership. Partnerships equalise the power relations at play and thus promote community capacity for research as social change (Eisinger & Senturia, 2001). Partnerships in PR also promote joint planning for long-term benefits and long-term commitment (Eisinger & Senturia, 2001), where each partner feels valued and equally recognised. In the current study, I made an attempt to explore the nature of partnerships and the inherent power relations at play.

The manner in which partnerships are constructed, forged, and mobilised by different stakeholders, in the process of guiding development and change efforts within disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, is a matter of central concern in PR processes for sustainable development. The increased popularity of participatory methods in research and development projects in developing countries has been accompanied by a critical evaluation of the quality and reliability of knowledge created and extracted in the process (Goebel, 1998). Research for this study involved the use of PRA methodology (Chambers, 2004) to explore the experiences of teachers as co-researchers partnering with university researchers in their role of partners in research and as change agents. Conducted in two provinces in South Africa, the study explored power relations and partnerships, in particular how teachers perceived themselves as co-researchers and how they experienced being treated as partners and experts in research with academic researchers.

Existing literature on partnership does not seem to shed adequate light on how partnerships may promote synergy of the interests and priorities of university researchers and community organisations and how partnerships may reflect participation and empowerment of people who have been involved in PR. The scope of this study *inter alia* focuses on these identified limitations, more specifically on partnership and power.

This study is thus informed by concepts and themes on power relations and dynamics, partnerships in PR, empowerment and leadership in community development. Power

seemingly plays a significant role in PR, partnerships, empowerment and leadership. Partnerships in particular present a ‘relationship that involves power sharing’ (Hodgett & Johnson, 2001:324). Partnership is viewed as a mechanism that facilitates and promotes the empowerment of the powerless, with the understanding that ‘it enables the powerless to contribute their information, knowledge and skills to the elaboration and implementation of programmes, projects or actions that affect them’ (Vasconcellos & Vasconcellos, 2009:136). Partnerships can also be initiated by community residents (Minkler, 2004), non-governmental organisations (Clarke, 1999), governmental agencies (Minkler 2004; Reilly & Petersen, 1997), and funding institutions (Citrin, 2001). However, university researchers (Chataway, 1997; Reilly & Petersen, 1997) initiate the majority of partnerships. In the case of this study, both community residents (teachers) and researchers (Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2010) initiated partnerships. In some cases, researchers approached the schools, whilst in another case the researchers were initially contacted by the school (teachers) for involvement.

I believe that teachers as co-researchers possess skills, resources and strengths. Throughout the world, civil society, universities and governments are building partnerships and leaning towards participatory and community-based models of inquiry in the construction of a more equitable and sustainable future. In the STAR project specifically, teachers have been involved as partners in the research process since 2003 (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2010).

A UNESCO (2009:1) brief states that partnerships and networks have the capacity ‘to co-create knowledge, mobilise it to inform practice and policy, and enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of people, communities, nations and the world’. It is assumed that through such articulation, local citizens are capable of collective action that may in turn result in significant development outcomes such as improvements in the quality of their lives, protection of resources, and the reduction in social exclusion and inequality (Chambers, 1997). A number of definitions and meanings of partnerships can be derived from existing literature, providing useful insights into the understanding of partnerships. Lorentz (1989) describes partnerships according to the criteria of commitment, mutual dependency and being guided by a set of behaviours. According to Lorentz (1989), partnerships are further guided by a set of questions that are concerned with behaviour that is permissible. He suggests that the purpose of rules in a partnership is to facilitate an equal exchange between partners. On the other hand, Mackintosh (1992:146) has a more sceptical view and describes the concept of partnerships as ‘a partial euphemism and token of political negotiation’ resulting in ‘a very

high level of ambiguity. This ambiguity is derived from conflicting views of the benefits and disadvantages of the collaboration typically required of partnerships'. Mackintosh (1992) identifies descriptors ranging from 'synergy' in the sense that partners share aims, assets and skills to 'imbalance', meaning that the costs of collaboration far outweigh the benefits.

In this study, I relied on the definition of partnerships by Sanginga (2006:115), who defines them as 'a collaborative arrangement between organisations to plan by engaging rural people and other stakeholders in a circular process of analysis, reflection and action, in which human capacity can be built and prospects for greater innovation can be achieved'. Accordingly, partners will contribute their expertise and share responsibilities and ownership to increase understanding of a given phenomenon. Furthermore, partners can incorporate the knowledge gained with action for capacity building.

2.4.1 NATURE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN PR

A complex set of contextual social, economic and physical factors play a significant role in determining the health status of communities (Collins & Williams, 1999; Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker, 2001). These factors may in turn contribute to the psychosocial problems often experienced by marginalised communities (Ferreira, 2006; Freudenberg, 1998). Evidence further suggests that numerous resources, strengths and skills are present within communities (e.g. supportive interpersonal relationships, community-based organisations) that can be engaged in addressing psychosocial problems in a community and promoting community development and well-being (Ferreira, 2006; Israel & Schurman, 1990; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

An understanding of the factors associated with social problems has contributed to calls for more comprehensive and participatory approaches to community research and a rise in partnership approaches, variously referred to as 'participatory action research' (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1987), 'action research' (Lewin, 1946) 'participatory rural appraisal/participatory reflection and action (PRA)' (Ferreira, 2006; Chambers, 1994a) and PR (De Koning & Marion, 1996; Hall, 1981). For the purpose of this study, I chose the PRA approach that directed the scope and focus of the empirical study, as PRA recognises power relations within the research process, particularly in a partnership (Martin, 2007). Furthermore, PRA seeks to empower social groups who may be marginalised within society, particularly in social research (Kendon, 2005). It was the intention of this study to find out if the partnerships

between teachers and university researchers were indeed participatory, addressing the following research question: *How do teachers perceive themselves as co-researchers in a collaborative research project in terms of power relations?*

PR refers to a research approach, philosophy or process, with the focus on partnership between researchers and the community (i.e. those being 'researched') (Alery, 1990; Maguire, 1987). Drevdahl (1995:68) describes PR as a 'world view about the conduct of research, rather than a linear, delineated procedure for collecting evidence'. PR does not follow a restricted and rigid research methodology. It is most easily conducted with people who have a well-developed consciousness of their community (Durch, Bailey & Stoto, 1997). Literature on PR states that there are three key fundamentals that differentiate PR from conventional social science research, namely people, power and praxis (Finn, 1994). PR is people-centred (Brown, 1985) in the sense that the process of critical inquiry is informed by, and responds to the experiences and needs of marginalised and oppressed people.

PR is thus about power relations between people and social groups. It aims to ensure that the community is an equal and active partner with other stakeholders involved in a study, e.g. universities, corporations or governments. Core to the main research question addressing power relations and partnerships, is that the knowledge and expertise of all partners are considered complementary. Such studies focus on partnerships that are created as people from different walks of life come together and investigate social problems to bring about transformation for capacity building in communities with scarce resources. In the current study, teachers have shared their experiences by participating in the STAR project as co-researchers, bringing in their own strengths and skills to facilitate transformative change in the communities they live in.

PR challenges practices that separate the researcher from the researched and thus promotes the forging of a partnership between researchers and the people under study (Freire, 1987, 1970). Both researcher and participant are viewed as actors in the investigative process, influencing the flow of research, interpreting the situation, and sharing options for action. Ideally, this collaborative process is empowering. PR thus brings isolated people together around common problems and needs, and validates their experiences as the foundation for understanding and critical reflection. In the STAR project, teachers and university researchers constantly collaborate as investigators in identifying research problems, working together to seek solutions to the social challenges faced by the communities.

Partnerships are often formed between communities and academic institutions. These partnerships can consist of teachers, university departments, graduate students, and academic institutions. Such partnerships can differ in terms of the level of community participation (Roussel, Fan & Fulmer, 2002), the setting in which university researchers work (i.e. university or community), and the objectives of the partnership (e.g. to carry out an intervention, a research programme, or to provide infrastructure for the development of research studies). Regardless of the impetus for the development of a partnership, community university alliances for research are characterised by a focus on community social issues and dissemination strategies that are meaningful to both the university and the community (Currie, King, Rosenbaum, Law, Kertoy & Specht, 2005).

Traditionally the researcher and the researched are in an ‘asymmetrical relationship’ (Chataway, 1997) in which the researcher is assumed to be in the best position to decide what a community needs and to provide this (Green & Mercer, 2001). PR seeks to break this asymmetry through the mutual engagement of community and researchers in all possible steps of the research (Chataway, 1997; Citrin, 2001; Green & Mercer, 2001). Recognising that ‘all knowledge is related to its context’ (Lerner, Fisher & Weinberg, 2000:13), the research itself is viewed as ‘a co-learning process for researchers and community members’ (Minkler, 2004:685), generating new knowledge useful to both sides of the relationship (Lerner *et al.*, 2000) and to which all participants have equal claim. In this study, I aimed to establish if the specific partnership in research was viewed as a co-learning process and whether or not new knowledge was generated by both parties in an equitable and equal manner.

2.4.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Various studies identify factors related to the success of community-university partnerships (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Lister, 2005). These include the creation and nurturing of trust among partners; respect for a community’s knowledge; community-defined and prioritised needs and goals; mutual division of roles and responsibilities; continuous flexibility, compromise, and feedback; strengthening of community capacity; joint and equitable allocation of resources; sustainability and community ownership; and sufficiency of funding periods (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Wolff & Maurana, 2001). A study conducted by Mitchell (2005:186) indicates that ‘partnerships will be enhanced if a shared vision exists with a strong, mutual commitment’. Beyond a shared vision, other attributes may contribute to effective partnerships, such as ‘compatibility between participants based on mutual trust and respect, even when from time

to time there may be legitimately different needs and expectations' (Mitchell, 2005:187). Furthermore, partnerships will be enhanced if there are benefits to all partners, equitable power for partners, clear communication channels, and the capacity to adapt so that partners can respond positively to the inevitable changes that may occur (Mitchell, 2005). Additionally, Mitchell (2005) emphasises attributes such as integrity, patience and perseverance by all partners.

Lantz, Vireull-Fuentes, Israel, Softley and Guzman (2001) suggest that clear working guidelines are the foundation for successful community–university collaborations. Academics need to work with community representatives who know and are known to the community and truly represent it. Brown-Peterside and Laraque (1997) recommend combining service to the community with a funded research protocol. Such service could help keep the community motivated to continue participating. Other factors related to the success of collaborations include community leadership of the partnership, shared decision-making (Butterfoss, Goodman & Wandersman, 1996), and small and concrete accomplishments (Eisinger & Senturia, 2001). Effective community–researcher collaborations require a paradigm shift from traditional practices to an approach that includes acknowledging community contribution, recruiting and training minority people to participate in research teams, improving communication, sharing power, and valuing respect and diversity (Kone, Sullivan, Senturia, Chrisman, Criske & Krieger, 2000). This paradigm shift is supported by a study done by Dalal, Skeete, Yeo, Lucas and Rosenthal (2002) indicating that relationships based on trust, shared interest, power-sharing and fostering co-learning and capacity building among partners are at the core of community university partnerships. In the current study, I aimed to discover whether these guidelines, which are attributes of successful partnerships as espoused by Butterfoss *et al.* (1996), also apply to the partnerships established as part of the STAR project. In the next section, I explain the functions of research partnerships.

2.4.3 FUNCTIONS OF RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Currie *et al.* (2005) outline an impact model that shows three main functions of research partnerships, namely knowledge generation, research education and training, and knowledge sharing. They link these to outputs, mid-term impacts, and long-term impacts. Although distinctions are made between the three function-related domains within each level of the model, the outputs and impacts related to the functions are not mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, the boundaries between the three domains are permeable. A particular impact can arise through the joint influence of partnership functions.

2.4.3.1 Partnerships as knowledge generation, research education and training

The Impact Model (Currie *et al.*, 2005) captures outputs of community–university research partnerships that reflect generated knowledge, such as research projects, interventions, reports and products. Through reciprocal influence, knowledge can be gained by the members of a partnership as well as the community at large. For example, collaboration between university and community researchers can lessen the discontinuity between missions of education (knowledge development) and service delivery (providing care) on the one hand, and the resulting research agendas on the other (Dufault, 1995). University researchers can learn which research questions meet the needs of the community or are relevant to daily practice (Spear & Rawson, 2002). On the other hand, community-based researchers have opportunities to influence the use of research in daily practice (Dufault, 1995), demonstrate the effectiveness of services and enhance the credibility of research in the field (Bogo, Well & Abbey, 1992). Moreover, community-based researchers (such as the teachers in this study) may ensure that research has practical applications (Eakin & Maclean, 1992).

I agree that the output of community–university research partnerships can be knowledge generation as in the case of STAR. In another study on the experiences of physician teams in community-based PR, it was found, for example, ‘that participants wanted to develop leadership seminars that equipped them with tools to navigate relationships in a partnership’ (Dalal *et al.*, 2002:288). Furthermore, a study on building community strength by Tesoriero, Samuel and Annadurai (2006) reveal that community participants were able to transfer knowledge to the rest of fellow community members on barriers to health and wellbeing, by developing and maintaining learning.

Research partnerships typically provide training and development opportunities for university researchers, community members, and students, which are catalytic in nature. Through collaboration with community members, university researchers can gain awareness of the feasibility of research designs (Schiller, 1998) and develop curricula that better prepare students for the complexities of daily practice (Hayward, DeMarco & Lynch, 2000). Changes to research agendas may be the result (i.e. a shift to more applied or more influential areas of research).

Typically, community members (such as teachers, service providers and programme managers) have less experience with research than their university partners (Schenzul, 1999). Research partnerships may therefore provide community-based researchers with opportunities to develop research skills (Schenzul, 1999), sometimes by providing clinical relief funding to allow for dedicated research time for service providers, or by engaging community members directly in the operational aspects of research.

2.4.3.2 Partnerships as knowledge sharing: communities of practice

The research dissemination activities of partnerships typically focus on enhancing the utilisation of research concepts and evidence by community members. Research partnerships comprising university and community partners attempt to balance various agendas with respect to desired audiences, media, messages, and the comprehensiveness of information shared (Ferman & Hill, 2004). These agendas may arise due to different incentives and reward systems provided by university settings and community organisations (Ferman & Hill, 2004). In the Ferman and Hill (2004) study on benefits for a university and community partnership, for example, some community participants complained that universities did not share funds that were obtained with the community.

Although one of the core functions of community–university partnerships is the use of practical knowledge, this may not meet the needs of academics who are expected to advance theoretical knowledge in their field (Ferman & Hill, 2004). Publication in peer-reviewed journals is often considered a better indicator of the success of knowledge-sharing efforts than media which may be better suited to the community, such as newsletters or websites. When assumptions are made about the superior nature of certain outputs (e.g. peer-reviewed publications), rather than formally measuring different types of mid- and long-term impacts, as well as outputs, the potential exists to overestimate impact and undervalue other approaches to knowledge sharing that may in fact lead to greater individual, organisational, or community change with respect to knowledge, skills and the use of information (Currie *et al.*, 2005). Conversely, the findings of the study by Dalal *et al.* (2002) indicate that sharing knowledge brought about social change to the community in the sense that co-learning and capacity building were fostered within the group. As a way of building trust by creating an environment that values the diverse perspectives of low-income women, Frisby, Reid, Millar and Hoerber (2005) found that community partners' knowledge was valued and incorporated into research (Frisby *et al.*, 2005).

Horner (1997) views leadership in partnership as a process where leaders are not seen as individuals in charge of followers but as members of a community of practice. A community of practice is defined by Drath and Palus (1994:4) as ‘people who are united in a common enterprise, who share a history and thus certain values, beliefs, ways of talking and ways of doing things’. I agree with Drath and Palus, as I regard the teachers in the STAR project as a community of practice. Members of a community of practice, as articulated by Kirk and Shutte (2004), distribute leadership with the capacity for engagement, characterised by a process of dialogue, connectivity and empowerment. This is referred to as community leadership: leadership within communities of different people who come together in a collaborative endeavour (Kirk & Shutte, 2004). Community leadership development is focused on building leadership capacity in communities of difference who are seeking effective integration (Kirk & Shutte, 2004). The more people with capacity to take the reins and develop collaborative programmes that work, the greater the successes will be in a specific community or neighbourhood. Therefore, community leaders may build leadership qualities in other members of their community (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003). Furthermore, community leaders will typically establish a set of guiding principles that allows others to be empowered and share ownership, thereby empowering the wider community so that the successes become greater and the failures fewer for that area (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003).

Community leadership development begins with capacity building. James (2004:6) defines capacity building as ‘an ongoing process of helping people, organisations and societies improve and adapt to changes around them’. In support of community leadership as development based on capacity building, Rubin (2004) found in his COPC partnership project that community members were empowered to do community organising and developing leadership, resulting in communities being able to advocate for change, formulate strategies and build organisations. These findings are similar to those of a Detroit community–academia partnership illustrated in a study by Lantz *et al.* (2001).

If capacity building is a process, learning must be at the heart of that process. It is through learning that people may come to see themselves and their situations in different ways. A transforming perspective will enable people to engage reality with new eyes. This capacity to see differently holds the prospect of beneficial social change. Learning that results in fundamental change is what Argyris and Schon (1991:21) refer to as ‘double loop learning’. Such change goes beyond adaptation; it is change that reframes attitudes, beliefs and cultural values (Chapman, 2002). A consequence of ‘seeing’ differently is that one is able to play

one's role in a system in a different, more authoritative way. In this way, learning presents an opportunity for system change.

Capacity building is further defined by James (2004) as a 'helping' process. Kirk and Shutte (2004) caution about the nature of 'help' since this may challenge the relationship between participants. Kirk and Shutte (2004) therefore regard partnership as the interdependence of different people with different roles engaged in the pursuit of a shared goal. They further mention that if clarity of role, purpose and relationship is not articulated and 'lived out', then the desire for empowerment as an outcome in capacity building programmes is undermined by a process which consciously or unconsciously fosters dependency. This can become a hidden virus in capacity building, and is what Freire decries in his work and writing on development (Freire, 1970, 1987).

Capacity building is viewed as underpinned by positive 'power to' and 'power with' models in which power is considered as social and cooperative, rather than negative and related to domination and control (Deutchman, 1991). It is therefore envisaged that the following will be included among the many purposes and intentions of community capacity building: to meet 'needs and improve assets and attributes; promote responsibility for solving local problems; build local leadership; stimulate active and reflective participation in urban renewal or regeneration; empower; promote health gains; local improvements; redress disadvantage; allow for effective services and promote better risk management' (Department of Health, South Australia, 2007:18). In its many purposes and intentions, 'community capacity building' can support community-based empowerment, the development of skills, knowledge and resources, and strengthened social relations. As such, empowerment is often cited as a reason for community capacity building.

Empowerment is discussed at the level of individual empowerment (changes in skills, knowledge, consciousness and awareness, hope, action and belief in abilities to affect change) and changes in wider social structures and processes that may result in increased resources and opportunities (amongst other things). Giddens's (1969) theory of structuration is often used as a theoretical basis to interpret empowerment processes. The theory is predicated on change as a product of interactions between individual agency and structures. As such, community capacity building is based on the outcome of empowerment, implying the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, building on assets and strengths, respecting diversity, responding to change and creating the future (Luttrell & Quiroz, 2007).

Empowerment as an outcome of community capacity building implies the development of the capacity and skills of the members of a community in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet their needs, and to participate more fully in society (www.charity-commission.gov.uk). For Jackson, Cleverly, Poland, Burman, Edwards and Robertson (1999), community capacity is the use of power (control of resources and decisions) to solve problems as well as the actual knowledge and skill sets that community groups require to effectively address local issues and concerns.

The overall benefits of community capacity building is to ensure that communities take control of their own learning in a way that enables them to effectively address the needs and issues on their agenda. Community capacity building is about underpinning change, which is well articulated by the Dunlop Report (2002:12), stating that ‘there is little chance of improving people's standard of living and overall quality of life, in a sustainable way, without their collaborative participation in planning processes. This requires community capacity building leading to empowerment’.

2.4.4 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PARTNERSHIPS

Extensive literature focuses on higher education institutions and community research partnerships that address the perceived value of partnerships, mostly from the perspective of higher education partners (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Ferman & Hill, 2004; Ferman & Shlay, 1997). Most of the studies address the benefits of partnerships to faculty and students (Hill & Dougherty, 2002; Lawson, 2002; Stoecker, 2003; Strand, 2000) or explore issues faced by university researchers involved in such partnerships (Benson & Harkavy, 2001; Hill & Dougherty, 2002; Lawson, 2002; Nyden, Figert, Shibley & Burrows, 1997b; Stoecker, 2003; Strand, 2000).

On the community side, four principal benefits of partnering with higher education researchers can be distinguished (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Hill & Dougherty, 2002). First, communities benefit from project-specific resources that higher education partners provide, particularly human capital. Rubin (2004:17) relied on community outreach partnership centres’ programmes to provide opportunities for community residents to develop skills, ‘gaining new capacities and tools that enable them to affect the public decisions that shape their neighbourhoods’. Secondly, community partners can gain access at no cost, to expertise on data collection and evaluation, to training as well as other incentives like mentoring people

in a community (Benson & Harkavy, 2001; Ferman & Hill, 2004; Lawson, 2002; Loots, 2010; Nyden *et al.*, 1997b); Stoecker, 2003; Strand, 2000). In their research, Ferman and Hill (2004) found that community partners gained free access to certain services, such as lawyers and assistance with curriculum development projects by university students. Additionally, through partnerships, the principle of sharing intellectual authority is an added benefit (Metzler *et al.*, 2003).

The third benefit of partnerships is the significance of resources leveraged by project findings (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Stoecker, 2003). Partnership project findings could result in change through interventions as well as provide access to additional equipment, facilities and events. Besides concrete access to institutional resources, partnerships may benefit communities by providing access to broader networks and possibilities (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Stoecker, 2003; Hill & Dougherty, 2002; Lawson, 2002; Benson & Harkavy, 2001; Strand, 2000; Nyden *et al.*, 1997b). For instance, findings from research on higher education partners and community conducted by Ferman and Hill (2004) revealed that community partners described the benefits of meeting other people who had the same interest in issues that they were dealing with and who were willing to assist them. Partnerships may thus create opportunities to work with similar community organisations in various neighbourhoods and even in other regions. In this study, I aimed to find out whether or not teachers shared such experiences from participating in STAR.

The fourth important benefit derived from partnerships is the legitimacy that accrues to the community partners and the intervention projects developed, by virtue of associating with tertiary institutions. Various research findings (e.g. Ferman & Hill, 2004; Strand, 2000; Nye & Schramm, 1999) reveal that communities at large, particularly business organisations, listen to community partners more closely because the university is part of the partnership. The ultimate goal and benefit of partnerships is to create and increase opportunities for empowerment and improve program effectiveness (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson & Allen, 2001).

Even though partnerships are viewed as insightful and beneficial, some barriers and challenges also exist, such as agenda and incentive conflict, lack of adequate capacity and institutional space (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Foster-Fishman *et al.*, 2001). Agenda and incentive conflict could be a major blow to partnerships. This occurs when roles and expectations of the research partners are not clearly defined. Both partners may enter the research partnership

with varying expectations (Nye & Shramm, 1997). In their study, Nye and Shramm (1997) found that most universities enter into partnerships as a way of getting the communities to approve grants that institutional researchers have applied for. Once the grant has been approved, university partners often do not return and share the grant fund with the community. Further challenges include struggles with the decision-making process, project selection, and the composition of the community board or committee (Eisinger & Senturia, 2001). Perceived lack of respect towards community partners is another potential challenge, particularly when university researchers view themselves as the only experts and ignore the fact that expertise comes in many forms, one of which is the knowledge of the community (Ferman & Hill, 2004). In their study, Rabaia and Gillham (2010:69) confirm that challenges of academic and community partnerships may exist where unequal power relations are apparent with university counterparts referring to ‘**our** funding’. Such comments indicate unequal power relations, lack of respect and lack of trust towards community partners (Rabaia & Gillham, 2010). As the current study uses a feminist standpoint epistemology, issues that have been identified as possible barriers could be reflected on.

Other challenges include organisational constraints, time pressures (including the length of time required for results to be realised), balancing community interests in interventions, academic research needs, cultural differences among the partners, competing demands for time and attention, and differences in orientation to the power structure (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Lantz *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, the challenge of mismatch of incentives exists, which is influenced by the relationships that characterise and shape each partner’s environment. In most instances, community partners join partnerships with the view of gaining access to concrete resources, to be empowered, expand their networks and gain legitimacy. Narrow role definitions may also contribute to a mismatch of incentives, as the nature of partnerships is evolving and at times ambiguous (Perkins, Ferrari, Covey & Keith, 1994). Although partnerships help participants to become decision-makers, researchers sometimes hold restrictive role definitions for the community partners and prescribe narrow roles. In a study conducted by Foster-Fishman *et al.* (2001) it was found that when working with a community with a long history of patriarchy, decisions are often made by certain privileged members within the community.

2.4.5 COMMUNITY AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

Research partnerships between communities and universities are presently common (Minkler 2005; Mayfield, 2001). Universities partner with the community to engage in research that would result in social change (Waghid, 2002). University engagement supports research and teaching to address special needs of communities; it integrates the teaching, research and service functions of the university in an interdisciplinary manner and promotes partnerships with public agencies and the community for broad public affairs and civic interests (Mayfield, 2001).

The concept of an engaged university rests on literature related to a wide range of case studies (e.g. Cox, 2000; Sandmann, Foster-Fishman, Lloyd, Rauhe & Rosaen, 2000). Much of the existing literature focuses on technical issues and on special issues related to working with community groups (Mayfield, 2001). Literature typically emerges from practitioners supporting community engagement, including fields of health-related schools, the social sciences, education, and service learning (Mayfield, 2001). However, existing literature on community–university partnerships has not adequately answered how the engaged university incorporates the voices and experiences of participants, particularly when using a PRA approach. It was the intention of this study to find the voice of the participants in relation to their experiences on community–university partnerships.

In their review of community-based PR, Israel *et al.* (1998) summarise the approach as enriching the research process and outcomes, as a community development strategy and as an opportunity to improve community–university partnerships. This approach differs from traditional research methods in that it is an iterative process, integrating a cyclical process of reflection and action as a primary goal. In line with this, I argue that community–university partnerships should be an approach that results in action which will ultimately bring about social change in communities. Feminist action research scholars have also used an array of community-based research methods to integrate knowledge and action to promote the political, social, and economic status of women and marginalised populations (DeVault, 1999; Gutberlet, 2008).

From a university perspective, PR implies a collaborative enterprise between academics and community members that seeks to democratise knowledge creation by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and

dissemination (Strand *et al.*, 2003). As Harkavy (2006) argues, the goal of universities should be to contribute significantly to developing and sustaining democratic schools, communities and societies by effectively educating students to be democratic and constructive citizens. Moseley (2007), coming from a practitioner and academic perspective, argues for greater collaboration between communities and universities. Arguing from a feminist geography position, Moseley (2007) stresses the importance of positioning oneself as a researcher and adopting a reflexive approach when working collaboratively in PR.

This study also adopts Moseley's (2007) reflexive approach. As such, I recognise that knowledge is situated, and that researchers' views are context-bound and partial rather than detached and universal. As Moseley (2007:335) argues: 'academics inherently analyse these relationships from their own vantage point, making it all the more important to uncover the perspectives of those partnering with academics'. Increasingly, universities are engaging in PR with the goal of producing policy outcomes that are applicable and effective for local community development (Hall, Tremblay & Downing, 2009). I am of the view that engaging in PR takes into account the fact that communities often have the skills and resources within them to undertake effective and meaningful research collaboration with universities. Communities bring with them knowledge and understanding of their situation. Additionally, I believe that establishing partnerships reflects an attempt to diminish power imbalances in the social system. It is anticipated that such meaningful research collaboration will bring about social change.

Academics are often viewed as outsiders by communities, despite the fact that at times academics are members of the communities where their research is based. When academics are outsiders, they can occupy one of three roles (Metzler *et al.*, 2003): Academics could occupy the role of 'initiator' where they engage with the community from an activist perspective of the research project. In the 'consultant' role academics assume the responsibilities of a real consultant. In this case, the community commissions the research project and the consultant carries it out. In the 'collaborator' role, academics work hand in hand with community members, recognising that each brings unique talents to the table (Metzler *et al.*, 2003). In the collaborative model, community members become equal researchers whose knowledge and experience is recognised and valued while on the other hand the academics bring important theoretical knowledge. In the current study, the 'collaborator' is emphasised and pursued since the study focuses on partnerships and power in PRA, where teachers are viewed as equal co-researchers.

When community members and academic researchers collaborate, both partners benefit and work in an equal relationship (Metzler *et al.*, 2003). The collaborator role emphasises relationship building between academics and community members with researchers participating in a broader, social change project. The STAR project is based on the concept of establishing mutual relationships. A study of the community perspective identified specific critical factors that may facilitate the development, effectiveness and sustainability of community-academic partnerships (Wolff & Maurana, 2001). The following factors were regarded as important as part of the collaborative model for building effective partnerships: creation and nurturing of trust; mutual division of roles and responsibilities; respect for the community's knowledge; joint and equitable allocation of resources and sustainability; and community ownership (Wolff & Maurana, 2001).

In addition to the different stages of a partnership that can be distinguished, different models of partnerships exist (Power, Dowrick, Ginsburg-Block & Manz, 2004). The Participatory Intervention Model (PIM) (Nastasi, Varjas, Schenzul, Silva, Schenzul, & Ratnayake, 2000) which is based on principles of participatory action research (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkavy, 1993; Schenzul & Schenzul, 1992) is a partnership-based model that promotes the formation and continual development of co-hierarchical, collaborative relationships between community partners and the research team. This model acknowledges the expertise of community members and researchers in their respective domains (Nastasi *et al.*, 2000). Community partners bring to the partnership an understanding of culture and an ability to relate to the people who live in the neighbourhoods. Researchers bring to the partnership an understanding of intervention development and evaluation, as well as an ability to facilitate the formation and maintenance of collaborative relationships.

The application of PIM can be challenging in that it requires that community partners and researchers adapt their roles and change their perceptions of each other (Nastasi *et al.*, 2000). However, actively involving community partners in the process of intervention design can create approaches that appropriately reflect the realities and values of the community, enhancing their acceptability to community partners, and child and family participants (Nastasi *et al.*, 2000). In this study, a feminist standpoint epistemology was taken as a means of understanding the experiences of teachers as co-researchers in their participation in the STAR project to reveal their perspectives on issues of power and partnership. This study therefore promotes the PIM model.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GAVENTA'S POWER CUBE

In this study, I consider the ability to influence change in power-sharing partnerships through the power cube theory of Gaventa (2003a, 2006), who has analysed the different ways that people can impact on decision-making. The theory posits that power is complex and exists in a relational context in different forms and degrees (phases of power), with different moments, opportunities or channels for its expression (spaces or arenas of power), and different levels of engagement within social relationships (places or levels of power). This dynamic framework enables an appreciation of the interplay of forms of power (in its different configurations and degrees of visibility, from visible to hidden and invisible), with its place of operation (concerning the arenas and levels of engagement of power locally, nationally and globally) and spaces of engagement (locating how the arenas of decision-making power are availed or accessed via provided or closed, invited, claimed or created spaces) (Gaventa, 2003a, 2006).

The current study is based within the broader STAR project, where teachers facilitate psychosocial support initiatives following the asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2010). STAR is a school-based intervention aimed at capacity building to provide support within vulnerable school-community contexts (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2010). Within the framework of the current study, using Gaventa's power cube (2003a), I thus sought to gain insight into the experiences of teachers using participatory methodology in the STAR intervention project, by exploring issues of power and partnership.

Individuals and communities exist within contexts criss-crossed by various forms of power relations. Since power is immanent or present in human social relationships, it must be held as a category of analysis because it can either disable or enable the efforts undertaken to achieve redress of social injustices and oppression or marginalisation experienced by specific social groups and communities within society.

I selected Gaventa's (2003a, 2006) power cube framework with the expectation that more specific insights could emerge about the broad concerns of participation in research, learning, advocacy and community mobilisation for capacity building, by breaking down the process into three analytical dimensions or relationships of the manifestations and operation of power, namely space, forms and levels of power, and relevant interrelationships. The dynamism of power is highlighted, indicating that different interests can be marginalised if power relations

are glossed over and that they must be redressed by inclusion strategies; hence the need to generate opportunities to influence change. Indeed, power analysis is imperative for understanding both the context in which changes are envisaged and the potential for success.

The power cube framework understands power ‘in relation to how spaces for engagement are created, the levels of power (from local to global), as well as different forms of power across them’ (Gaventa, 2003a:127). I believe that using this lens for understanding PR processes and community capacity building efforts could help assess the possibilities of transformative action by participants. The framework offers ways to examine participatory action in development and changes in power relations by and/or on behalf of poor and marginalised people. Gaventa’s (2003a) power cube presents a dynamic understanding of how power operates, how different interests can be marginalised from decision-making, and the strategies needed to increase inclusion. It describes the powerful use of power across three continuums. Gaventa (2006) states that many sides of a cube can be the first entry point for power analysis. He argues that when any successful change in power relations takes place, each of the pieces on each dimension of a cube simultaneously has to align with the others. To understand power relations, the question must be asked how the spaces of power for participation were created, with whose interests in mind and on what terms of engagement (Gaventa, 2006).

2.5.1 SPACES OF POWER IN THE POWER CUBE

According to Gaventa (2003), the term ‘space’ as a dimension of power refers to the different arenas in which decision-making takes place and in which power operates, and how these spaces are created. Space may be the starting point for action and participation. Spaces are seen as opportunities and channels where participants can act to potentially affect decisions and relationships that may affect their lives and interests (Gaventa, 2006). Cornwall’s (2002) work indicates that the spaces for participation are not silent, but are shaped by power relations at play. Cornwall (2002) further links the concepts of power and space drawing upon French social theorists (Lefebvre, Foucault, and Bourdieu). In particular, for Lefebvre (1991:24) ‘space is a social product ... it is not simply ‘there’, a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power’.

Since space is a social product, power relations are inherent to help scope the boundaries of participatory spaces, in terms of what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which

identities (Cornwall, 2002). In terms of the rules of engagement and the agenda of issues that can be discussed, an understanding of space can help identify entry points for change and may encourage self-reflection on the power that different actors exercise. In this study, my intention was to hear the voices of teacher participants, in order to understand their participatory experiences in the STAR project, and gain insight into how teachers as co-researchers perceived and dealt with power as they participated in the partnership research process with university researchers to address their community problems.

A useful approach for the analysis of empowerment opportunities, utilising Gaventa's (2003a) power cube concept of spaces, is proposed by Cornwall (2002, 2004, 2007), who distinguishes between 'closed spaces', top-down 'invited spaces' and bottom-up 'claimed spaces' in order to understand the interaction of power and knowledge on policy. Citing an example of the explanation of top-down and bottom-up spaces, Brock, Cornwall and Gaventa (2001:3) succinctly summarise how these spaces might work:

...two broad kinds of policy spaces – those that are found in invited forums of participation created 'from above' by powerful institutions and actors, and those more autonomous spaces created 'from below' through more independent forms of social action on poverty-related issues. By examining how different narratives of poverty and different actors interact in such spaces – as well as how they may be excluded from them – we can better understand the ways in which power and knowledge frame the policy processes.

Returning to the discussion of the three continuums of spaces, first 'closed spaces' can be identified in which one asks if the decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors; in other words, *do researchers make decisions and provide services 'to the people' without the need for consultation or their involvement?* Closed or insider spaces are typically occupied by elected representatives, bureaucrats, state actors and experts who make decisions on behalf of others without consultation or involvement. These are the closed or uninvited spaces referred to earlier (Gaventa, 2004), where barriers may prevent certain issues from being considered and actors from having a voice. Others that have examined routes to influence include Grant (1995), who analyses the political system and the way that opportunities influence policy decisions within parliament can effect change. Insider and outsider interest groups are identified, along with the different strategies employed by each. Insider groups rely on establishing good contacts, that is social capital, and work within a current power structure to influence policy (Grant, 1995). On the other hand, outsider groups without such contacts seek alternative channels such as the media and social action to put their concerns on the policy agenda. In this way, they create and claim their own spaces.

According to Grant (1995), public opinion is an important factor in pressure groups' ability to persuade and influence, since the groups are ultimately not able to make decisions and wield little effective power. Grant (1995:183) draws on Lukes' dimensions of power and highlights the 'influence of dominant interests and values that suppress challenges from outsider groups being reminiscent of how cultural and symbolic capital are mobilised in spaces of power to delimit what is considered legitimate and important in policy decision-making'. An elite group controls these spaces. Such groups may exist within many government systems, international finance institutions (IFIs) or institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Many civil society efforts focus on opening up the spaces of decision-making through greater public involvement, transparency or accountability (Gaventa, 2005).

In a case study on the effects of participatory development in India, Pellissbery and Bergh (2007) found that participation for material incentives was based on closed spaces of power which had both hidden and invisible power structures. Crawford (2003) noted similar findings in a study on partnership and governance reform in Indonesia that examined the ubiquity of partnerships in development aid for understanding decision-making structures and activities. Crawford's (2003:139) findings showed that 'decision-making bodies are constructed in a manner which ensures that reform agenda of international agencies remains relatively unchallenged both in terms of what is included and excluded'.

Secondly, invited spaces are concerned with the type of people invited to participate by various authorities (Cornwall, 2007; Gaventa, 2006). Invited spaces are a type of ongoing consultation. They exist where those with positional power and authority ask people to participate (Gaventa, 2006). These spaces are relatively open public spaces, and focus on dialogue and participation. Under external pressure or in an attempt to increase legitimacy, some policy makers may create invited spaces in which outsiders can share their opinions (Gaventa, 2006). While they serve as an opportunity to participate and influence decisions, the chances for influencing long term change are unlikely.

Thirdly, claimed or created spaces are possessed by less powerful actors, gained from the power holders (Gaventa, 2006). Created spaces afford the less powerful a chance to set up their agendas and create solidarity without control from power holders. In this arena, power is gained through action or negotiation.

In this study, I aimed to determine the type of spaces that existed among teachers as they participated in the STAR project and what their experiences have been with regard to the power at play within the context of spaces. Additionally, I focused on the question as to how the identified spaces have influenced and perceived their role in the research project.

2.5.2 FORMS AND DEGREES OF POWER IN THE POWER CUBE

The second dimension of the power cube framework (Gaventa, 2006) concerns the ‘forms’ of power, or the dynamics of power that shape the inclusiveness of participation within each space. The forms of power involve three attributes of power namely visible power, hidden power and invisible power. Visible power refers to observable decision-making, that is strategies that entail the ‘who’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ of policy-making defined, for instance, by statutes, legislation or policy (Gaventa, 2006). It is the ‘embodiment of ‘power over’, viewed as legitimate authority, usually exercised by bureaucracy, people presumed to have expertise, and political representatives inhabiting various structures of governance’ (Gaventa, 2006:28). Visible power can also be explained as rationalised power, that is, the epitome of bureaucratisation of many domains of social life in the modern world.

Hidden power refers to certain powerful people and institutions maintaining their influence by controlling who makes decisions and what are included on the agenda (Gaventa, 2006). Finally, invisible power is the most ‘insidious form of power as it shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation’ (Gaventa, 2006:29). In this case, not only are some issues excluded from discussions, they are also hidden from the consciousness of people, thus influencing how people think. With invisible power, the construction of ‘voices’ in invited spaces is influenced, as participants may merely echo what the power holders who shape places want to hear (Gaventa, 2006). A significant motivator for outsiders is the disparity between those with power and those without. Wright (2000) recognises the problem of top-down control, where there is little or no communication between powerful decision-makers. Wright (2000:27) values the importance of communities in decision-making and recognises that in order for solutions to be reached, they have to be present: ‘The four dimensions – personal responsibility, consensus, local currencies and community – overlap and reinforce one another, but the greatest is community’. It takes the community to be engaged in order to solve problems at neighbourhood level.

In the current study, I attempted to explore the nature of participation with regard to the forms of power that were present and thus experienced by teachers. The forms of power also consider the level and nature of enablement in PR and as such, it was my intention to reveal the nature of power environment as experienced by teachers. Furthermore, as I explored the dynamics of the forms of power experienced by teachers, I needed to keep in mind the strategies that entail the ‘who’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ revealed by the forms of power.

2.5.3 LEVELS OF POWER IN THE POWER CUBE

Gaventa’s (2003a, 2006) power cube also emphasises the importance of understanding the interaction between levels of power and the ‘places of engagement’, and particularly distinguishes between the international, national and local levels or places of power (Gaventa, 2003a, 2006). The concern with how and by whom the spaces for participation are shaped intersects with debates on the places or levels where critical social, political and economic power resides. Gaventa (2006:27) acknowledges that some ‘work on power (especially that on gender and power) starts with an analysis of power in more private or intimate spaces, much of the work on public spaces for participation involves the contest between local, national and global arenas as locations of power’. It can be argued that most of participatory practice begins locally, since that is where ordinary struggles with resisting power and construction of voice begins. In some quota, the argument is that power struggles are globalised and thus deliberation on participation should begin at the global level (Gaventa, 2006). Additionally, some theorists view power struggles to be embedded in the national level context, with this being the point where power is legitimised (Gaventa, 2006).

The analysis of power and empowerment described by Taylor (2008:159) as interconnected and flowing is pertinent here: ‘If power is to flow through the system, these local circuits have to be linked into the social, political and economic circuits from which they have been cut off’. Therefore, power begins at the local level. Local people thus have to build their capacity at a local level. As such local empowerment values and acknowledges the contribution of local resources, involvement and ownership, and their potential power and energy. The dynamics of power is influenced by the space power exists in, the level and the form it takes (Gaventa, 2006).

In the current study, teachers worked with various stakeholders in the STAR project. It was therefore important to explore the dynamics of power relations as it unfolded at various levels.

I had to be mindful of the various opportunities (if any) that were availed for teachers during this study in order to experience power at various levels. In this study, I argue and suggest that transformative change will occur when power struggles are levelled so that inclusiveness of participation become visible and the levels of engagement begin at local vicinities.

Having conceptualised and articulated this theoretical framework by using Gaventa's (2003a, 2006) power cube, I was interested in the extent to which teacher participants perceived that these opportunities (interaction of power with place and space) were available to them, and how effective they believed and perceived themselves to be in bringing about involvement and change in the power-sharing partnerships of the STAR intervention, based on their experiences and from their standpoint. The power cube framework had the potential to assist me in addressing the research questions and gaining insights in terms of power and partnership in research relationships between teachers and researchers.

2.5.4 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS FLOWING FROM UNDERSTANDING THE POWER CUBE AND POWER RELATIONS IN PR

Gaventa's power cube (2003a, 2006) refers to the dynamics of power relations as manifested in different arenas. It emphasises the importance of understanding the interaction between the type of space in which it is found, the level at which it operates and the form it takes in participation in research, partnerships, learning, advocacy and community mobilisation for capacity building. Therefore, power analysis is imperative for understanding both the context in which changes are envisaged and the potential for their success. The Power Cube theory is therefore based on the multifaceted and multidimensional conception of power (Gaventa, 2005) which enables us to emphasise aspects of previous assumptions and the invisible power which impregnates PR. The Power Cube framework is further linked to the analysis of power by Bourdieu's (1984) *habitus* idea, and integrated with Cameron and Ojha's (2007) discussion of deliberative and reflexive processes in PR and development. Therefore, the Power Cube theory emphasises that agency, particularly from the social context in which it is exercised, result in change and transformation in PR. A conceptual link must thus be established between agency and social change and the transformation processes which PR and development interventions attempt to promote.

Gaventa (2003a, 2005, 2006) highlights the traditional conception of power which has often been interpreted negatively in the sense that it modulates and restricts the potential for human

agency. That is, power is traditionally conceived as domination and thereby referred to as power over or the ‘ability of the powerful to affect the actions and thoughts of the powerless’ (Gaventa, 2005:145).

2.6 CONCLUSION

In chapter 2, I reviewed existing literature within the context of this study by exploring concepts and empirical evidence on power, partnerships, empowerment, participation and PR. Furthermore, I provided a theoretical framework based on the Power Cube framework of Gaventa (2003a) as the guiding philosophy of the study.

In chapter 3, I provide a description of the methodological choices I made and the strategies I applied in the study. Throughout, I justify my choices in terms of the purpose of the study and the related research questions.

