

**DISSEMINATION RESEARCH: TEACHERS AS FACILITATORS**

mini-dissertation submitted by

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### **Jeremiah 29:11**

*“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.*



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## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

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I, Melanie Joubert, hereby declare that

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is my own work and that all references appear in the list of references.

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Melanie Joubert

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Date

## ABSTRACT

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### DISSEMINATION RESEARCH: TEACHERS AS FACILITATORS

by

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The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators of the STAR intervention with fellow teachers at two neighbouring schools. The study constituted part of a broader research project that commenced in 2003, at a primary school in the Eastern Cape. At the time of the current study, seven of the ten teachers who participated in the initial study were replicating the initial study's strategy in two neighbouring schools in an attempt to assist the teachers in providing psychosocial support.

In an attempt to explore the experiences of the teacher-facilitators I observed a STAR intervention session (November, 2008), that involved four participants facilitating a STAR intervention session at the neighbouring school. Following my observation of the intervention session, I co-facilitated a focus group, exploring the teacher-facilitators' experiences in fulfilling the role of peer-facilitators. Two days after the first focus group, I co-facilitated a follow-up focus group for the purpose of member-checking. In addition, I relied on field notes and visual data as data sources.

Based on the data analysis that followed, three main themes emerged. Firstly, the teachers seemed to ascribe meaning on a personal level in terms of their experiences as facilitators of STAR. They experienced joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others, feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, personal development and growth, as well as confirmed commitment and motivation. Secondly, they experienced a shared voice in the community, in response to the peer-facilitation of STAR, referring to appreciation and trust that inspired enthusiasm for participation in various school-community systems and a sense of community as outcome of facilitation. Thirdly, participants identified aspects related to being a peer-facilitator, in terms of overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern, working as a team, relying on creative problem solving when dealing with potential challenges, and extending the scope of facilitation.

Based on the findings of the study I concluded that the participating teachers experienced the facilitation of STAR in a positive manner on both a personal and professional level. As a result of their positive experiences, they seemed to become even more committed and motivated than initially, to support their community through the facilitation of STAR. Their positive experiences seemingly influenced their perceived development in terms of self-efficacy beliefs and actualisation, which in turn enhanced their personal and professional growth, thereby forming a cycle of improved positive experiences on various levels.



## LIST OF KEY WORDS

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1. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy
2. Dissemination research
3. Experiences
4. Facilitation
5. Fidelity of implementation
6. Peer-facilitators
7. STAR intervention
8. Teachers as STAR facilitators
9. Teachers in neighbouring schools



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## CHAPTER 1

### SETTING THE STAGE

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study is part of a broader research project that commenced in 2003. The initial PhD study (Ferreira, 2006) focused on exploring and describing the manner in which a South African informal settlement community in the Eastern Cape was coping with HIV & AIDS at the time, within the theoretical framework of the asset-based approach. Several studies followed (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ferreira, 2008; Ferreira, Ebersöhn & Loots, 2008; Loots, 2005; Mnguni, 2006; McCallaghan, 2007 & Odendaal, 2006) culminating in a pilot of STAR (Supportive Teachers Assets and Resilience). The STAR intervention (which was initially facilitated by six researchers<sup>1</sup>) has been replicated in three other schools in two other provinces in South Africa (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ebersöhn, 2007).

Subsequently dissemination research (Lomas, 1993) led to seven Eastern Cape participants being trained as STAR facilitators. In this role as STAR facilitators the seven teachers replicated STAR in two schools in the Eastern Cape (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ferreira, 2008). This dissemination research phase in the Eastern Cape occurred during 2007 and 2008. The aim of disseminating STAR was twofold. On the one hand the team wanted to determine the extent to which STAR could be disseminated to other sites by individuals who had participated in STAR. On the other hand disseminating STAR to additional teachers implied addressing resilience in more schools. The purpose of the current study was to explore the experiences of the seven teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators in the dissemination of STAR to two neighbouring schools. For this purpose, four of the seven teachers participated in this study.

As background to the current study, I explored existing theory on facilitation. I centred my readings on the experiences of facilitators (teachers) during a facilitation process in dissemination research. Extensive literature exists on the development and origin of

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<sup>1</sup> R.Ferreira, L. Ebersöhn, T.Loots, V. Odendaal, M. McCallaghan, M. Mnguni.



facilitation (Bentley, 1994; Jones, 1988; Wilkenson, 2004), facilitation as a vessel of instruction (Brown, 2004), the facilitation process (Bentley, 2004; Wilkenson, 2004), the meaning of facilitation (Berry, 1993; Cilliers, 1996; Rooth, 1995) and the facilitator as a person (Cilliers, 1996). However I was unable to source a variety of literature on the experiences of facilitators involved in dissemination research, more specifically applying Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) techniques within the South African context (as was employed during the STAR intervention) during dissemination research. As such the research could contribute to the existing knowledge base on the experiences of facilitators involved in PRA dissemination research.

One example of an existing related study by Rohleder, Fish, Ismail, Padfield and Platen (2007) reports on students' experiences of participation in a research project, indicating that students generally experienced the project as positive, yet challenging. They experienced their participation as facilitators as a valuable teaching and research exercise. Closely related to this study Griffiths, Oates and Lockyer (2005) report on students' experiences of a facilitation process in changing the mode of teaching. These researchers (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005) found that students prefer the opportunity to discover and develop instead of being taught by means of traditional methods such as lecturing. Also related to this finding Rohleder *et al.* (2007) found that through the use of facilitation, the participants in their study became aware of the importance of discovery and started thinking about discovering new things for themselves.

In addition to facilitation theory the current study is informed by the existing knowledge base on dissemination research and experiences. Dissemination research can be described as the active process by which researchers investigate the best potential methods they are aware of, to receive, accept and use this information and intervention presented to them (Lomas, 1993). With this study, I aim to add to the knowledge base on dissemination research in terms of facilitators' views and experiences in fulfilling the role of peer-facilitators.

## 1.2 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) the experiences of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators when disseminating STAR to fellow teachers in two neighbouring schools. As already stated limited studies have been conducted to date on the personal experiences of facilitators involved in dissemination research, specifically in South Africa. As such the research not only seeks to inform (a) dissemination research, but also (b) existing facilitation theory. In addition, by understanding facilitators' experiences of the facilitation process, people in helping professions such as teaching and Educational Psychology might gain valuable insight into the role of being a facilitator amongst peers.

As a student in the field of Educational Psychology I believe in supporting people to address and overcome the challenges they face. I view coping and resilience, when faced with adversity, as necessary for mental health, and agree with Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) who regard people as being capable of addressing life challenges and finding solutions to their problems. I became involved in the said research project based on my belief that the STAR intervention holds the potential of being sustained. Furthermore I regard community engagement as part of the field of Educational Psychology that I would like to work in one day as a practitioner.

Dissemination research (Glasgow, Lichtenstein & Marcus, 2003; Lomas, 1993) involves the examination of strategies to promote adoption and maintenance of an effective program in other settings or with populations other than that of the original study. As such, dissemination research attempts to understand and evaluate the process of dissemination. In the current study I sought to understand one such example, namely the experiences of the teachers replicating the STAR intervention. From a practical perspective valuable information was gained to potentially elaborate on the STAR intervention offered to teachers in future. Reflection by the participants, in terms of their experiences, also informed future dissemination of STAR in other schools.

Finally this study could contribute to existing literature on facilitation processes applying PRA methodology and principles in South Africa. The anticipated practical value of the current study therefore lies in presenting a documented example that may inform communities during future capacity-building activities in terms of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators. In addition facilitation forms an integral part of Educational Psychology, as practising psychologists facilitate discussions and interventions (also in the educational sector) on a regular basis. In the same manner teachers fulfil the role of facilitators on a daily basis, when in their classrooms and dealing with children. However teachers seldom fulfil this role when in the company of their peers. Based on these ideas, it follows that the focus of this study falls within my personal interests and beliefs, yet holds the potential to build on literature in the field of dissemination research, Educational Psychology and facilitation theory.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The current study was directed by the following primary research question:

*What are the experiences of teachers as facilitators during dissemination research of the STAR intervention?*

To address this question the following secondary questions were explored:

- Which positive experiences or value did the teachers gain by fulfilling the role of facilitators, if any?
- Which challenges did the teachers experience in facilitating the STAR intervention programme with peers?

### **1.4 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY**

Based on my initial literature review I approached the study with the following assumptions:

- I believed that the participating teachers possessed the skills and competence to facilitate the STAR intervention programme.
- I believed that the participants of this study would benefit from sharing their experiences as facilitators of the STAR intervention, to potentially learn from this and improve their skills by reflecting on their role as facilitators.
- I assumed that the participating teachers were willing and able to identify their own strengths, difficulties and possible obstacles as facilitators of the STAR intervention.
- I assumed that facilitation and dissemination research could successfully be applied within the context (and together with) of the particular community involved in the current study by rendering psychosocial support and building resilience in schools.
- I assumed that the knowledge base on dissemination research in terms of facilitators' views regarding potential strategies might evolve and prove to be active, proactive, interactive and, ultimately effective during the STAR intervention.

## **1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

In the following section I clarify the key concepts of this study.

### **1.5.1 Experiences**

Buchy (2004:38) refers to experiences as “voices” that are concerned with “*recognizing and fostering the emergence of responses and the presence of multiple voices*”. Experiences include the presence of multiple voices, that recognise the connection between individuals' education and their personal experiences, as well as the presence of different identities (Neuman, 2007).

In this study experiences refer to the perceptions of the participating teachers in terms of them fulfilling the role of facilitators of the STAR intervention with fellow teachers of

two neighbouring schools. These experiences include positive as well as negative experiences, strategies that seemed to be successful as well as those not viewed as successful, and activities of facilitation that were reportedly enjoyed by the participants.

### **1.5.2 Teachers as STAR facilitators**

The teachers involved in the current study are teachers who have been participating in the broad research project since 2003. During this study they fulfilled the role of facilitators of the STAR intervention in two neighbouring schools. They are all women who teach at a local primary school in an informal settlement community in the Eastern Cape. These teachers were trained as STAR facilitators by the researchers of the initial study. As part of their role as facilitators the teachers were expected to support their community in a psychosocial manner and address resilience in schools.

### **1.5.3 Facilitation**

According to Bentley (1994:134) facilitation is a concept which describes an activity and literally means “*to make easy*”. It is something that someone does; implying a process although it does not necessarily require a facilitator. Bentley (1994) views facilitation as the process of empowering people to take control and responsibility for their own efforts and achievements.

Jones (1988:174) states that the concept of facilitation initiated in psychotherapy, is characterised by neutral attitudes, and focuses on “*bringing out*” instead of “*putting in*”. According to Cilliers (1996) facilitation refers to the availability of a process of education and opportunities for the development of a second person through which growth and development towards self-actualisation and optimal functioning can be stimulated.

From the above description of the concept, facilitation seems to be a process that could assist or help a person, with the guidance of another to overcome an obstacle or difficulty, and to learn and experience self-growth. Therefore, facilitation in the current

study refers to the group of teachers who were trained as facilitators, to facilitate the STAR intervention for teachers in two neighbouring schools during dissemination research.

#### **1.5.4 Dissemination research**

As stated, dissemination research involves the examination of strategies to promote adoption and maintenance of an effective program (the STAR intervention in this study) in other settings or with populations other than that of the original study (Lomas, 1993). In the current study dissemination research therefore implies the active process during which teachers facilitated the STAR intervention. The aim of this study is to provide information that other interventions may apply in future (Lomas, 1993). I attempted to elaborate on the knowledge on dissemination research, and to focus on facilitation strategies that might be regarded as active, proactive, interactive and, ultimately, effective.

#### **1.5.5 STAR intervention**

As alluded to earlier, the STAR intervention is a community-based programme that was developed in various phases since 2003, constituting several postgraduate studies (Loots, 2005; McCallaghan, 2007; Mnguni, 2006; Odendaal, 2006; Olivier, 2009) following on after an initial doctoral study (Ferreira, 2006). The initial Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) project developed into a broad research project as the study progressed (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ferreira, 2008). The STAR intervention involves the identification and mobilisation of existing resources by teachers to address psychosocial challenges and support children, their families and communities, in an attempt to enhance resilience.

STAR thus aims to address resilience in schools by equipping teachers with competencies to mobilise psychosocial support. STAR is based on the asset-based approach and resilience theory. As opposed to the needs-based approach, where

emphasis is placed on problems, needs and deficiencies, the asset-based approach regards problem solving in terms of creating and rebuilding relationships between individuals, associations and institutions, placing the emphasis on enablement and empowerment (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Resilience can be defined as a pattern of being strong in the face of adversity or inordinate demands. Resilience implies goal-directed behaviour of coping and rebounding, together with the accompanying emotions and cognitions (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2002).

### **1.5.6 Teachers in neighbouring schools**

Colleagues in neighbouring schools refer to teachers for whom the STAR intervention was facilitated in 2007 and 2008 by the facilitating teachers. The neighbouring schools were selected based on established relationships between the teachers initially involved and some of the teachers in the two neighbouring schools. They were namely seventeen women (fifteen women at one school and two women at another school) who teach at primary schools in the same Eastern Cape region.

## **1.6 BROAD OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the research process of the current study. The figure is followed by a description of the research methodology.



**Figure 1.1:** Overview of the research process



Although I discuss the research design and methodology in detail in Chapter 3, I now provide a brief overview to serve as background to the empirical study I conducted. I followed a qualitative approach, seeking to understand the experiences of the participating teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators (Creswell, 2009). I relied on an interpretivist epistemology in my attempt to interpret human behaviour on a verbal and non-verbal level, against the background of the participants' life worlds, as well as their past experiences and existing understandings thereof (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

I selected a single instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2003) to investigate the experiences of the teachers involved as facilitators in a facilitation process. The participants (teacher-facilitators) were selected by means of convenience sampling, based on their involvement in the STAR project since 2003 and their being easily accessible (Patton, 2002).

In an attempt to explore the experiences of the teachers, I co-facilitated two focus groups (one for member-checking purposes) in November 2008 with four of the seven STAR teacher-facilitators as data collection strategy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Berg, 1998). Before the focus group session, I read literature on the theory of facilitation and dissemination research as well as the initial study conducted in 2003. In this manner I was able to conceptualise and contextualise the necessary background against which I could explore and interpret the participants' experiences. I also observed a STAR intervention session (28 November 2008, 14:00-16:30) at a primary school in the Nelson Mandela Metropole, Eastern Cape. I relied upon observation-as-context-of-interaction (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000), documenting the observations by means of field notes and visual evidence (photographs) (Berg, 1998; Patton, 2002; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). I further relied on a research diary (Poggenpoel, 1998; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002) to document experiences, observations and reflections.

I thematically analysed and interpreted the raw data I had obtained by means of independent content analysis of the transcripts of the focus group discussions and

observations, documented as field notes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Wilkenson, 2004). The selected research design and chosen methods enabled me to derive a rich description of the experiences of the teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators.

## **1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I adhered to the necessary ethical guidelines during the course of this study, as stipulated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria (Ethics Committee of Faculty of Education, 2009). By conducting a study within a broader research project, permission for conducting the research had already been obtained from the relevant Department of Education and school principals when I entered the research field (included in Appendix A).

In conducting this study I was guided by the principle of informed consent (Merriam, 1998). Prior to commencing the data collection activities I obtained informed consent (Appendix A) from the participants in the study (as part of the related study). I continuously respected the human nature of the participants. I did not deceive the participants in any way, and prevented them from being harmed during data collection activities. I ensured that the participants were aware of the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

I respected the principles of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the information shared. In this regard I requested the participants to also respect the confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of others during the research process and focus group discussions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Although I altered identifying information during transcriptions of the focus groups the participants indicated that they wanted their identities to be displayed on any visual data included in documentation of the study. In an attempt to adhere to confidentiality, I ensured that my field journal and the audio tapes have been kept in a safe and secure environment.

I did not mislead the participants by withholding any information from them that related to the current study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I followed an open approach, where the participants were informed of the purpose and the process of the research throughout the study. I also attempted to be accurate in reporting on the collected data, and did not omit any data that had been obtained, guarding against its manipulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

## **1.8 QUALITY CRITERIA**

In my attempt to produce a rigorous study, I strived to adhere to the quality criteria associated with qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Firstly, in an attempt to obtain credible findings I engaged in the research process as well as the data collection activities in the research field. I further employed crystallisation with the aim of verifying the themes that emerged during this study from multiple data sources.

Secondly I attempted to obtain transferable findings by selecting a case which represented a specific phenomenon. In addition I attempted to enhance the possibility of transferability by providing rich descriptions of the experiences of the participating teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators. I selected a case study design, valuing the uniqueness of the case and what one might learn from it, with a repeat of findings (dependability) not being my goal (Stake, 2000). Transferability is, however, a possibility.

I aimed to enhance the confirmability of the current study by utilising multiple sources of data and multiple data collection strategies. Furthermore I employed various examples of direct quotations from the participants in presenting the results and in support of the interpretations I had made (Kelly, 2002; Mertens, 1998).

Finally, in an attempt to obtain authentic findings, I presented a balanced view of the various perspectives, views, beliefs and values the participants had shared in terms of

their experiences of being facilitators in the STAR intervention (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In addition I utilised photographs and observation notes from my research diary to support the findings in terms of the participants' experiences of being facilitators during the STAR intervention.

## **1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

### **Chapter 1: Setting the stage**

Chapter 1 serves as a background chapter to the mini-dissertation, by providing an introductory orientation, a general overview of the study and a discussion of my reasons for selecting the particular phenomenon as my research focus. The relevance and contribution of the study, statement of the research purpose and questions, and clarification of key concepts are provided, followed by a brief overview of the selected paradigm, research design, and methodological choices I made. I also briefly introduce ethical considerations and my attempts to adhere to quality criteria.

### **Chapter 2: Exploring existing literature as background to the study**

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical background for this study. I explore literature related to the topic that was being researched, discussing theory on facilitation and dissemination research. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the theoretical framework.

### **Chapter 3: Research process**

In Chapter 3 I describe the research process in detail in terms of the selected research design and methodology followed during the empirical part of the study. To investigate the research problem as formulated in Chapter 1 I outline the selected methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, exploring the strengths and challenges implied by my choices. The chapter concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations and quality criteria.

#### **Chapter 4: Results and findings of the study**

Chapter 4 consists of the presentation and discussion of the data and information obtained and analysed during the current study. Results are provided in terms of the themes and sub-themes that emerged during data analysis. I then situate the findings in terms of existing literature with the aim of relating them to existing theoretical frameworks and models in order to reach conclusions.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations**

In Chapter 5 I provide a summary of the main findings of the current study in terms of the research questions and purpose of the study, as formulated in Chapter 1. I present the main conclusions, followed by my reflections in terms of the potential contributions and strengths of the study, as well as the challenges I faced during the investigation. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and practice.

### **1.10 CONCLUSION**

The aim of Chapter 1 was to provide an introductory orientation of the study, as well as a broad view of what was to follow in Chapters 2 to 5. I outlined the purpose of the current study, formulated the research questions and stated the assumptions with which I approached the study. I clarified key concepts and briefly introduced the paradigmatic perspective, research methodology and strategies employed during the investigation.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review of relevant and contemporary sources. I discuss the underlying theory according to which I planned and undertook the empirical part of the study, and against which I interpreted the results of this study. I conclude the chapter with a theoretical framework for the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the preceding chapter was to provide an introduction to this study, creating a basis for the chapters to follow. I formulated the research questions and presented the assumptions with which I approached this study. Thereafter I clarified key concepts and presented a brief overview of the selected research design and methodology.

In this chapter I discuss existing literature on dissemination research, with reference to teachers' experiences of fulfilling the role of facilitators. Within the context of the current study, it was firstly important for me to understand existing theory on facilitation in order to be able to provide the necessary background against which I could explore and interpret the participants' experiences. In line with the focus of this study, I centred readings on the experiences of facilitators (teachers) during a facilitation process in dissemination research. In reviewing existing literature I was guided by the focus of this study, in terms of the research questions and the purpose of the study. In presenting existing literature in this chapter, I aim also to identify areas to which my research could contribute. I conclude the chapter by presenting the theoretical framework.

#### 2.2 FACILITATION

In the discussion of facilitation, I focus on the following aspects: definition of facilitation; description and meaning of facilitation; personality profile, skills, roles and responsibilities of facilitators; and typical experiences of facilitators. Limited studies have been conducted on the personal experiences of facilitators involved in dissemination research, specifically in South Africa. As such this research could build on existing theory of facilitation and add to the knowledge base of facilitators' personal experiences when involved in a research project and working amongst fellow teachers.

By understanding facilitators' experiences of the facilitation process, people in helping professions such as teaching and Educational Psychology might gain insight into the role of being a facilitator amongst peers.

### **2.2.1 Understanding the concept of facilitation**

The concept "facilitate" comes from the Latin *facilis* which means "to make easy" (Bentley, 2004:75). Rees (2001) states that facilitation literally means to make something easier by guiding and structuring the participation of members so that everyone is involved and makes a contribution. According to Bentley (2004) facilitation describes an activity. It is something that someone does, and therefore implies a process. Neil and Dias (2002) agree and state that the process of facilitation implies a process of doing something, making a process progress more effectively when a facilitator provides prompts to guide participants through a series of experiences. According to Berry (1993), facilitation processes are learner or group-oriented, and in contrast with the directive "*show and tell*" style of traditional education methods.

Rohleder *et al.* (2007) and Cilliers (1996) agree that facilitation creates the availability of a process of education and that it can provide opportunities for growth and actualisation. The teachers who presented the STAR intervention to fellow teachers and participated in the current study seemed to align with this definition of facilitation, as they were involved in a process of education, which provided them with opportunities for growth and development. In elaborating on this description, Maslow (1970) used the term self-actualisation to describe a desire that could lead to realising one's capabilities and achieving one's ambitions. Rohleder *et al.* (2007) and Cilliers (1996) further state that facilitation can also include periods of non-action, silence and even the absence of a facilitator.

Schwarz (1994) distinguishes between basic facilitation, where a facilitator intervenes to help a group with a specific problem or process, and developmental facilitation, where the facilitator helps the group grow in its ability to handle future problems or processes.

Jones (1988:147) highlights the fact that the concept of facilitation developed within the context of psychotherapy, where a neutral attitude is adopted and the focus is on “*bringing out*” instead of “*putting in*”. In support of this view both Rees (2001) and Schwarz (1994) consider facilitation as a process in which a neutral person might help a group to work more effectively.

In this regard Bentley (2004) views facilitation as the process of empowering people to take control of and responsibility for their own efforts and achievements. This author believes that if people develop, they do so because they have made a choice to do so. According to Bentley (2004) an individual cannot be developed by others.

From the above description of the concept of facilitation, it seems clear that facilitation is a process that can assist or help a person with the guidance of another to overcome an obstacle (or difficulty), and to learn and experience self-growth. The definition of facilitation is in line with the psychotherapeutic field of person-centred psychology from which it originated, as well as with the theory of helping (Carkhuff, 1993; Egan, 2002; Ivey, 1988). Ferreira (2004) supports this statement by viewing facilitation as an innate human quality, specifically of those in the caring or health service professions.

According to Rogers (1983), rather than managing and controlling the learning process, facilitators are required to focus on providing resources and opportunities for learning to take place. Ferreira (2004) agrees by regarding the art of facilitation as learnt and practised, instead of inherited. In essence, facilitation therefore seems to be about the empowerment of people to accept responsibility for their inputs and personal achievements (Bentley, 2004).

### **2.2.2 Profile of a facilitator**

According to Cilliers (1996) as well as Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997), the personality profile of a facilitator generally refers to the personality traits and characteristics, interpersonal skills and knowledge of the person facilitating a process.



These authors argue that certain acquired interpersonal characteristics are more important than the techniques that facilitators apply. These characteristics are generally in accordance with the interpersonal characteristics of a psychologically healthy person (Rothmann & Sieberhagen, 1997). It follows that an effective facilitator generally portrays characteristics such as integrity, integrated functioning, assertiveness, a focus on the present, application of personal values in a flexible manner, sensitivity to other's feelings and the ability to express emotions in a spontaneous manner without being impulsive or compulsive (Rothmann & Sieberhagen, 1997). Furthermore Gerber (2008) regards patience as a positive attitude, professional appearance and a sense of humour as important attributes of efficient facilitators.

Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) argue that an effective facilitator's self-concept is usually characterised by self-acceptance and self-worth. Feenberg and Xin (2004) agree with this view and believe that recognition of contributions generally stimulates the desire to again contribute in future, and that this might add to the development of self-confidence and a positive self-concept amongst participating members. The above statement can be related to the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory posits that individuals' perceived ability to perform a specific activity or task influences their motivation and persistence to engage in activities or tasks. If individuals (such as the participating teachers) perceive that they possess the knowledge and skills to engage successfully in an activity, such as STAR, they would be more likely to attempt the activity. Bandura (1986) states that self-efficacy will not be enhanced merely by acquiring skills, but by the way in which such skills are acquired, potentially resulting in a sense of competence.

Rothmann and Sieberhagen further (1997) believe that facilitators usually show optimistic and unconditional acceptance, respect for other people and a preference for qualitative, intimate, balanced, sensitive and considerate relationships filled with love. These characteristics can enable a facilitator to make verbal and non-verbal contact with other people or a group in an effective and responsible manner. Gerber (2008)

agrees with the above view and states that a facilitator generally demonstrates a high degree of sensitivity to verbal as well as non-verbal communication.

Schwarz (1994) is of the opinion that ideal interpersonal skills of facilitators include the ability to build trust in the facilitation environment and to avoid personal bias. According to Bentley (2004) a facilitator should encourage co-operation and be able to diffuse high tension situations. Green and Haines (2002) believe that a facilitator needs to display cultural sensitivity and be a good communicator who can provide constructive feedback to participants to assist them in their learning. Such interpersonal skills were of importance within the context of this study as these skills could have been experienced during the facilitation of STAR by the participating teachers.

### **2.2.3 Skills of facilitators**

Ferreira (2004) states that facilitation can be considered an art which can be learned and practised. Wilkenson (2004) agrees, explaining that considerable skills and expertise are needed from a facilitator to fulfil the various roles that are part of the different stages of the facilitation process. Feenberg and Xin (2004) are of the opinion that facilitation is an art of leadership in group communication, with the facilitator being the one who fulfils a leadership role.

Facilitation can be regarded as a non-directive art to provide the correct stimulus for a group or individuals in order for them to fully participate in their own development (Rooth, 1995). Within the context of the current study it was necessary that the facilitators (teachers) fully participated in the facilitation process in fulfilling the role of sole facilitators. In line with Rooth's (1995) view of facilitation as a non-directive art, Christenson and Robinson (1994) as well as Green and Haines (2002) are of the opinion that a facilitator should generally adopt a neutral position during the process of facilitation and not be more concerned about the process of development than the outcomes thereof. The skills mentioned here seemed important within the context of this

study as they served as a backdrop against which I could analyse and interpret the experiences of the participating teachers.

Gerber (2008) states that an efficient facilitator will aim to promote knowledge transfer by involving participants in interaction and feedback, as well as providing challenges and opportunities for direct engagement and experiencing tasks. Finestone (2004) agrees with this opinion, stating that for knowledge to be transferred in a meaningful way, facilitators are required to guide and support their participants to develop a sense of duty and responsibility.

According to Wilkenson (2004) knowledge and experience in the effective use of facilitation techniques are however not enough. Gerber (2008) believes that a skilled facilitator provides motivation on a continuous basis and has specific goals and established procedures. In addition Wilkenson (2004) states that facilitators usually model positive affirmation and demonstrate caring by means of words and actions, finding pleasure from being of assistance to others. This caring quality of facilitators is believed to encourage participants to feel good about themselves and their work through instilling a positive belief in their own ability to succeed (Gerber, 2008). From the above statement it seems clear that support forms an integral part of facilitation.

In addition to the mentioned skills, Gerber (2008) and Schwarz (1994) believe that facilitators generally possess the ability to deal with problem situations, reflect a balanced view of life, act with integrity, learn cooperatively and evaluate their own progress and development. Within the context of the current study it was important to remain aware of these skills as the goal of this study was to explore the experiences of the participating teachers as facilitators of the STAR intervention.

Facilitation does not mean that one has to lead from the front of the group (Wilkenson, 2004). At times the facilitator needs to lead from within the group, by example and participation rather than persuasion. Bentley (2004) reminds us that a facilitator will occasionally lead from the back and follow, thereby enabling the group to lead.

However, according to Bentley (2004) this is not something that comes naturally. Facilitators thus often have to learn to follow.

Bentley (2004) identifies six specific skills that facilitators often need to learn in terms of followership. Firstly, a good facilitator typically displays the skill of listening in an open and quiet way. This might enable the facilitator to hear what is happening and to be aware of the feelings and emotions that lie behind what others are saying. It can also provide facilitators with a basis for the choices they make about what is happening, how it is happening and what one might want to do subsequently. Secondly, a facilitator should question in an enquiring and learning way, in order to understand what is happening. These skills can provide facilitators with the necessary knowledge to make decisions about what to do. In the third place Bentley (2004) states that a facilitator needs to communicate any thoughts, feelings and ideas of what is happening. This could provide facilitators with a sense of freedom to act in a manner that they view as appropriate. Fourthly facilitators need to act in the best interest of those in the group in order to achieve shared objectives. Fifthly, facilitators are required to continuously review what is happening. This action is particularly relevant after a facilitator has acted, in order to assess which changes certain actions have had on the progress of the group. The reviewing process is concerned with listening, questioning and communicating with others about what is happening at a certain moment. By constantly monitoring what is happening in the here and now, the facilitator can remain grounded in the present rather than keep relaying the past or fantasise about the future. Finally a facilitator is required to adapt to changing conditions. When facilitators are aware of how things are changing, they can choose to adapt their actions accordingly. This skill could allow facilitators to change their minds and to adjust to what is being done to suit the particular needs of a given group and moment, rather than remain with previously relevant, but no longer appropriate ideas.

I concur with Gerber's (2008) belief that a competent facilitator generally encourages participants' awareness of the consequences of their actions and places the emphasis on future goal setting. One way to do this is by planning and setting goals that can be

achieved and assisting participants to reach these goals. In the current study the teacher-facilitators guided their fellow teachers in identifying potential school-based support projects and setting goals and action plans for these to be initiated. To be in line with the profile of a facilitator as discussed in 2.2.2, I needed to consider the potential personality traits, characteristics and interpersonal skills of the STAR facilitators throughout this study. I assumed that the teacher-facilitators were enthusiastic about STAR and the way forward. Furthermore, I regarded patience, as personal characteristic, as an important part of the profile of a skilled facilitator.

#### **2.2.4 Roles and responsibilities of facilitators**

According to Wilkenson (2004), a facilitator fulfils various roles during the process of facilitation. Firstly a facilitator is regarded as a motivator who is required to establish momentum in a group. Secondly facilitators typically fulfil the role of guides who listen, analyse and compare comments, and formulate questions to enhance the group process while acting in the role of questioner. Thirdly a facilitator is regarded as a bridge builder, creating and maintaining an environment for sharing ideas. The fourth role is one of peacemaker in which the facilitator guides the group towards a constructive resolution of a problem or conflict. The fifth role of a facilitator includes that of taskmaster, where responsibility is given in terms of time management and keeping discussions on track throughout the session. Lastly a facilitator is expected to praise participants for every effort, the progress they are making and the results they achieve.

Berge (1995) is of opinion that facilitators fulfil a social role, focusing on the promotion of human relationships, provision of opportunities for the group to develop a sense of group cohesiveness and group unity, and assistance of the group to work together towards a mutual cause. In addition a facilitator is usually responsible to affirm and recognise inputs from the participants (Berge, 1995; Ferreira, 2004). A competent facilitator generally shows empathy and warmth, which can be seen as part of the facilitator's social role (Gerber, 2008).

Apart from the social role, facilitators fulfil a managerial role. Gerber (2008) believes that good decision-making and analytical skills are crucial for successful facilitators, especially in fulfilling their managerial role. According to Berge (1995) some of the responsibilities of the managerial role include setting objectives, timetables, procedural rules and norms for decision making. A practical role that a facilitator typically fulfils is to help the group to form quickly. According to Bentley (1994) individual energy merges when people come together in a group. Yet in order for this to happen, the people in the group need to relate to one another, to the group as a whole and to the facilitator. The role of a facilitator thus further includes creating a safe environment where people can explore relationships with others in the group.

Within the context of the current study it was important to remain aware of the different potential roles of facilitators as the goal of this study was to explore teachers' experiences as facilitators of STAR, which implied the different roles they might have experienced during the facilitation process. In summary the STAR facilitators needed to perform various roles during the facilitation of STAR. Their responsibilities included listening, motivating and praising their colleagues and each other. They needed to be able to act as bridge builders of the community, thereby potentially including members of the community such as the parents, other teachers and the broader community. As the role of facilitator typically implies a social role, the facilitators of STAR ideally needed to be able to establish a sense of group cohesiveness and empathy and warmth within the group, where they could experience a safe environment. During this study, I kept these potential roles and responsibilities of facilitator in mind, in interpreting the data I obtained.

### **2.2.5 Experiences of facilitators involved in research**

Based on studies conducted on participants' experiences of the facilitation process (Rohleder *et al.* 2007; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002), participants in research studies generally seem to experience the facilitation process as positive and supportive in creating awareness amongst themselves, thereby contributing to their self-concept, self-

worth and self-actualisation. Self-concept refers to individuals' ideas of who they are, what they are capable of and whether they feel positive or negative about the latter (Rohleder *et al.* 2007). Self-worth is considered as part of the self-concept and forms part of its valence dimension. It refers to a person's sense of personal value. Self-worth is often used interchangeably with the term "self-esteem". Rohleder *et al.* (2007) found that through the use of facilitation the participants in their study became aware of their self-awareness and subjective experiences, and began to increasingly think independently. Based on the findings of the Rohleder *et al.* (2007) study, students experienced their participation as facilitators as a valuable teaching and research exercise.

Closely related to this study, Griffiths *et al.* (2005) report on students' experiences of a facilitation process in changing the mode of teaching. These researchers (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005) found that students prefer the opportunity to discover and develop instead of being taught by means of traditional methods such as lecturing. Further related to this finding, Rohleder *et al.* (2007) found that through the use of facilitation, the participants in their study became aware of the importance of discovery and started thinking about discovering new things for themselves.

A study by Duvenhage (2009) explored the experiences of volunteer care workers facilitating an intervention programme with vulnerable preschool children, and found that these workers had experienced meaningfulness in life. Duvenhage (2009) found that participants were motivated to make a difference in the children's lives and performed their activities with motivation, determination, enthusiasm, passion and commitment. In line with these findings Carstens (2007) found that care workers were eager to go the extra mile to be effective in their work. Smith (2004) reports similar findings in his study of care workers expressing motivation and commitment in fulfilling their role as facilitators.

Carstens (2007) found that care workers, as facilitators, are generally eager to do whatever it takes to be successful and effective in their work with children and youths.

They are reportedly enthusiastic, devoted and motivated to make a difference, despite potential high levels of stress, due to the nature of the profession (Bertolino & Thompson, 1999). Another study by Smith (2004) found that care workers as facilitators perceived their involvement with children as less draining and ultimately in a positive light. The participants in Smith's (2004) study perceived their work as care workers as a calling instead of an occupation. They experienced their commitment as child care workers, as extremely important and serious. In support of this finding, Duvenhage (2009) found that the volunteer care workers in her study experienced self-development in terms of enhanced interpersonal skills, expanding their competencies and ability to interact with people. Duvenhage (2009) further found that the volunteer care workers experienced positive feelings of pride, excitement and joy in their role of facilitators of an intervention with young children.

In terms of personal attributes the care worker-facilitators in Duvenhage's (2009) study reported flexibility and adaptability as important attributes to their role as facilitators in unforeseen situations. In support of this finding, the Alberta Occupational Profiles (2009) states that care workers are required to be flexible and creative in order to adopt new ways of doing things and finding innovative solutions to problems and challenges.

Another study by King (2000) describes the experiences of facilitators who were involved in a trust-building exercise amongst members of a work team. It was found that early in the process interpersonal trust, communication and relationships emerged as important themes in the team members. King (2000) states that trust emerged through the process of facilitation amongst the team members. To conclude, existing literature seems to indicate that facilitators usually experience the facilitation process as positive and a process that can create awareness in terms of self-concept, self-worth and self-actualisation.



## 2.3 DISSEMINATION RESEARCH

In the discussion of dissemination research I focus on the following: conceptualisation of dissemination research (including dissemination in the social sciences context); interrelated processes, models and methods involved; challenges implied by dissemination research; and suggestions for effective dissemination research. In the past dissemination research derived mainly from the medical or health sciences context, as highlighted by Young, Marks, Kohler and Hsu (1996) who believe that a need exists in the behavioural science (social science) context in terms of dissemination research. The mentioned shortcoming may, however, be partially addressed by disseminating the findings of the current study, focusing on this area of investigation.

### 2.3.1 Defining dissemination research

In terms of the concept dissemination, some scholars distinguish between “*diffusion*” and “*dissemination*”, with diffusion indicating the unplanned or spontaneous spread of ideas, whilst dissemination refers to a more directed and planned process of action (Rogers, 2003). Lillrank (1995) states that the object of dissemination may be concepts, skills, tools or innovative practices. Within the context of this study dissemination refers to the skills (interpersonal, personal and professional) and innovative practices (extending STAR) that the teachers experienced as facilitators, taking place within the social sciences context.

Lomas (1993) agrees by regarding dissemination research as the study of processes and variables that may determine and influence the adoption of knowledge, interventions or practice by various stakeholders. These processes and variables (Lomas, 1993) may include different contexts for example the medical sciences (physical health promotion) as well as the social sciences, such as interventions (like facilitating STAR in a community) to promote emotional wellness. In support, Glasgow *et al.* (2003) describe dissemination research as a process which involves the

examination of strategies to promote adoption and maintenance of an effective program in other settings or with populations other than that of the original study.

According to Glasgow *et al.* (2003) dissemination research is, at its core, committed to building bridges between research, professional, community and advocacy organisations so that the various role players can gain from and contribute to new knowledge. This statement highlights the move from dissemination research from the medical to the social context as the role of community and advocacy organisations is regarded as important in the contribution of new knowledge. Whatever the context, the goal for dissemination research practitioners is to move research-tested ideas and technologies (medical or social context) into practice (community). In this regard Slater, Pinnegan and Madigon (2005) state that dissemination research seeks to identify the best possible methods and approaches to make people aware of and use already-proven interventions. This statement of Slater *et al.* (2005) is of particular interest within the context of the current study, since the participating teachers had the potential to make their colleagues aware of methods to use in psycho-socially supporting their communities, as they embarked on the process of facilitating the STAR intervention with fellow teachers.

Kerner, Rimor and Emmons (2005) believe that the dissemination of evidence-based interventions is critical to improving public health. In line with this belief Lomas (1993) states that dissemination research does not seek to determine the effectiveness of a particular intervention but it occurs after success has been established and in the aim of finding the best possible way for an intervention to reach members of a larger population. This statement relates to the context of the current study as this investigation forms part of a broader research project (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ferreira, 2008; Ferreira, 2006; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2008; Loots, 2005; McCallaghan, 2007; Mnguni, 2006; Odendaal, 2006; Olivier, 2009) with the effectiveness of the initial study already having been established when I commenced this study. Furthermore Lomas (1993) believes that dissemination research involves an active process through which researchers investigate the best potential methods (for example the STAR intervention)

of making target groups (teachers at neighbouring schools to whom the STAR programme was being presented) aware of, receive, accept and use information and intervention presented to them.

In conclusion, within the context of the current study, I viewed the facilitation of the STAR intervention as a directed and planned process taking place within the social sciences context of the teacher-facilitators community. In undertaking this study, I assumed that new ideas relating to the implementation of STAR could be discovered and that STAR held the potential to be implemented to other settings or populations. I predicted that the STAR facilitators would be able to adhere to their role of bridge builders in terms of facilitation as well as in participating in dissemination research. Based on existing literature I also assumed that collaboration between researchers as professionals, community and advocacy organisations could potentially be established in order that the various role players gain from the information relating to STAR, and thereby subsequently impact on improving the health of their communities.

### **2.3.2 Interrelated processes in dissemination research**

According to Lomas (1993) the terms diffusion, dissemination and implementation denote the idea that information can be part of a communication process before it will be available as input during decision-making. As stated diffusion can be regarded as a passive concept, largely unplanned and uncontrolled, whereas dissemination typically involves a more active process implying action, targeting and tailoring information for an intended audience. Lastly implementation implies the goal of communication, which according to Lomas (1993), involves more than increasing awareness in a particular audience. To increase awareness in one's audience, Lomas (1993) suggests a focus on tailoring the message to the specific needs of that audience and being aware of the implications of the message for the audience.

As part of the discussion on dissemination research and the implementation thereof, I discuss the concept of fidelity of implementation as this can be compared to the concept

of integrity and credibility (Elliott & Mihalic, 2002). According to Lomas (1993) implementation implies communication, with the concept fidelity of implementation also emphasising communication, as defined by Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco and Hansen (2003:238): *"the degree to which programs are implemented as intended by the program developers"*. Elliott and Mihalic (2002) agree with the importance of communication during the delivery of an intervention (such as STAR) and explain that fidelity of implementation involves the delivery of instruction in the way that it was designed to be delivered. In line with these definitions, Elliott and Mihalic (2002:5) define implementation fidelity in terms of the question whether or not *"a program service or intervention is being delivered as it was designed or written"*. Elliott and Mihalic (2002) explain that achievement of high implementation fidelity is one of the best ways of replicating the success of interventions achieved by original research. Based on the focus of the current study on facilitators' experiences, this research aims to foreground facilitation strategies in terms of fidelity of implementation.

According to Lomas (1993) dissemination research typically involves a process implying action, focusing on targeting and tailoring information for an intended audience. To understand the process of implementing research findings (STAR intervention programme) in practice (facilitation of STAR to colleagues), Lomas (1993) suggests the social influence approach and adult learning theory as theoretical backdrop. I believe that these approaches are relevant to this study in terms of understanding the role of social influence and the environment of the participating teachers in the implementation of dissemination research.

The social influence approach is one of two approaches used to understand the process of implementation of dissemination research. A social influence approach refers to habit, socially accepted, appropriate norms, and peer acceptance as motivators for behavioural change. This approach suggests that modelling behaviour, as a member of a social grouping, generally takes precedence over acquiring and applying information as an isolated individual. Mittman, Tonesk and Jacobson (1992) mention that the social influence approach considers peer judgment and beliefs as a major role in an

individual's evaluation of new information. Therefore, in the current study, it was important to consider continuously the role of social influence in the teachers' evaluation of new information (content of STAR).

Another theory that might be used in understanding the implementation of dissemination research (STAR) with the participating teachers in this study is adult learning theory. This theory focuses on individuals' environments as well as the characteristics of expected behaviour change or innovation (Fox, Mazmanian & Putnam, 1989). This theory further highlights the importance of personal motivation and learning as preparation to change and to verify whether a change has been positive and valuable or not. Having explained the three interrelated processes in dissemination research, (diffusion, dissemination and implementation) and potential theories to understand implementation (social influence approach and adult learning theory), the following question can be raised: *Did the implementation of STAR in practice adhere to the proposed conditions for successful implementation?* (Lomas, 1993).

In conclusion I regarded it as potentially meaningful for me to understand the processes of dissemination research in order to explore and comprehend the experiences of the participating teachers facilitating STAR. It follows that, in order to increase awareness amongst the audience of STAR (colleague teachers, parents and wider community) the message of STAR potentially had to be tailored to the specific needs of the communities involved, being aware of the implications that the dissemination of STAR could potentially have on the specific audience (parents, teachers and broader community).

### **2.3.3 Models and methods of dissemination research**

I regard the knowledge transfer model as applicable to the current study (Crosswaite & Curtice, 1994) according to which procedures such as the facilitation of STAR by the participating teachers, are supposed to develop mechanisms (an awareness through facilitating STAR) to identify knowledge relevant to users (knowledge on how teachers can support their community members with HIV/AIDS) and effective transfer strategies

(transferring the knowledge through facilitating STAR to teachers in their community, the parents and churches) (Crosswaite & Curtice, 1994). In this study the manner in which knowledge (STAR) was proposed to be transferred to members of the community was through the participating teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators. Gerber (2008) supports the knowledge transfer model and is of opinion that facilitators could aim to promote knowledge transfer by involving participants in the facilitation process.

The focus of the current study implied the possibility of discovering strategies to transfer knowledge by exploring the experiences of the participating teachers as facilitators. During this study I had the opportunity of gaining knowledge that could potentially be translated into practice, which could in turn be applied in future facilitation programmes and potentially inform dissemination research *per se*. In terms of potential methods of dissemination research, Lomas (1993) states that tools and instruments are often geared towards assessing the ways in which change has occurred among a target audience or organisation during dissemination research. I believe that by exploring and describing the experiences of the participating teachers (in fulfilling the role of facilitators in STAR); I had the opportunity to disseminate research on the manner in which the participants had experienced their role as facilitators of STAR both personally and professionally.

Crosswaite and Curtice (1994) state that qualitative methodology is often used in dissemination research, to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation process involved. In the current study I followed a qualitative approach, seeking to understand the experiences of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators of the STAR intervention. I believe that this approach allowed me to emphasise the uniqueness of individuals (Creswell, 2009) and collect data in a real-world setting, thereby providing me with a comprehensive picture of the facilitation process.

### 2.3.4 Challenges implied by dissemination research

Dissemination research is currently marked by a limited investment in the adoption of evidence-based interventions, thereby resulting in limited research in this particular field. Elliott and Mihalic (2002) offers a potential way of addressing this challenge by suggesting implementation fidelity, explaining that successful evidence-based practice can be governed by fidelity of implementation.

Kerner *et al.* (2005) explicitly state that limited studies of effective dissemination of evidence-based programs and the adoption of these by communities, the public health sector and other clinical practice settings have been completed to date. As such the need for ongoing research in this area of health promotion is continuously highlighted. These authors believe that the translation of research findings into evidence-based public health and clinical practices could be actively disseminated and widely adopted. I concur with this idea by believing that, through the dissemination and translation of these research findings, and previous research related to the STAR intervention, the challenge of adopting effective dissemination studies by communities might be partially addressed. The results of the current study might be used by future researchers in evidence-based programs and adopted by individuals to potentially support their communities.

Other factors potentially adding to challenges typically involved in dissemination research include confusion with regard to the definition and application of dissemination research (Ellis, Robinson, Armour, Brouwers & O'Brien, 2005). These authors believe that the lack of standardised and accepted terminology makes it difficult to compare studies with one another and to communicate findings. They believe that terms such as *diffusion*, *dissemination*, *knowledge transfer* and *knowledge exchange* might contribute to the said confusion. Another challenge identified by Balus and Boren (2000) suggests that the process of diffusion of innovations is usually slow, whereas Rogers (2003) believes that a lack of understanding in the processes of dissemination research lies at the core of this challenge. Glasgow *et al.* (2003) mention yet another challenge in terms

of the strategies typically employed during dissemination research. This author states that researchers' efforts to transfer effective strategies into widespread use are often unsystematic and uncoordinated and that little is currently known about the best strategies to facilitate active dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices.

In an attempt to combat such potential obstacles, I attempted to explain interrelated processes involved in dissemination research to better understand the processes I relied upon when reading this mini-dissertation. In this regard, please consult Chapter 3 for an explanation of what dissemination research constitutes, specifically within the context of the STAR intervention. In addition I believe that my co-researchers' efforts to clarify the strategies involved in the STAR programme are systematic and coordinated, which align with Lewis's (1996) belief that dissemination research needs to be planned and intentional, and occur in a systematic manner. Finally Orleans (2003) views the publication of results as another key challenge in dissemination research, which is done in this study in the form of this mini-dissertation, as well as subsequent articles and conference papers.

### **2.3.5 Suggestions for effective dissemination research**

Orleans (2003) believes that effective dissemination research essentially implies a process of push and pull. Those who can adopt innovations are generally receptive to innovations (pull), while at the same time a systematic effort is required to help the adopters to implement innovation (push). Orleans (2003) states that to date dissemination research has focused more on push (researchers), with relatively little emphasis on pull by, for example, individuals concerned with Educational Psychology, helping professions and teaching. As part of the broader study my co-researchers have been making a systematic effort in partnering with participating teachers (adopters) to implement STAR (the innovation), thereby possibly being exempt from the rule by pulling instead of pushing.



Ellis *et al.* (2005) suggest that intervention dissemination research needs to be conducted in partnership with service delivery agencies, and that research dissemination efforts need to be guided by dissemination research findings as they emerge. Slater *et al.* (2005) agree and suggest collaborative partnerships between behavioural scientists, health services researchers and health care practitioners. These authors are of the opinion that such partnerships could expand the theoretical framework and contextual relevance of dissemination research. When these partnerships exist and interventions are designed for disseminations, the resulting interventions are more likely to be sustained when research findings have been completed (Slater *et al.*, 2005). The dissemination of STAR is in line with this statement as the dissemination efforts have been guided by the emerging research findings of the studies forming part of the broad project (Ebersöhn, 2009; Ferreira, 2008; Ferreira *et al.*, 2008; Loots, 2005; Mnguni, 2006; McCallaghan, 2007 & Odendaal, 2006; Olivier, 2009).

As a result of multiple collaborative partnerships between the mentioned practitioners, Ellis *et al.* (2005) propagate role clarification and consideration amongst researchers in the dissemination process, as it was found that researchers view their own and each other's roles in the dissemination process in a different way. These authors believe that without specific attention to these roles any efforts of researchers and practitioners are likely to fail, even in instances characterised by commitment.

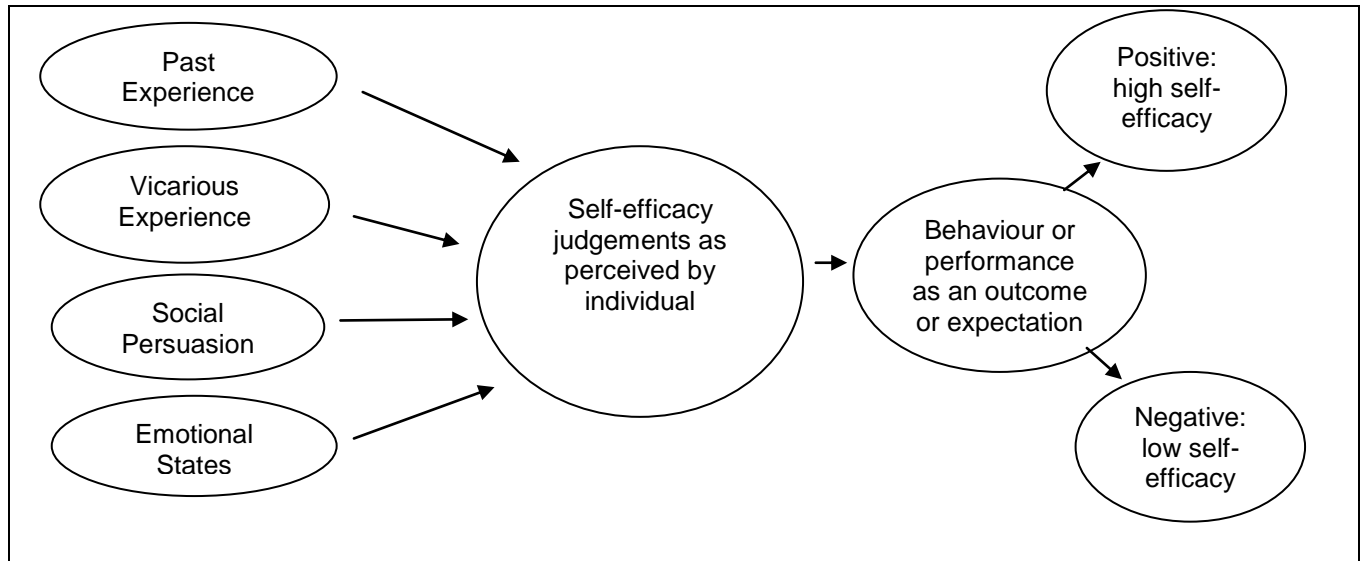
In terms of a potential model for dissemination research, Israel, Schultz, Parker and Becker (2001) suggest the community-based participatory research model as an effective strategy to use with partners of a community, as they are of opinion that community health practice settings are the broadest and most diverse context possible for dissemination research. These settings include schools, faith-based organisations and health departments as well as community-based institutions. The authors (Israel *et al.*, 2001) further believe that community-based organisations may be more open to the adoption of approaches identified as effective, due to them being involved as full partners in the study design, implementation and the evaluation of research findings. Thus tacit knowledge about what works could be evaluated explicitly through research.

This statement is of specific relevance to the current study as the participating teachers can be considered as partners of the community and as part of the participatory action research activities that have been applied (Chambers, 2004).

As part of the suggestions for effective dissemination research, I now refer to suggestions on ensuring high fidelity of implementation. This concept (fidelity of implementation) can be seen as part of the implementation part of dissemination research. The National Centre on Response to Intervention (2008) makes some suggestions for proactive practices that could ensure fidelity of implementation. Firstly fidelity of implementation can be compared to the concept of credibility. Secondly, it is suggested that interventions could be linked to improved outcomes and describe operations, techniques, and components of the implementation process. Thirdly, responsibilities of specific people involved in the implementation are proposed to be defined. Furthermore it is suggested that a data system for measuring operations, techniques, and components of the implementation process is created and finally a system for feedback and decision making, as well as accountability measures for non-compliance, are suggested (National Centre on Response to Intervention, 2008). In conclusion I assumed that the teachers facilitating STAR could be receptive to the STAR intervention programme and assist their colleagues, parents and wider community to implement STAR at the onset of this study.

## **2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the theoretical framework I relied upon for the purpose of this study.



**Figure 2.1:** Sources of self-efficacy information

I selected Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy as the theoretical framework for the current study as this theory is based on the idea that an individual's belief or perceived confidence for coordinating or carrying out a specific action may influence whether a specific action is taken or not. Bandura (1986) mentions certain possibilities such as motivation, creativity, self-reflecting and self-steering possibilities that might enable individuals to have some control over their thoughts, feelings and actions.

At the onset of this study, I believe that the teacher-facilitators' perceived self-efficacy (the self-decision about the ability level in facilitating STAR) could be enhanced as a result of them facilitating STAR; and that their outcome expectation (the self-decision on the positive or negative outcomes resulting from behaviour) could be positive, after facilitating STAR, resulting from the decisions they had made regarding the outcome of their involvement. Based on the idea that self-efficacy judgment typically plays a crucial role in determining the activities a person will take or avoid, I assumed that the participating teachers might already have acquired self-efficacy through their profession as teachers, yet that these teachers' levels of self-efficacy could potentially be enhanced even further as a result of them facilitating STAR.

According to Bandura's (1986) theory the participating teachers' perceived self-efficacy (regarding them being facilitators of STAR) could arise from four sources of information, their past experiences (successes and failures), vicarious experience (the experience from the colleague teachers for whom they facilitated STAR), verbal persuasion (from their fellow teachers, them as a team, the original researchers and the broader community), and physiological states (their current wellbeing). The participating teachers' outcome expectation thus seemingly involved their individual appraisals that a specific action (STAR) could bring about a decided outcome (change in their community or not) (Bandura, 1986).

Perceived academic self-efficacy is also included as part of the theoretical framework and defined as personal judgments of one's capabilities to organise and perform the sets of action to attain designated types of educational performances (Bandura, 1986). Such judgments were potentially relevant in this study, as the participating teachers' experiences as STAR facilitators could be influenced by the way the teachers think, motivate themselves and act (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1986) states that individuals engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not. Thus the higher the sense of efficacy in the participating teachers, the greater effort, persistence and resilience could be expected in the face of adverse situations, such as challenges or problems encountered as part of the facilitation of STAR (Bandura, 1986). As a result of these potential influences, I regarded the participating teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as strong potential determinants of the level of accomplishment they would finally attain (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002). Therefore self-efficacy beliefs could potentially play a key role in setting the course of intellectual development (Bandura, 1986).

## 2.5 ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework I completed, I undertook this study with some assumptions. I assumed that the four teacher-facilitators who facilitated the STAR intervention programme would demonstrate the following:

- Higher levels of self-efficacy after facilitating STAR.
- Increased awareness of self-efficacy beliefs (belief or perceived confidence for coordinating or carrying out a specific action, namely to facilitate STAR for peers) as a result of facilitating STAR, thus becoming aware of their levels of self-confidence and perceived knowledge and skills.
- A certain level of motivation prior to facilitating the STAR intervention, as described by Bandura (1986).
- Enhanced levels of self-reflection, aspirations and self-steering possibilities as a result of facilitating STAR.
- A belief that they are capable of fulfilling the role of facilitators of STAR, and thus would not be anxious about the facilitation of STAR with colleagues.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of Chapter 2 was to provide a literature review in terms of the key aspects of the current study. I discussed facilitation as the underlying theory of this study. Thereafter I explored literature relating to dissemination research. I concluded the chapter by explaining my theoretical framework.

In the next chapter I focus on the research process of this study. Besides discussing the qualitative methodological approach I followed, I present the selected interpretivist paradigm I relied upon. I then discuss the research design, data collection and documentation procedures, as well as the process of data analysis and interpretation.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH PROCESS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter I presented and discussed the theoretical framework upon which I relied in undertaking this study. I discussed facilitation as the underlying theory of the current study, in terms of meaning, the typical profile of a facilitator, as well as the roles and responsibilities, instruction methods, process and general experiences of facilitators. Thereafter I explored literature relating to dissemination research.

In this chapter I describe the design and execution of the empirical study I conducted. I relate my methodological choices to the research questions and purpose of this study. I present a detailed account of the data collection strategies I employed, whereafter I discuss the data analysis and interpretation I completed. I then explore my role as researcher, discuss ethical considerations and conclude the chapter with an explanation of the rigour of this study.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

In this section I discuss the methodological paradigm (qualitative research) and thereafter the selected metatheoretical paradigm (Interpretivism).

##### 3.2.1 Methodological paradigm

I followed a qualitative approach, seeking to understand the experiences of teachers (participants) as facilitators of the STAR intervention. I emphasised the uniqueness of individuals (Creswell, 2009) and collected data in a real-world setting, working inductively. I focused on the perceptions, meanings, understandings and experiences of the teachers facilitating the STAR intervention with teachers of two neighbouring schools. I attempted to obtain insight into a naturally occurring phenomenon and

provided rich in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon explored (Patton, 2002). I interpreted the collected data in terms of the meanings that participants (teachers) ascribed and not as determined or controlled by me.

One of the advantages of following a qualitative approach was that I could collect data in a real-world setting (teachers facilitating the STAR intervention at a school in their community). Photograph 3.1 illustrates the session that I observed.



**Photograph 3.1:** Teachers facilitating the star intervention at a school in their community

A qualitative approach thus allowed me to focus on the experiences of the teachers presenting the STAR intervention, with the outcome being a process rather than a product. A qualitative approach (working inductively from an insider's perspective) further enabled me to develop an understanding of the manner in which reality was constructed by the participants in this study. Qualitative techniques, such as observation, focus groups and member-checking provided me with the opportunity to share in the views and understandings of other people (Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2002). In addition, qualitative research enabled me to build a puzzle in which I constructed a picture that took form as I collected and studied the various parts.

I found data interpretation to be challenging as I had to guard against interpreting the participants' experiences and the meaning thereof through the filters of my own frame of reference. I reflected on this challenge in my research diary, and also with my supervisors. By doing this I guarded against overinterpretation during the data analysis process. I also included member-checking to make sure that the themes I had identified during the focus group were indeed the correct themes coming from the life worlds of the participants and had not been fabricated by me or my understanding and interpretation of the event. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) qualitative research involves a diversity of approaches, and due to this, general standards of good practice are unlikely. These authors believe that one could debate the level of interpretation that is involved in qualitative research and how standards of correctness should be established. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) believe that conclusions regarding qualitative research could be carelessly constructed or not properly thought through and depend on the researcher involved in the particular study. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest peer examination, reasoned consensus, satisfactory selection and training of researchers, to combat these challenges. In the current study, I relied on regular feedback discussions with my co-researchers, and supervisors, as well as field notes in my research diary in an attempt to address these potential challenges (level of interpretation and carelessly constructed research) implied by qualitative research.

### **3.2.2 Meta-theoretical paradigm**

I followed an interpretivist paradigm in my attempt to gain a deep understanding in terms of the personal worlds of the participants, relying on their perceptions and interpretations thereof (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). My decision to utilise Interpretivism as a paradigmatic lens can thus be related to the purpose of this study, focusing on the perceptions and views of teachers facilitating the STAR intervention with fellow teachers in two neighbouring schools. I did not want to describe a single truth and reality or provide objective interpretations, but rather an in-depth description of the selected case.



The context in which knowledge was constructed was also of importance in my choice of Interpretivism. According to Schwandt (2000) the process of understanding can be referred to as empathic identification, where the researcher has to understand the meaning of human action, interaction and the subjective intent of the participants. Being a researcher following this paradigm (Interpretivism), I had to constantly assume that the participants' subjective experiences were real and should be taken seriously (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002).

Furthermore the interpretivist paradigm is in harmony with my personal view of the world, believing that people construct meaning *via* their interaction with the world around them. Working from an interpretivist view I aimed to understand the meaning that teachers gave to their life worlds, and experiences from their own points of view, as they are the individuals that live in their particular worlds (Mertens, 1998). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), giving meaning takes place within a particular context, implying that human behaviour, feelings and experiences can only be understood in relation to a specific context. In the current study, the abovementioned argument relates to the context of facilitation within a school environment in an informal settlement community. Interpretivism implies the interpretation of human behaviour on a verbal and non-verbal level, against the background of the participants' life worlds, as well as their past experiences and existing understanding thereof.

The relationships between me (as researcher, as well as my co-researchers) and the participants, as well as the relationship amongst the participants were interactive by nature. Only through listening and interaction with the participants, was I able to understand the participants' experiences and feelings in terms of being facilitators (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). As an interactive mode of data collection is emphasised by an interpretivist paradigm; I selected focus groups as primary data collection strategy, supported by some other techniques.

In addition to the reasons already mentioned, I regard the interpretivist paradigm as suitable for this study due to the exploratory and descriptive manner in which research

is generally conducted within this paradigm (Schwandt, 2000). An interpretivist paradigm also allowed me to be guided by the research questions and not merely a theoretical framework, whilst themes emerged during the data analysis process. Critical theorists criticise the interpretivist paradigm to the extent that they believe this paradigm to lack overt political commitment and not doing justice to for example economic aspects of people's lives (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). These theorists believe that by emphasising subjective experience, interpretivist approaches may tend to ignore the historical and social location of subjects in material reality. According to critical theorists interpretivist approaches are not comprehensive enough in incorporating a commitment to a set of emancipatory values in undertaking research (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). In this study I do not view these concerns as limitations, as this research required an in-depth investigation of a specific phenomenon.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES**

I now discuss the research process (as introduced in 1.6 and Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1) I followed in terms of the research design I selected, as well as my selection of participants and the data collection strategies upon which I relied.

The purpose of the current study was to explore and describe (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) the experiences of four teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators in the dissemination of STAR to fellow teachers in two neighbouring schools. As mentioned in Chapter 1 limited studies have been conducted on the personal experiences of facilitators involved in dissemination research, specifically in a South African context. Therefore I believe that this research not only sought to inform dissemination research, but also existing facilitation theory.

#### **3.3.1 Research design**

In an attempt to address the exploratory and descriptive research questions, I selected a single instrumental case study design. This choice enabled me to investigate the

experiences of the teachers involved as facilitators in facilitating the STAR intervention. Selecting and investigating this particular group of participants is in line with Creswell's (2009) definition of a case study, which he describes as the exploration of a bounded system, a case or multiple cases over a period of time through detailed, in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information that is rich in context. This particular design implies a focus on a phenomenon which is characterised by specific boundaries in terms of context, time or a few individuals, a set of documents, an event, or an activity described within its setting (physical, social, economical or historical) in order to provide the necessary context (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2000). The possibility of certain tendencies being transferred in future to similar communities does exist, as other South African informal settlement communities might display a context and characteristics similar to the one described in this study (Stake, 2000).

In the current study the aim was not to generalise knowledge, but rather to obtain a thorough understanding of the experiences of the teachers facilitating the STAR intervention within a particular context (the teachers of two neighbouring schools), environment (the Nelson Mandela Metropole in the Eastern Cape) and time (November 2008). A case study research design supports the interpretivist paradigm, which I utilised as a paradigmatic lens. A case study design assisted me (the researcher) to interact with the participants, in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the realities they hold (Merriam, 1998). I employed a case study research design due to its potential of providing detailed descriptions of the educators' experiences of being facilitators during the STAR project (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

A case study research design may also imply some principles of PRA which is employed within the broad research project. According to Chambers (2004) the aims of PRA include the co-creation of knowledge in an active partnership with those who are affected by the knowledge, with the purpose of improving their social, educational as well as material conditions. Sustainable and prolonged change in a problem situation can only occur when a shift has occurred in the knowledge-base of those attempting to change. Consequently the underlying aim of this study was to explore teachers'

experiences as facilitators, asking them to think about their own competencies in facilitating the intervention.

In this study a case study design implied the advantage of immediate intelligibility in so far as the case speaks for itself. By providing a detailed report on the research results in Chapter 4, I aimed to allow readers of this study to experience the research endeavours to such an extent that they might be able to draw their own conclusions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). The current study might further provide insight into cases which are similar, thus assisting in the interpretation of such cases, provided that they share close contextual similarities. In selecting the case (being a single bounded system) I was able to rely on the potential advantage that a case being studied in-depth might provide many insights into the topic of research (Patton, 2002).

However this choice of a case study design also implied certain potential challenges (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Firstly case studies are not easily open to cross-checking, as they may be selective, subjective, biased and personal. Case studies are prone to the possibility of observer bias, despite attempts to address reflexivity in observations, interpretations and analysis. I attempted to address these potential challenges by embracing the interpretivist paradigm I had selected, to which the construction of knowledge can be seen as interactive and subjective. Therefore the current study accepts personal involvement in the construction of meaning in collaboration with my co-researchers and participants (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002).

I realised that my own system of knowledge could influence my observations as well as the interpretations and analysis of the raw data. I attempted self-scrutiny throughout the research process, employing critical reflection and regular debriefing sessions with my supervisors as strategies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2000). Another challenge of this selected design relates to the lower sample numbers by which a case study design is generally characterised. My participants were selected on the basis of convenience and might therefore not expand variability and be representative of the natural population (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). However, the aim of the current research was not to generalise

knowledge, but rather to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences of a selected group of teachers in their role as facilitators. Finally Guba and Lincoln (1985) explain that what might be true in one context may not be true for another, urging researchers to gather data in a variety of contexts, which might be time-consuming. The purpose of this study was not to obtain data in a variety of contexts over an extended period of time but rather to focus on a single instrumental case study within a particular context, environment and at a particular time (November, 2008).

### **3.3.2 Selection of participants**

The participants in the current study were conveniently selected, as they had been participating in the said broader research project since 2003 (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Convenience sampling “*means that the persons participating in the study were chosen because they were readily available*” (Mertens, 1998:265). According to Patton (2002) convenience sampling implies the selection of individuals that are easily reached or where sampling can be done easily. Within the context of this study, one advantage of this type of sampling was therefore that the participants were easily accessible.

The limitations were, however, that convenience sampling might lead to cases where the information lacked depth (Merriam, 1998). The fact that Ferreira (2006: 106) took great care in purposefully selecting “*an information rich case*” might combat the fact that the current study relied on convenience sampling. As this case can be considered as a valuable instrumental case, it is important to value its typicality (Stake, 2000). By implication, in a similar research setting, with similar participants, the possibility exists that the results of this study may be regarded as applicable.

The participants in this study (Table 3.1) are four female teachers of a primary school located in the Eastern Cape Province. As indicated before, I had gained entry into the selected community through my supervisors who had been involved in the ongoing broader study since 2003.

Participant	Role in facilitation	Qualifications
1	Facilitator	Teacher's Diploma, Certificate in special education
2	Facilitator	Teacher's Diploma, Certificate in special education
3	Assistant facilitator	Teacher's Diploma, Certificate in special education
4	Assistant facilitator	Teacher's Diploma, B. Tech-degree

**Table 3.1:** Participants in the study

### 3.3.3 Data collection

I relied on a variety of data collection procedures, each implying certain strengths and potential challenges, in an attempt to increase the rigour of this study (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002).

#### 3.3.3.1 Focus groups

I co-facilitated a focus group (in collaboration with my supervisors) during my first field visit in November 2008, aiming to explore the participants' experiences as facilitators of the STAR intervention sessions. The focus group lasted one hour, was audio-recorded (Creswell, 2009) and transcribed verbatim (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) (refer to Appendix E in this regard). In addition field notes (Patton, 2002) and my research diary (Creswell, 2009) allowed me to document a comprehensive picture of what had transpired during the focus group that I had conducted. Creswell (2009) explains that whilst audio and video recordings can be used in qualitative research, such use can be problematic because of background noise. I did not experience this as a challenge, but lost the last part of the recorded data from the member-checking session due to technical problems. It was however helpful to conduct the focus groups with my two co-researchers (supervisors), with all of us noting the main points of the focus groups and engaging in a debriefing session after each focus group as an initial attempt at data analysis. Throughout the process, I at no time experienced that the participants'

spontaneity had been negatively affected by our note-taking or the recording. Photograph 3.2 demonstrates our facilitation and note-taking during the first focus group discussion.



**Photograph 3.2:** Conducting a focus group

The focus group discussion was guided by the following schedule:

- How did you experience facilitating the STAR intervention?
- What did you enjoy (what worked and why?)
- What was difficult in presenting this programme and how did you address these difficulties?
- What could you have done differently?

During the first of two focus groups the emphasis was on the experiences, views and opinions of the teachers in terms of them facilitating the said STAR intervention with teachers from two neighbouring schools. Subsequent to an initial data analysis following the first focus group, I co-facilitated a follow-up focus group for the purpose of member-checking (Creswell, 2009) three days later. The same four participants were involved, allowing me to determine whether or not my interpretation of their experiences was a true reflection of their views. In addition the participants were allowed another opportunity to elaborate on the data already obtained.

According to Berg (1998) a focus group can be described as a guided or an unguided discussion that addresses a relevant topic or a topic of interest to both the researcher and the group. I implemented focus groups in an attempt to gain insight into the views of the participants in order to address these research questions. A focus group discussion implies the potential of encouraging participants to speak freely about their attitudes and opinions, and share their views and ideas (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Kelly (2002) views the facilitation of a focus group as a process whereby the facilitators face the challenge of maintaining a balance between so-called “*focusing in*” (the discussion being guided by the facilitator towards specific themes) and “*focusing out*” (the discussion flowing naturally). During the focus group discussions I co-facilitated, I kept this balance in mind and aimed to steer the discussions in terms of the questions mentioned above.

My initial decision to employ focus groups was based on the potential advantages of this data collection strategy. Interactions between group members could stimulate discussions where one group member reacts to comments or questions by another member (Wilkenson, 2004). This could allow for a greater number of ideas to be generated through a group discussion than through an individual discussion (Berg, 1998). In my view this was the case with regard to the participants as discussions were seemingly stimulated when different members reacted to the comments of the other members.

Another advantage of a focus group that applies to the current study lies in the fact that the current data collection was economical in the sense that the insight of more than one participant could be gathered during a single discussion. Moreover the quality of the raw data could be enhanced by means of the interaction between the participants as they corrected and balanced each other’s insights, and in doing so, removed extreme or false views from the raw data. Because of the socialisation involved prior to and during the focus group discussions the participants seemed to enjoy the focus groups (Patton, 2002).



During facilitation of the focus groups, I also had to address certain challenges. I had to manage and steer the discussion process in such a way that no participant felt that she had not been able to get her point of view across. As one or two participants tended to dominate sometimes, not allowing other less verbally inclined participants to contribute, I, together with my co-researchers, had to pay attention to actively involve the more silent participants by redirecting questions to them for their views. Finally I could not ensure confidentiality within the focus group, although I did request the participants to keep the content of their discussions confidential (Patton, 2002; Wilkenson, 2004). I tried to address the abovementioned potential challenges of focus group discussions by being aware of the interplay in the group and facilitating the participation of all participants.

### **3.3.3.2 Observation-as-context-of-interaction**

Being a qualitative researcher I was interested in the observation (field notes in my research diary and photographs) of the participants' behaviour in a form that seemed meaningful to them (Mertens, 1998). I did not employ predetermined categories of measurement or responses during my observations, but attempted to keep my observations descriptive and broad. Angrosino and Mays de Pérez (2000) state that observation of human interaction and actions can only be interpreted (meaningful) within the situational context it occurs in and not by means of predetermined codes (refer to Appendix B for examples of observations as captured in my field notes as well as Appendix G for visual presentations, supporting my observations). As such, I employed observation-as-context-of-interaction (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000).

Prior to the focus groups I conducted, I observed one of the STAR intervention sessions that the participants facilitated, documenting my observations by means of field notes, my research diary and photographs. This allowed me to gain insight into the behaviour and actions required of the teachers against the background of the STAR intervention (the teachers' life worlds) as well as their past experiences. Observation-as-context-of-interaction assisted me in giving meaning within this particular context (the STAR

intervention and the focus groups conducted) (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). According to Adler and Adler (1994) observations in natural settings can be rendered as descriptions either through open-ended narratives or checklists and field guides. In line with this emphasis Creswell (2009) describes observation as the fundamental base of qualitative research methods.

As a qualitative researcher, I was constantly aware of the fact that my observations might have been influenced by my age, gender and race. Moreover, as I was observing across cultures, I continually had to guard against observation bias and attempted not to overly or incorrectly interpret non-verbal communication such as body language (Creswell, 2003). I believe that my behaviour and expectations were dynamic and developed in interaction with the dynamic behaviours and expectations of the participants in this study. Because of this I adopted a flexible peripheral-member-researcher role whereby I observed and interacted in a manner that an insider perspective could possibly be established (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000).

According to Nightingale and Cromby (1999) reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossible task of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity urges researchers *"to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research"* (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999: 228). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) are of opinion that reflexivity is necessary for a valid interpretation of the phenomenon under study. These authors believe that a researcher's demographic and personal attributes may impact on the elicitation of research data. I agree with Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) in believing that I, as a researcher, will almost invariably provide some commentary on my subjective responses to the research process. In an attempt to combat these potential subjective responses I continually relied upon reflexivity during the current study as I was drawn into the worlds of others.

By being part of the focus group and observing one of the STAR sessions, I was able to take note of what was happening. I was continuously aware of the potential limitations of my own feelings, and that putting these forward as possible insights into the experiences of the participants could be presumptuous, as my own feelings could have been clouded by my own frame of reference. In line with the interpretivist paradigm I relied on, I believe that the observations made during the current study were interactive, and represented shared meaning making between myself and the participants within the interactive context of the research field (Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002). The following excerpt was taken from my research diary:

*“These teachers seem like family, as if they knew each other all their lives...one of the teachers described it as Ubuntu during the focus group. Although I did not understand everything that transpired during the STAR intervention session, I felt part of the group and experienced the same emotions as these women...”* (Field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 5).

Furthermore I made use of observation-as-context-of-interaction to gain insight into the setting of the research field with regard to aspects such as the environment, community, school, living conditions and interactions between the participants (Creswell, 2003). I noted the following in my research diary, illustrated in Photograph 3.3:

*“The teachers seem so proud of their school and especially their new counselling room, they took pride in showing this new establishment to us, and talked excitedly how this happened as a result of STAR”* (Field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 1)



**Photograph 3.3:** Making use of observation-as-context-of-interaction through field notes and visual data

### **3.3.4 Data documentation**

I relied on various strategies to document the data I had collected, as discussed in the following subsections.

#### **3.3.4.1 Field notes and research diary**

I thus relied on a research diary for documenting the data I collected, consisting of my field notes and reflective thoughts that focused on my observations as well as the non-verbal information obtained. Please refer to Appendix B for examples of my field notes. I included extracts from my reflective thoughts in Appendix C. These extracts include planning notes, notes for conducting the focus groups, important things to remember when doing qualitative research and overall reflections before and after the focus group and member checking session. These reflections were not used for data analysis purposes.

According to Patton (2002), field notes represent an account of what transpired during a research process and can include transcripts of video or audio tapes. Field notes can be described as a constant note-keeping process of observations and conversations encountered in the field. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) focus groups

are usually recorded by note-taking. I compiled descriptive field notes during the initial and member-checking focus groups. Based on the nature of my field notes, I was able to represent an account of what had transpired during the focus groups (Patton, 2002). Extensive field notes were of particular value when I discovered that the last three minutes' recording of the member-checking focus group had been lost.

Descriptive field notes thus enabled me to document my observations as field worker and to keep record of the participants and their contributions. In addition to descriptive notes, I relied on reflective field notes to document my personal reflections, emotions, experiences, successes and areas for improvement throughout the study. By making use of field notes and reflective thoughts I employed reflexivity (Patton, 2002). Although I incidentally forgot to make field notes during the first focus group, because of being engaged and "*in the moment*" of this fairly new experience as field worker, I recorded data collection sessions by means of a voice recorder (except the mentioned last three minutes of the member-checking session), with the possibility of revisiting the process at a later stage and elaborating on my field notes where necessary. Finally personal notes and reflections have been assisting me in revealing inner dialogue, self-doubts and questions; and deal with the insights, and challenges I experienced during this study (Patton, 2002).

#### **3.3.4.2 Audio-visual data documentation**

With regard to the audio-visual data documentation methods I employed, I obtained informed consent from the participants prior to using an audio-recorder during the focus groups. This data documentation technique allowed me to keep records of the focus groups without being distracted by detailed note-keeping. Although Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:129) mention the challenge of this technique that "*it could detract from the intimacy of the encounter*" with both the facilitator and participants performing for the audio-recorder, instead of really talking to each other, I did not experience this potential challenge. It seemed as if the participants were not intimidated or putting on an act for

the sake of the audio-recording, most probably due to them being used to data collection activities being recorded.

In addition to the audio-recorder I used photographs (Appendix G) to document my observations and supplement the collected data during the observed STAR intervention session and the focus groups I co-facilitated. The generation of visual data provided me with the opportunity to gain insight into the teachers' life worlds and the immediate community (Chambers, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). Photographs also allowed me to capture the details of the field visit, for perusal after the fieldwork had been completed.

One of the advantages I experienced using photographs is that I simultaneously developed a written description of what was transpiring in the photographs, with these descriptions being used in conjunction with other data sources such as the transcribed focus groups, my field notes and research diary (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). However I constantly had to guard against overinterpreting photographs, reminding myself to analyse the photographs together with the other data collected. In an attempt to address the mentioned challenge, I discussed my interpretations of the photographs with my supervisors to obtain a balanced view (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

### **3.3.5 Data analysis and interpretation**

I conducted independent content analysis (see Appendix E and F for examples of the data analysis) of the transcripts of the focus groups, my research diary and the photographs obtained (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Content analysis can broadly be defined as any systematic and objective technique used for identifying unique characteristics of messages conveyed in the data that are recurring. Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) suggest some guidelines for interpretivist analysis which I adhered to. Firstly I immersed myself in the research material. This included the transcripts of the initial study I read in planning the current study (although this did not form part of the current data analysis but merely served as background reading before I entered the

field), and the transcripts of the focus group discussions. My field notes were also part of the raw data that I thematically analysed. I recorded ideas on the experiences of the participating teachers as facilitators (phenomenon being studied). The field notes in my research diary also assisted me to reflect on my theoretical method and ethical issues involved and to record points of uncertainty that still needed to be clarified, after I had analysed the other data collection techniques.

Secondly I deduced themes by inferring general rules or classes from specific instances. According to Kelly (2002) the central goal of data interpretation is to discover themes. A bottom-up approach is implied by the interpretivist paradigm, whereby I analysed data to find the organising principles that underlined the material. Certain themes re-occurred, forming patterns, as described by Kelly (2002). As the participants were from a different race and language than mine, I attempted to use the terminology used by the participants in labelling the themes and sub-themes I had identified.

The next step in the data analysis process was coding. I coded lines, phrases, words, and paragraphs that had relevance to the themes under consideration. I returned to the transcripts of the focus groups I had colourcoded, which presented the three main themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The colour-coded themes provided the context of the conversation which took place during the focus groups and I aimed to increase the ease (for the reader) to recognise a theme as it emerged during data analysis.

A range of methods is provided by Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) by which coding can be conducted. Some of these include using coloured marker pens, cutting and pasting on a word processor, or using a software programme. In this study I did not rely on any software programmes based on my personal preference. I aimed to provide a detailed description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and context that constitute the phenomenon being studied (Allan, 1998). For this purpose, I employed the cut and paste method on a word processor.

The next step was elaboration, as described by Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002). During this phase I explored the initial themes to capture finer nuances which might have been overlooked in the first attempt of coding. I established a cycle of coding, elaboration and recoding until I felt that no further significant new insights were emerging from the data. Finally, I interpreted the data I had analysed. The interpretation included a written account of the phenomenon I had studied, utilising the themes from the analysis as my subheadings. After this process had been completed I monitored my interpretations, ensuring that I had not over-interpreted (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002).

During the data collection phase, I (as the researcher) was already developing ideas and theories about the phenomenon under study. Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) believe that in interpretivist research, no clear distinction can be made between when data collection ends and data analysis starts. According to these authors data analysis is thus seen as an ongoing process and not something that occurs only when the data collection has been completed. In the current study I continually relied on my research diary during data collection in order to reflect on ideas that had emerged.

### **3.4 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER**

Merriam (1998) regards the researcher as the main instrument of data collection. I made use of convenience sampling (guided by my two supervisors who had been conducting the related study and already knew and had selected the participants), was responsible for observations, co-conducted two focus groups and collected various forms of raw data. It was important for me to constantly be aware of my values, beliefs and assumptions that I might have imposed on the study. I used my research diary (refer to my reflective thoughts in Appendix C) in order to reflect on these issues (Merriam, 1998).

Within the context of this study, I viewed reality as being socially constructed during the data collection, analysis and interpretation phases, and acknowledged the fact that multiple truths or constructions of realities can exist. I conducted my interpretations and



reflections through the aforementioned paradigmatic lens. Working from an interpretivist paradigm, I (as researcher) focused on the interactive nature of knowledge construction. I made observations and engaged in interactions with the participants, in an attempt to establish an insider's (emic) perspective (Kelly, 2002).

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As a qualitative researcher I viewed myself as a guest in the world of the participants. Throughout the study I aimed to adhere to research ethics (Stake, 2000). As a master's student in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, I employed the Faculty of Education's Research Ethics committee's guidelines (Ethics Committee of Faculty of Education, 2009).

#### **3.5.1 Informed consent**

I was guided by the principle of informed consent, which refers to the right of participants to be informed of the nature and consequences of research and to participate voluntarily (Creswell, 2009). The participants in this study knew that no elements of deceit or manipulation were present and that they could withdraw from the research at any time (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998). As my co-researchers had already obtained permission from the Department of Education (as part of the broad study), the principal of the school as well as the participants in the study (Appendix A), I did not need to again obtain separate informed consent.

#### **3.5.2 Respect for the human nature of participants**

I respected the human nature of the participants and did not deceive, mislead or withhold information from the participants in any way (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Oliver, 2003). I also paid attention to the principle of accuracy, reporting on and including accurate data. In reporting the current study in this mini-dissertation, I did not fabricate or falsify any data, or omit any data that I had obtained. Finally I guarded against the

manipulation of data by reflecting on potential challenges. I further believe that the research team in this study is competent with regard to the functions they fulfilled and the procedures followed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Hayes, 2000; Oliver, 2003).

### **3.5.3 Confidentiality**

Berg (1998) refers to confidentiality as the active attempts of researchers to protect participant's identities as well as of that of the research location. I did this by changing each participant's name and the name of a location to a pseudonym in the transcripts included in Appendix E and F as well as in my field notes (Appendix B) and reflective thoughts (Appendix C).

However, with regard to visual data, the participants requested for their identities not to be disguised in any manner. Furthermore my research journal and the audio tapes are kept in a safe and secure environment and will be maintained for the next 15 years, as required in terms of ethical guidelines when working with human participants. Unfortunately I lost the last three minutes of the second focus group due to a technical problem I encountered. As I had already transcribed most of the data manually and based on the extensive and descriptive field notes I had made during the session, I was able to represent an account of what had transpired during the member-checking focus group (Patton, 2002). I do, however, consider the loss of recorded data due to technical problems during the member-checking session as a limitation in the current study.

I adhered to the principles of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the information shared. I requested the participants to also respect the confidentiality, privacy and anonymity shared by others during the research process and focus group discussions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Despite the fact that I employed observation-as-context-of-interaction during data collection, I undertook not to invade any participant's privacy. However I could not guarantee anonymity in the focus group due to the nature of focus groups, but I believe that the participating teachers will

adhere to this principle of privacy as they had been part of this project since 2003, and understood the sensitive nature of the discussions involved in this study.

### **3.5.4 Protecting the welfare of participants**

I aimed to protect the participants from harm (nonmaleficence). I did not expose the participants to physical risks or harm. I was sensitive and understanding during the focus groups. I have not misled the participants by withholding any information from them that related to the current study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Oliver 2003). I followed an open approach, in which the participants were informed about the purpose and the process of the research throughout the study. I attempted to be accurate in reporting on the collected data, and not omitting any data that had been obtained, thereby guarding against the manipulation of data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The possibility of participants being harmed by data analysis and the reporting of data when reading reports on the study, and being able to identify themselves, does not apply to this study, as the outcome (the experiences of the participants as facilitators) can be regarded as positive and might probably result in them feeling proud of their participation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, the participants indicated their desire to be known and identified as the broader project progressed.

### **3.6 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY**

In an attempt to produce a rigorous study, I aimed to adhere to the quality criteria associated with qualitative research. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) the aim of producing a rigorous study lies in the value of trustworthiness, in other words whether or not the research audience can be convinced that a study is worth taking note of and that the findings present reality. I relied on self-awareness, being open to listen and not regard myself as the expert, in an attempt to meet the criteria of trustworthiness and

relevance. I was aware of potential biases, regularly reflecting in my research diary and having discussions with my supervisors (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### 3.6.1 Credibility

Internal validity (quantitative research) and credibility (qualitative research) are used in parallel (Patton, 2002). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) credibility refers to the degree to which the research conclusions are sound. In an attempt to adhere to this criterion, I thought about my anticipated findings and conclusions and asked myself the following question: “*Are there any other factors that might explain the results that I anticipate?*” Credibility thus asks the following question: *To what extent are the findings truthful?*

I employed the necessary measures to ensure that the current research was believable (credible) by describing the phenomenon (teachers’ experiences of being facilitators) from the perspectives of the participants, and in doing that aligning with the purpose of qualitative research. I aimed to establish credibility by continually looking for discrepant evidence in the hypotheses I was developing as a means of producing a rich and credible account of the research findings (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). One way of doing this was to use triangulation, whereby I collected data in various ways to arrive at a thorough understanding of the research findings. I further relied on peer debriefing with my supervisors in an attempt to increase the credibility of the current study. These debriefing discussions focused on my potential subjectivity and possible bias influencing the research findings (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

As the participants were the only ones who could legitimately judge the credibility of the current results, I included a member-checking session, allowing me to determine whether or not my interpretation of the experiences of the participants was a true reflection (Seale, 1999). I also relied upon multiple methods, namely observation, focus groups and recordings that might lead to a rich, reliable and diverse construction of the participants’ realities (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

### 3.6.2 Transferability and generalisability

Transferability (external validity) refers to the dependability (generalisability) of the findings of a study. In other words: *Are the findings applicable and can they be transferred to other contexts?* According to Patton (2002) this criterion relies on the possibility of data being representative of the wider population. McMillan and Schumacher (2000) believe that transferability refers to the ability of the researcher to provide detailed descriptions in order to enable the reader of the research report to determine the degree of similarity with another research context where the findings could be applied.

My interpretive account of the research findings cannot merely be applied to other contexts or generalised to other settings because only four teachers participated in this study within a particular context. They do not necessarily represent the voices of the total community (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). However, the aim of Interpretivism is not to generalise the findings of a qualitative study, but to gain in-depth insight into the phenomenon which are being investigated (Patton, 2002). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002: 431) summarise this idea *“because of the contextual nature of interpretive research, there are usually strong limits on the generalisability of findings”*.

In this study I aimed to enhance the possibility of transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the experiences of the four participants as facilitators of the STAR intervention (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998) in the hope that these experiences can be applied to other settings as well. In addition I aimed to enhance transferability by providing detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the research context. These descriptions might provide the reader of the study with detailed accounts of the structures of meaning which developed in this specific context. These understandings might then be transferred to new contexts in other studies to provide a framework of reflection in terms of meaning and action that occur in these new contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

### 3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability (qualitative research) and reliability (quantitative research) can be used in parallel with each other. They consider whether or not the same findings would emerge if a study were to be repeated, in other words whether or not the findings could be replicated (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). According to Merriam (1998:206) dependability can be viewed as “*whether the results are consistent with the data collected*” and whether or not the findings might be obtained again.

Qualitative research acknowledges the fact that social reality is constantly changing. This qualitative study implies change, as opposed to reliability which implies stability over time. Moreover I as the researcher might have had an influence on the process and outcomes of the study, resulting in the fact that the same findings cannot be guaranteed on other occasions. Furthermore I was working from an interpretivist paradigm, and did not assume that I was working with a stable and unchanging reality. Therefore I do not expect to obtain the same results repeatedly (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). I selected a case study research design valuing the uniqueness of the case and what I might learn from it. A repeat of findings might be regarded as meaningless (Stake, 2000).

### 3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability (objectivity) answers the question whether or not researcher bias can be ruled out with regard to the findings of a study. Confirmable findings imply data and interpretations that can be related to its sources instead of being fabrications of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Although observer and researcher bias can be regarded as inevitable in any qualitative study, as values influence the way in which researchers interpret data during qualitative analysis, such bias can be acknowledged and guarded against. I constantly reflected in my research diary in an attempt to minimise bias, and was also involved in regular debriefing sessions with my supervisors on the topic. I utilised multiple data collection strategies to further enhance the confirmability of the

current study. I also included various examples of direct quotations from the participants in the discussions in support of the interpretations I made (Kelly, 2002, Mertens, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

I aimed to provide a detailed account of the participants' experiences on being facilitators of the STAR intervention programme. However, I acknowledge the fact that the way in which I interpreted the data is not the only possible way of interpretation. For example a researcher from another field might have interpreted the data differently, based on the paradigm utilised as lens of interpretation (Patton, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

### **3.6.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity implies that a balanced view of the various perspectives, views, beliefs and values of the participants is provided when reporting on a study. In an attempt to adhere to this requirement, I presented different views of the participants regarding their experiences as facilitators of the STAR intervention programme in this mini-dissertation (Mertens, 1998).

I thus attempted to ensure fairness and authenticity in the current research by including a range of different perspectives of the four teacher-participants, explaining their realities. I strove towards gaining insight into the participants' views and experiences of their life worlds. I read the related studies in the research project in an attempt to gain insight into the participants' life worlds. I also participated in several informal conversations with the participants during the time I spent in the field to gain a deeper understanding of their life worlds prior to entering their context. By including a member-checking focus group (Babbie & Mouton, 2001); I tried to ensure that I had understood them correctly. Prior to the focus groups that were conducted, I observed one of the intervention sessions that the participants facilitated. This allowed me to gain insight into the behaviour and actions required of the teachers when facilitating sessions against

the background of the STAR intervention (the teachers' life worlds) as well as their past experiences.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I presented and discussed the research process that I employed during the empirical study I conducted. I discussed Interpretivism as a paradigmatic lens that I utilised. I then described the research design (an instrumental case study design), data collection and documentation procedures (focus group discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, research diary (containing field notes and reflective thoughts) and visual data), as well as data analysis and interpretation. I reflected on my role as researcher and concluded the chapter with discussions on ethical considerations and the rigour of the study.

In the next chapter I present the research results. I interpret the results in terms of existing literature, thereby formulating and discussing the findings of this study.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

I commence this chapter by providing some reflections on the research process described in Chapter 3, as well as my involvement in the research field. Subsequently, I present the research results in terms of the themes and sub-themes that emerged after this analysis and interpretation of the raw data. I include colour-coded verbatim quotations of the participants in support of this discussion of the themes and sub-themes. I conclude the chapter with the findings of the current study, linking the results I obtained to existing literature. Throughout I aim to highlight similarities and explain any potential contradictions.

#### 4.2 REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Entering a research field can be regarded as a process of negotiations with gatekeepers of the community in an attempt to establish their trust and support (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002). In this study I experienced mixed emotions when entering the research context, ranging from excitement, to certain levels of anxiety. In the sections that follow, I reflect on my involvement during the study, by referring to the research activities I was involved in.

##### 4.2.1 Fulfilling the role of field worker in a related study

In reflecting on the role of field worker I fulfilled during the early phases of my involvement in the STAR research project, I initially thought that the field work had started during those early stages, when I was interacting with the teacher-facilitators, the fellow teachers at their school and their principal (Patton, 2002). However I soon realised that, as I had studied the related study's transcripts before entering the

research field, the field work had started even before I visited the research field with me becoming involved in an indirect way.

In fulfilling the role of field worker and co-researcher I learned that I was a fairly flexible person who could adapt to changing circumstances. I also learned to trust my instincts and be myself in the research field. PRA enabled me to be an active part of the research process, yet also to value the contributions of the participants as active members of the process. To me my co-researchers seemed very natural in the field. What inspired me most was the way in which they connected with the participants and became part of the setting, thereby teaching me to trust myself and the research process.

#### **4.2.2 Observations: making field notes and compiling a research diary**

I aimed to keep my field notes as clear and descriptive as possible (Berg, 1998; Patton, 2002). For example, instead of writing: *the participant enjoys the session*, I would rather describe why I perceived that participants had enjoyed a session, stating that: *the presenters get so excited! They get up and sit down again. Amazing to see the response of teachers involved...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4). Please refer to Appendix B for more examples of my field notes. I included extracts from my research diary (reflective thoughts) in Appendix C. These extracts include planning notes, notes for conducting the focus groups, important things to remember when doing qualitative research and overall reflections before and after the focus group and member checking session. These reflections were not used for data analysis purposes.

I aimed to record my reflections on the experiences I had when entering the research field by reflecting on the process, on myself as researcher, as well as the theory that served as background to the current study. As a qualitative researcher my feelings and reactions formed part of the data I obtained, which resulted in my reflections on personal feelings and reactions (Merriam, 1998; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002), for example *...I was almost in tears when participant 1 explained her content of the memory*

*box, she was so truthful and honest and it was beautiful, she made me feel very vulnerable* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 2). Refer to Appendix B for examples of my field notes.

#### **4.2.3 Co-facilitating focus groups**

I felt comfortable in conducting the focus groups, believing that the context in which knowledge is constructed is imperative (Schwandt, 2000). I adapted to the role of researcher, more specifically facilitator, quite comfortably and was impressed with my ability to involve different members of the group in the discussion. For me, the processes involved in facilitation were fairly easy. I did not have to force myself to lead the focus group, as it came rather naturally, probably due to my background and training in Educational Psychology. I enjoyed the conversational, interactive manner in which the focus groups took place. During the focus groups (initial discussion and follow-up member-checking discussion) I was guided by the research questions, as reflected in the focus group protocol (Appendix D) which provided me with a plan of action and structure. The focus groups were, however, not conducted in the form of a fixed question-and-answer-interaction but rather in a conversational manner, which I found to be appropriate and successful within this specific context.

### **4.3 RESEARCH RESULTS**

Based on data analysis, three main themes emerged in terms of the participants' experiences as peer-facilitators of the STAR intervention. Firstly, the teachers seemed to ascribe meaning on a personal level in terms of their experiences as facilitators of STAR. Secondly, they appeared to experience a shared language or voice in the school-community, due to the facilitation of the workshop; and thirdly, they identified significant aspects related to peer facilitation of the STAR intervention. I now discuss the main themes in terms of the relevant sub-themes that emerged. As background, I provide the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the various themes and sub-themes in Table 4.1

Theme/ sub-theme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<b>Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer-facilitator</b>	Any reference to personal positive experiences of the participating teachers	Contributions that did not reflect positive experiences of the participating teachers, for example reference to the experiences of the community or fellow teachers
<b>Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others</b>	References to the teachers' joy in enabling their fellow teachers by transferring knowledge and skills	Contributions that did not reflect joy of participants and enablement of fellow teachers
<b>Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence</b>	References to the teachers' belief in themselves; their abilities and accomplishment based on the facilitation of STAR	Contributions not reflecting self-worth , a sense of accomplishment, and caring feelings as experienced by the participating teachers
<b>Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth</b>	References to the process of personal as well as professional development that the teachers underwent (due to the facilitation of STAR)	References that did not demonstrate the participating teachers' development and growth
<b>Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation</b>	References to feelings of love, care, passion and commitment based on the participants' involvement as facilitators of STAR	References that did not demonstrate feelings of love, care and commitment as experienced by the participants
<b>Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation</b>	References to responses by the teachers' community, after STAR was facilitated with them (school, parents, church and wider community)	Contributions that did not reflect responses by the teachers' community, after STAR was facilitated for them
<b>Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in school-community systems</b>	References to excitement, joy, positive attitude, eagerness and appreciation by the teachers that STAR was being presented to as well as by members in the school- community	References that did not indicate joy, positive responses and appreciativeness by the fellow teachers in the school-community

<b>Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation</b>	Statements indicating the sense of community as a result of STAR as experienced by the teacher-facilitators	References not reflecting a sense of community as a result of STAR as experienced by the teacher-facilitators
<b>Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and actions</b>	References to the practical considerations of facilitating STAR	Contributions that did not reflect the participating teachers' experiences of practical considerations or actions required as facilitators
<b>Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern</b>	References to feelings of uncertainty and concern as experienced by the participating teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators	References reflecting feelings other than that of uncertainty and concern
<b>Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team</b>	References to teamwork or joint activities in being facilitators	References to individual actions
<b>Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges</b>	References to potential problems in implementing STAR, ways to solve or overcome these problems, and the problem solving abilities of participants	Contributions not indicative of the creative problem solving abilities of the participants
<b>Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation</b>	Statements indicating the participating teachers' need to involve wider audiences as a result of STAR	References to remain isolated and limited to the schools involved

**Table 4.1:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer-facilitator**

Four sub-themes emerged regarding participants' reported positive personal experiences of being peer-facilitators of the STAR intervention. Firstly teachers expressed joy in sharing knowledge and enabling peers. Secondly they indicated feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. Thirdly personal development and growth

were reported, and lastly, the teacher-participants' commitment and motivation were seemingly confirmed by being peer-facilitators.

#### 4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others

The teacher-participants indicated that they had experienced a sense of joy in sharing knowledge. In this regard, they noted the process of enabling peers to support others in the school-community as empowering. One of the participants summarised this idea: *you know what... it is really the saying that said: when you educate a woman, you educate a nation...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 1). In addition to the participants' reports, my observations confirm their reported feelings of joy: *she seems so happy, almost exhilarated to be presenting this workshop...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 2); and *...these teachers like to be in charge, they really enjoy presenting!* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 5). Photograph 4.1 demonstrates the joy displayed by a teacher-facilitator to share knowledge with her colleagues during the facilitation of the STAR intervention session I observed.



**Photograph 4.1:** Experiencing joy by sharing knowledge as peer-facilitator

Another participant emphasised her joyful experience of allowing other teachers to experience things for the first time, by saying: *...and we've been at the resort with them, and for them it was the first time that they have gone out...we've met lots of friends because of us...* (focus group 1, participant 4, p. 4). Another participant reported how

she experienced joy in enabling others, by stating that: *...now it seems that we really ...we love it...we are doing it out of love, and we inspire other people...Because you could see I've done something...I've done something* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 5).

The participating teachers reportedly experienced themselves as competent facilitators. In this regard they stated that they possessed the necessary skills to facilitate the STAR intervention to peers and shared their knowledge with fellow teachers: *...what I liked about this ne...I can give others knowledge that I didn't have before* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 5). In support of this statement I noted my observations during the first focus group: *Participant 3 seemed to have thought about this for a while; it seemed as if she took a lot of pride in being useful to these teachers* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 3).

#### 4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence

Participating teachers seemed to experience a sense of self-worth and accomplishment by being peer-facilitators (to my mind possibly demonstrated as self-confidence). One of the participants expressed experiencing self-confidence in the following way: *...you see, I use to talk to the group of people but to...to...when you are about to talk with the people who....you are educated, you must be extra to know that I have that confidence, their reception was good then...you continue doing it in the right way...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 18). It seemed as if facilitators believed in their own ability to succeed as facilitators: *...eh, and we could do it...* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 2). Teacher-facilitators' expressions of themselves seemed characterised by self-confidence and self-worth: *...I'm an educator; I can stand up and do it with confidence!* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 19).

Concerning this observed self-confidence, I made the following field note during the STAR intervention session I observed: *it seems as if participant 1 believes in herself and her abilities, the way she talk seems encouraging (although I can't understand all of it!) she is presenting with confidence!* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p.2). In support, a participant stated: *...with myself I've got the self-esteem...I'm very much confident, I'm*

*a leader uhm uhm, I'm very much tolerant...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p.17). In addition, I noted the following during the member-checking session: *participant 1 took credit for their accomplishments and had faith in herself, the group and STAR* (field notes, 01 December 2008, p. 2).

The following statements similarly serve as expressions of confidence regarding facilitation as the intervention progressed: *...we are presenters (all: mmm) but we do have it, we are not in a TV but we are presenters!* (focus group 1, participant 1, p.17); *...genius!... we are genius!* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 18); and *...now so far the way it happened it happened more than we thought, it was more than our expectations* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 15). One of my field notes (Appendix B) further supports these reported experiences of self-confidence: *...I can't help but almost giggle at participant 1 for her self-confidence! She takes ownership for their efforts and seems to trust and believe in herself and STAR...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).

During the initial focus group, participant 3 explained how her experience of being acknowledged may have positively impacted her self-confidence: *...so at least at my church I'm the light to them...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 5). My field notes confirmed this idea: *there is proudness in these women; it looks as if they truly believe in what they are doing...* (field notes, 28 November, p. 4). Furthermore the participating teachers linked their own experience of being confident facilitators to the researchers of the STAR project: *you gave us those personalities...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 19); and: *your confidence gave us confidence... you are the ones who initiated that you must transfer the knowledge...* (focus group 1, participant 4, p. 19). My field notes confirm this idea: *it looks as if participant 4 has such admiration, and appreciation for R2 and R3, it seems as if they are proud of what they became because of them* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 5).



#### 4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth

It seemed as if the teachers experienced personal and professional development by being peer-facilitators. Their perceptions that they were active participants of STAR and the success experienced by fellow teachers appeared to contribute to feelings of personal growth. One of my field notes supports their apparent development and growth: *It seems as if they inspire each other and learned from being STAR facilitators, personally and professionally* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p.2).

The participants seemed to gradually become aware of certain accomplishments and their own abilities as facilitators, as illustrated in the following contributions: *I'm a good discusser* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 17); and: *...eh the presenter, good presenter...* (focus group 1, all participants, p. 17). Other participants elaborated: *what I've learned about myself is that I've got leadership qualities, I can relate to others, I can listen...I'm also tolerant...I can transfer the knowledge for others...what I know, what I've gained, I can present to others* (focus group 1, participant 4, p. 17). In support of statements like these, I noted: *... participant 4 looks like a natural leader...although she seemed like the quiet one, initially, she has a great touch with the teachers, she seems real and authentic in her role as presenter and the others respond to her...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 5).

In further confirming their development of being peer-facilitators, one of the participants stated the following during the member-checking session, emphasising the facilitator skills and qualities she had acquired during the facilitation of STAR: *...the skill of lecturer, and facilitator and leadership* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p.2). The participating teachers seemingly viewed themselves as competent facilitators.

#### 4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation

Apparently, by being facilitators, teacher-participants were motivated to provide support in their school-community, by transferring knowledge and skills to fellow teachers in

neighbouring schools. Their commitment to the STAR project, as a way to support vulnerability, appeared to serve as driving force during the facilitation and extension of STAR to peers. One of the participants explained their commitment to be involved as facilitators: *and the love and the caring of what we are doing because, we would have not been here if we didn't love what we are doing, of we did not care about the other persons...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 2). Other participants elaborated: *... eh ja, passion, and the caring and the support for what we are doing* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 2); and: *it give me...how to give support, caring, loving...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 17). In further support, I noted the participants' apparent high levels of commitment in my field notes: *participant 1 seems so committed and real about this, she is not afraid to show her feelings and to share...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 2).

The demonstrated willingness of the teacher-participants to support school-communities through the STAR intervention appeared to go beyond practical support in the form of facilitating STAR to other schools: *...it's so interesting, you don't want to miss out, ooh... I get worried, I'm gonna miss something!* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 9); *...We don't want to be absent....and... that is why I come every time (all: mmm)*; and: *when I'm absent, ooh... I feel sorry for myself, that I'm gonna miss something* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 9). Likewise, I observed: *even the presenters are making notes when their fellow facilitators is in front, they tell each other to shhhh, when they can't hear, they don't want to miss anything!* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4); and: *...the fellow teachers ask questions and talk amongst each other and it is clear from their body language (even though I don't understand their language) that they are satisfied with the answers....the facilitators are so involved in this session, and enjoy the input from the group* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation**

Theme 2 relates systemic responses to the dissemination of STAR. Two sub-themes emerged. Firstly positive responses included possibilities for extending participation;

and secondly a sense of community was observed as an outcome of the facilitation of STAR.

#### **4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in school-community systems**

It seemed as if participating teachers were able to facilitate trust amongst fellow teachers, as I noted: *there seems to be a quiet sense of trust amongst these women, they are able to share intimate and sensitive details with one another, and it seems as if this is a safe environment for them* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p.2). They appeared to appreciate and trust each other and their fellow teachers, and were seemingly enthusiastic and willing to extend STAR to school-community systems.

The teacher-facilitators reported that their peers (to whom STAR was presented) were enthusiastic in response to the facilitation of the intervention programme. One participant summarised her experience: *the confidence is to see the way the people are taking the thing that we are saying, that means you can do it in the right way...their response...it keeps you going, you see, because the positive attitude that they are giving to you, it seems as if...do it do it do it...you see. You could see it in their eyes, you know mos, you're lecturers, you could see that what I'm presenting now, is taking to...is making a difference to the person I am transferring to...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 9-10); and: *...but when we came in here, they were so enthusiastic...you see...they grabbed it...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 2). Photograph 4.2 shows the enthusiastic engagement of teachers during a facilitation session. In addition to participants' reports and visual data, I observed the enthusiastic participation of both facilitators and peer-teachers participating in sessions: *the more enthusiastic the crowd get (mmm, ja...ehhh) the louder the facilitator talks! It seems as if they inspire each other...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).



**Photograph 4.2:** Enthusiasm during peer-facilitation of STAR

Besides enthusiasm, the teacher-participants commented on the apparent willingness of fellow teachers to be part of the intervention: *firstly, the eagerness of other learners, the other educators you see...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 2); and: *they were fascinated by the things we are doing... they were doing...*(focus group 1, participant 3, p. 3). Another participant emphasised: *they come in numbers...even the one that was not in...she just arrived and she was so sorry that she was late....she could be part of the workshop.... so I think the eagerness and the enthusiasm from them* (focus group 1, participant 4, p. 4). In this regard, another participant also reported on the apparent appreciation displayed by fellow teachers: *she didn't have the words to thank us for what we're doing to them, for what we've done to them* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 7).

The enthusiasm reportedly extended to school-community systems: *...ever since we've been in this programme (R2 knows) we went to my minister, we've started it in our church, as a result... every Sunday there is a candle light ceremony, and there is a collection, that we are collecting...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 5). In addition, teachers anticipated that parents may want to participate in support initiatives: *...because I think the parents will take the initiative to the broader community outside and even to the churches* (focus group 1, participant 4, p. 15).

#### 4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation

The teacher-participants indicated that they had experienced a sense of community, group cohesiveness and unity while facilitating STAR. Statements such as the following reflect that expressed unity may have extended systematically: *...a language in the community, not with us as educators because we talk like from what we had from the seminar, I heard it from the ...the colleague, the educators talking, now the parents must talk to another parent maybe that parent will be interested, at the end of the day we'll be backing them, we'll be helping them...we will be the community that is working towards other communities...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 16). In support of the above statement, Photograph 4.3 illustrates teachers' task-immersion (sense of community) as an outcome of peer-facilitation of STAR.



**Photograph 4.3:** Sense of community as a result of peer-facilitation

During the member-checking focus group, one participant summarised the notion of sense of community in the way knowledge is shared: *...the circle, the language...the sharing of the knowledge...* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 3). Another participant emphasised the apparent sense of community by stating: *ja ja...their part of our family...Ubuntu...it's part of our culture* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 5); and: *...like a family of teachers...* (member-checking focus group, participant 2, p. 3). In support of statements like these I captured my observations of the intervention session in the

following manner: *...I feel as if I knew these women for a long time already; they hugged me as if I'm part of their family. It seems as if these teachers are all part of a family, hugging and greeting each other and sharing their meals* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 1). Photograph 4.4 also shows participants' "being part of a family" based on STAR's facilitation by teachers.



**Photograph 4.4:** Being part of a family

Shared challenges added to teachers' sense of unity: *...because we know that there are other schools that have the problems that we had ...we experience the same problems, even if we are at primary or high school or University, we experience the same problem* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 1). Another participant stated: *...yes the problems are the same...poverty...HIV unemployment, the problem is the same...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 1); and another: *so the other schools can do that, so that's what makes us to pilot to other schools, so that they know the problems we encounter...The other schools did encounter and address them and solve them* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 1). I noted the apparent similarity and potential unity in the participants' experiences in relation to those of other teachers: *...everybody agrees, and nods their heads when participant 1 is talking about ill parents and how their children can remember them, it seems as if they all experience these challenges and that this might unite them even further....* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 2).

### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and actions

The following sub-themes emerged in terms of the practical fulfilment of teachers being peer-facilitators: overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern; working as a team; relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges; and extending the scope of facilitation.

#### 4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern

Participating teachers indicated that they initially felt apprehensive and uncertain about the way their fellow teachers would respond to them facilitating STAR. In addition, teachers were too uncertain about their skills and expertise to be facilitators. Some teachers' responses indicated their feelings of uncertainty: *...because when we came here we were afraid of how are they going to take us? Or are they going to accept what we are coming with, and how are they going to feel about what we've got...we had those misconceptions you see...?* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 3); and: *...we didn't know that we've got something, and now we've got something...* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 6). Teachers seemingly worried about how they would come across as facilitators and how their fellow teachers would perceive them: *...but firstly let us face the reality...firstly it was...it's not easy...to... to have the eye contact with the educator and to express yourself to another educator...and how do they see you...you know...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 18).

Initial feelings of uncertainty and concern apparently gradually changed into feelings of exhilaration, as teachers gained confidence in themselves as facilitators. One of the participating teachers summarised this idea: *...the confidence is to see the way the people are taking the thing that we are saying, that means you can do it in the right way...then...you continue doing it in the right way...now you've got that confidence to be a public speaker...but at the end of the day you could see...I've done it!...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 18-19). I captured my observations of the intervention session I attended as follows: *...it seems as if the enthusiasm of the group inspires the facilitators,*

*and...they are very professional in the handling of this, they ask questions, enjoy answering them and don't allow chatting in between...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).

#### **4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team**

Participating teachers monitored their facilitation of STAR on a continuous basis, and followed a distinct plan of action as a facilitator-team regarding session preparation: *...before we go anywhere, before we go anywhere...we start...we meet together... before we start we meet, we talk* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 13); and: *...a plan of action...* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 13). In this regard, I observed: *...the teachers have a quick chat before we begin. I don't understand what they are saying but it seems like they are getting together as a team, organising and planning, perhaps the order of the session...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 2). My observations were further confirmed during the member-checking session, when teamwork was highlighted as follows: *...eh...meetings, planning, discussing, we were a team ne...* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 5).

Participants noted that they regularly discussed operational requirements regarding facilitation activities. Apparently, such organising and operational skills were by-products of facilitation, again indicating teamwork: *...and for even for today with this day at our school, we worked together, and we were planning and discussing, you know mos...Who's doing this, who's doing this, and then, then then...ja.....we planned today also...* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 5). I commented on teamwork and shared leadership with regard to the facilitation of STAR as follows: *...they all take turns as presenters, they share their responsibilities. It seems as if they keep the attention of the group by switching presenters, working together as a team...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).



#### 4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem-solving in dealing with potential challenges

When faced with challenges regarding facilitation, teachers expressed the idea that they solved problems creatively: *...the difficulty there that we encountered was with the other school you see...you know mos when you start something ne...the other educators did not want to attend you see...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 11). One reported problem experienced was an initial school withdrawing. One participant explained: *...the minute we got another school, I didn't feel anything, I would have felt something if there was no school to take part altogether...so at first I was very much down...but immediately there was \*..... eager to take it over, it was then that I said the problem's solved, you see...otherwise it was a obstacle for us...because we were ready to meet them...and they didn't come...it was a very disappointing time...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 11). Another participant expressed pleasure in their problem-solving abilities: *... yes, but it wasn't a problem, we solved it, you see, if they didn't come, if we didn't get another school, we we we would have encountered this problem, but we found another school, so eh...there was no problem with that...* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 4).

Another reported challenge was transport to the school where STAR was facilitated. A solution for the problem is seemingly expressed in the following excerpt: *...sometimes it was the transport you see, but we solve it...it wasn't that much you see...because we went together you see* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 12). During the member-checking focus group, participants again emphasised the solution they found to the potential transport problem: *...we go together...we go to the school together...* (member-checking focus group, participant 3, p. 4).

Thirdly absenteeism by facilitators seemed to be challenging. Other facilitators seemingly managed this challenge flexibly: *...because they would tell stories lately... and they agreed in the morning and they know that I have to go, but when you remind them like 'no I'm not coming', like Patience was saying...she didn't feel ok when she*

*was not coming...it's a problem in that you see, but we cope* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 12). In this example the participants indicated commitment as facilitators to attend the facilitation sessions: *...as a result you have to shift our things, because you have to be there...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 12). Other expressions of creative problem solving include: *...we are coming up to overcome those problems, so we have already done that* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 1). In support of statements like these I noted my observations as follows: *...it seems as if they know how to do what is suggested as if they've done it before...they did not even think about it, as if..."of course we will recycle"... they seem so self assured in their abilities...* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 4).

#### **4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation**

The participants indicated that, after facilitating STAR with fellow teachers, they experienced a need to involve wider audiences. One participant stated: *that is why we want to expand we want to grow bigger and bigger to the whole nation...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 1); and later elaborated: *...that is why we want to expand, we... even in my church...you can give ideas, support, care ...everything...I can assist.. it's not here within me I transfer it to other people...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 5). Another participant expressed a widening of their facilitation scope *...I was just coming to say to you...you initiated a small thing...but the small thing is BIGGER!* (focus group 1, participant 2, p. 6); and *...like a fire...mmm jaa...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 6).

One participant explained the need to further transfer STAR, by involving the parents and the wider community: *...everywhere...we want to take it everywhere...yes...eh (all), churches, the parents then children, the schools, everywhere* (member- checking focus group, participant 3, p. 4). I noted similar views: *...I think they talk with so much confidence and admiration because they've experienced these changes first hand, it made them believers who wants to share their knowledge with the rest of their community* (field notes, 28 November 2008, p. 3).

Participating teachers expressed the possibility of being facilitators (and disseminating STAR) systematically in the following way:

- **Teachers/colleagues:** *...we grow and grow...these people they didn't know nothing, we were waiting for this information you see, then they came out with it...so we could see the results of the activities of what they're doing there, their involvement and even themselves...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 7); and: *...I think even them, they are going to other schools, other schools, that are around them...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 9).
- **Parents:** *...the parents are always in the community, even if they, if you call them and say we gonna meet after church 30 minutes or 45 minutes and then we're given a platform and then we talk to the churches, we talk to the taverns...ne? So that this thing HIV and AIDS everyone, everyone in their corner, or his corner will have this information, this knowledge...* (focus group 1, participant 3, p. 15-16); *...and it is because of us that we get the parents...everyone must know this thing, we want to share it to everyone* (member-checking focus group, participant 1, p. 5); *...the school is not all about the teachers, the teachers and the learners. We can...in our programme we can involve more parents...and see how willing are the parents, not only the caregivers* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 15); and: *...the parents, you see those people are very important, let us not think like educators only, lets involve them, if we're going to do it in other schools there must be a parent...you see...even if there are two...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 16).
- **School-community:** *...so at the end of the day we can identify a place where we can take that money...so that it can assist somewhere...that showed that it went beyond our thinking...It's so nice when you can transfer it, because where you can find most people is the churches, the schools, you see...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 5); *...you can go and give talks to the teenagers, in the churches... wherever... because you know that I did it with the educators, it will*

*be more with the other people you see* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 10); and:  
*...but now, what I wish to do...I wish it...I want to teach other mothers there by the church to do it themselves...* (focus group 1, participant 1, p. 6).

## **4.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

In this section I relate the themes and sub-themes that emerged in existing literature and research. Throughout I aim to highlight correlations, but also indicate possible contradictions. I present the current findings in accordance with the structure of the research results, as presented in section 4.3.

### **4.4.1 Experiencing the role of peer-facilitator in a positive manner**

I found that the participating teachers seemingly experienced high levels of enablement, joy, self-worth, sense of accomplishment, self-development and growth by being peer-facilitators of the STAR intervention. In addition, their commitment and motivation to be involved in the project seemed to be confirmed by their being facilitators.

#### **4.4.1.1 Experiencing joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others**

From the results it seems that the teacher-participants experienced joy in, on the one hand, sharing knowledge, and on the other hand, building capacity of fellow teachers supporting the school community. Being facilitators afforded teachers opportunities to enable peers to provide psychosocial support in school-communities. Schwarz's (1994) definition of facilitation similarly refers to intervention with a group facing a specific problem. Participants in the current study seemed to enjoy sharing knowledge with peers in their capacity as facilitators. Duvenhage's (2009) findings correspond with this finding, as the volunteer care workers in her study also experienced feelings of pride, excitement and joy being facilitators of an intervention with young children. Even though the context of Duvenhage's (2009) study differs from the context of the current study, it

appears that facilitators generally experience joy, excitement and enablement when implementing interventions supporting people facing vulnerability.

Jones (1988) indirectly emphasises potential feelings of joy, by stating that facilitation is about “bringing out” in individuals rather than “putting in”. Teachers in the current study valued “bringing out” in fellow teachers, more than their efforts as “putting in”.

Teachers in the current study reportedly discovered attributes allowing them to be competent facilitators as the process progressed. These attributes included acceptance, sensitivity and a love of what they do as teachers. In support of experiences like these, Gerber (2008) believes that such attributes can enable a facilitator to make verbal and non-verbal contact with other people or a group in an effective manner. Wilkenson (2004) supports this finding, indicating that teachers typically value people, with their words and actions, thereby showing that they care. The participating teachers in this study seemingly experienced that they possessed the necessary knowledge and skills (competencies) to facilitate the STAR intervention to peers.

The findings of the current study on enabling abilities and the joy of sharing knowledge further relate to Bandura’s (1986) self-efficacy beliefs, as discussed as part of the current theoretical framework. The participating teachers’ belief in themselves as facilitators and their corresponding enabling abilities seemingly influenced their ability to facilitate (Bandura, 1986).

#### **4.4.1.2 Feeling self-confident and valued**

The results of this study suggest that the teachers demonstrated self-worth and accomplishment in their role as facilitators, plausibly manifesting their self-confidence. The acknowledgement that participating teachers experienced as facilitators from fellow teachers appeared to impact positively on their self-confidence.

Participants seemingly believed in their own ability to be successful in facilitation. This belief had an apparent positive effect on their self-efficacy beliefs. In this regard Gerber (2008) emphasises self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986), proposing that beliefs to succeed may encourage and motivate participants to feel good about themselves and their work. The results indicate that participants regarded themselves as competent facilitators, possessing skills and knowledge to facilitate STAR. This finding supports the main assumptions of this study, namely that I assumed that participating teachers possessed skills and competence to facilitate the STAR intervention at the onset of this study. In relating self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) to the findings of this study, I propagate that participating teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding facilitation were seemingly enhanced by facilitating STAR. As Bandura explains in Schreuder and Coetzee (2002: 211): *"it is a relatively enduring set of beliefs that they can cope effectively in a broad range of situations"*.

Participating teachers seemed to experience a sense of accomplishment as a result of facilitating STAR. This can be linked to expressions of positive self-concept, as reportedly experienced by the teachers. In support Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) explain that a facilitator's self-concept is usually characterised by self-acceptance and self-worth. In line with this finding Duvenhage (2009) found that care workers in her study experienced meaningfulness in life based on their facilitating an intervention programme for vulnerable children. Moreover, Smith (2004) reports similar findings in which the care workers involved in that study expressed correlating positive feelings. The relationship between care workers and children in Duvenhage's (2009) study correlates with the way in which the participants in the current study perceived their relationships as facilitators with fellow teachers, describing these relationships as characterised by trust and understanding.

Acknowledgement by fellow teachers apparently inspired commitment to sustain involvement in the facilitation of STAR. Feenberg and Xin (2004) support the notion by stating that recognition for contributions typically stimulates the desire for continued involvement by facilitators. Furthermore, Feenberg and Xin (2004) mention that

recognition might enhance the development of self-confidence and a positive self-concept amongst members of a group. This idea is supported by the results of this study, according to which participants demonstrated confidence in terms of their own abilities as facilitators.

#### **4.4.1.3 Experiencing personal development and growth**

Participating teachers seemingly experienced personal and professional development by being facilitators of STAR. The positive feedback they reportedly received from fellow teachers possibly contributed to their feelings of personal growth. In this way participating teachers became aware of certain accomplishments and abilities (on various levels) by facilitating STAR to peers.

Based on the multiple definitions of facilitation (Bentley, 2004; Berry, 1993; Cilliers, 1996; Jones, 1988; Rees, 2001; Rohleder *et al.*, 2007; Schwarz, 1994) I regard facilitation as a process that may assist a second person to experience self-growth. Duvenhage (2009) found that the volunteer workers in her study experienced self-development in terms of enhanced interpersonal skills, an extension of their knowledge and skills, and their ability to interact with people through the facilitation of an intervention programme. Besides correlating with Duvenhage's (2009) findings, insights into personal and professional development, correlate with other studies advocating the development of facilitators. For example studies by Rohleder *et al.* (2007) and Cilliers (1996) found that facilitation can create a process of education, thereby providing opportunities for growth, development and self-actualisation for both the group and facilitator.

In line with Maslow's (1970) self-actualisation theory, the results of this study suggest a process of self-actualisation. In this regard participating teachers could arguably authentically express their intrinsic nature of being teachers and support their community. Teachers thus experienced psychological growth in the form of self-worth, self-growth and self-actualisation in the role of facilitator. Studies by Rogers (1983)

indicate that the characteristics of self-actualising people often overlap with the characteristics of a facilitator, including feelings of connectedness with others, appreciation, and feeling at ease with complexity and ambiguity. In this study I found that the participants experienced these characteristics as mentioned by Rogers (1983), by seemingly being concerned about and caring towards their fellow teachers, and being able to overcome difficulties.

Participating teachers seemed to become increasingly aware of their personal and professional development as they progressed in facilitating STAR. Through the process of dissemination research the participants seemingly became aware of knowledge and skills they had not known they possessed (Lomas, 1993). The awareness of their own abilities as facilitators correlates with other studies describing participants' experiences of facilitation processes. One study undertaken by Rohleder *et al.* (2007) on participants' experiences of a facilitation process indicates that participants experienced the facilitation process as positive and that awareness amongst themselves could be created by means of facilitation processes. Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) support this finding and state that the awareness that was created amongst the participants in their study by means of a facilitation process contributed to the participants' higher levels of self-actualisation.

Participating teachers in this study seemed able to evaluate their own progress and development as facilitators. In addition, as facilitators they appeared to monitor progress of the programme (STAR) and their fellow teachers, towards the end of the intervention. In this regard Gerber (2008) and Schwarz (1994) believe that facilitators typically reflect a balanced view of life, act with integrity, learn in a co-operative manner and possess the ability to evaluate their own progress and development. On the other hand, Bentley (2004) found that the developmental process of a facilitator starts with a decision made by the facilitator and is not necessarily dependent on the process. Possible reasons for Bentley's (2004) contradictory findings with what I found might be that teachers facilitating STAR only became aware of their own development and growth as the facilitation of STAR progressed and the facilitation process enabled them to consider



concerns and questions. Yet despite not making initial choices themselves, as explained by Bentley (2004), it seems as if the participants experienced self-development and growth based on their involvement as facilitators.

#### **4.4.1.4 Remaining committed and motivated**

The results of this study suggest that the participating teachers remained motivated and committed to facilitate interventions to support vulnerability in school-communities by transferring STAR knowledge and skills to fellow teachers in neighbouring schools. As such, the teachers' passion for their vocation appeared to be a driving force to facilitate STAR in school-communities.

Participants seemingly demonstrated commitment to facilitate STAR. Likewise participants were committed to their role as facilitators, to peers, and supporting vulnerability. According to Shreuder and Coetzee (2002) the application of personal values denoted by norms, beliefs, preferences, needs, interests, intentions, codes, criteria and world view or ideology, typically lead to and enhance commitment and motivation. This finding further correlates with a study by Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) who found that facilitators are usually able to apply their personal values in a flexible and sensible manner, thereby displaying optimistic and unconditional acceptance, respect for people and a preference for intimate, sensitive and considerate relationships filled with love. In this study the teachers' driving force of willingness, commitment and motivation to facilitate STAR can probably be explained in terms of such personal values (respect for people and a preference for intimate relationships). This hypothesis, however, requires further research.

A study by Gerber (2008) also emphasises the caring quality usually displayed by facilitators. In this study, it was also apparent that such caring qualities and values seemed to motivate participants to remain committed to facilitate STAR. Closely related to these findings, Duvenhage (2009) found that volunteer care workers in her study were motivated to make a difference in the children's lives in respect of where they

facilitated an intervention. Participants in that study performed their activities with enthusiasm, passion and commitment. These findings further correlate with a study conducted by Carstens (2007), indicating that care workers are usually eager to do whatever it takes to be effective in their work.

Teachers in the current study demonstrated positive experiences of facilitation, possibly impacting belief in their own (and peers') abilities positively, which may have motivated sustained commitment. Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy is based on the idea that an individual's belief or perceived confidence in coordinating or carrying out a specific action can influence whether a specific action is taken or not, and mentions possibilities such as motivation and self-steering that might enable individuals to control their thoughts, feelings and actions. Gerber (2008) states that competent facilitators typically possess the ability to encourage and motivate participants. In addition the participants in this study indicated that, as facilitators they were committed and motivated to contribute on an intellectual level, in terms of providing their community with knowledge. Wilkenson (2004) supports this finding and states that one of the roles of a facilitator includes that of motivator, which could establish momentum in a group. Furthermore, it seemed that, as facilitators, the participants in the current study experienced the dynamics of the group as strong. The finding that fellow teachers seemed equally willing, motivated and eager to learn, made it easy for participants to praise peers' efforts. In line with this finding, Bentley (2004) states that any facilitator has the task of praising participants for the progress they make.

#### **4.4.2 Positive response to the dissemination of STAR**

Based on the results of this study, it seemed as if teachers attending STAR sessions (as facilitated by peers) responded in a positive manner. In this regard their enthusiasm related to STAR was observed and they expressed feeling part of a big family. Teachers indicated the need to transfer STAR-related knowledge to support school-communities.

#### **4.4.2.1 Positive response and enthusiasm on various levels of society**

From the results of the current study it seems clear that participating teachers enjoyed peers' enthusiasm in response to their facilitation of STAR. The participants reported that the positive response and enthusiasm were noticeable systemically. In this way in addition to participating teachers, enthusiasm was noted in other school-community systems. Plausibly, trust between teacher-facilitators and their fellow teachers seemingly accompanied enthusiasm.

I relate the manner in which STAR was facilitated to fidelity of implementation (as described in Chapter 2). Firstly the diffused STAR research project was synthesised by a credible body (University of Pretoria, co-researchers) and dissemination occurred in a "user-friendly" format in the form of facilitation, with a message that justified the need for change (supporting vulnerable school-community members). Secondly the implied change (supporting vulnerability in a school-community) was implemented with flexibility and was seemingly within the power of participating teachers. In this regard, teachers appeared to include school-community collaboration and cooperation as a resource. Thirdly the research findings of STAR were communicated to participating teachers from different sources within and outside the school-community. Fourthly respected and local institutions (such as the church and local schools) reportedly considered adopting findings and outcomes of the project in their own practices. Finally opportunities arose for exploring the implications of the research findings during personal encounters with either an influential local colleague (participating teachers) or respected outside authority (co-researchers).

Teachers' implementation (as facilitators) of STAR therefore adhered to Lomas' (1993) goal of implementation by focusing on tailoring the message to the specific needs of their audience (their peers), being aware of the implications of the message and increasing awareness amongst participating teachers. The content of the STAR intervention was tailored to the specific needs of the teachers, namely the need to transfer knowledge to the school-community to provide psychosocial support.

The teacher-facilitators reported that their fellow teachers trusted in them. Bentley (2004), as well as Schwarz (1994), are of opinion that part of the role of a facilitator is to create a safe environment and to trust others during the facilitation process. In this regard, King (2000) notes that trust can emerge through the process of facilitation and amongst team members who participate in a study. In this study, the experiences of the teacher-facilitators suggest similar manifestations of trust, subsequent to the process of facilitation.

As mentioned participating teachers indicated that the enthusiasm of their fellow teachers reciprocally inspired them to be enthusiastic about facilitating STAR. In this manner enthusiasm seemingly encouraged facilitating teachers and fellow teachers (to whom STAR was presented). Equally, Gerber (2008) and Schwarz (1994) support this finding by stating that any facilitator has a responsibility to encourage participants in terms of themselves and their work. Accordingly Wilkenson (2004) is of opinion that facilitators often find pleasure in being of assistance to others. In further support Bentley (1996) states that individual energy may merge when people come together in a group, believing that in order for this to happen, the people in a group need to relate to each other and the facilitators of a group. A prerequisite for collective energy (enthusiasm and willingness) is that the group members (peer-teachers) relate to each other.

#### **4.4.2.2 Facilitating a sense of community**

The results of this study suggest that facilitation can lead to a sense of community, group cohesiveness and unity (as perceived by the teacher-participants). Teachers expressed the need to include school-community members in this unity. Furthermore, shared barriers contributed to experiencing a sense of community.

In terms of a sense of community, Lomas (1993) states that at its core, dissemination research is conducted to build bridges between research, professional, community and advocacy organisations, in order for everyone to be able to gain from and contribute to new knowledge. Wilkenson (2004) is of the opinion that a facilitator can be regarded as

a bridge-building agent who creates and maintains environments for sharing ideas and knowledge. In the current study it seemed as if facilitation of STAR resulted in teachers gaining and contributing to new knowledge by working with peers, thereby adhering to the essence of dissemination research as mentioned above.

The dissemination of STAR was conducted as partnership between researchers, participating teachers, and reportedly, other school-community members (e.g. colleagues, parents). This finding reminds one of collaborative partnerships as documented in the work of Slater *et al.* (2005) foregrounding collaborative partnerships between behavioural scientists (me as the researcher), health services researchers (supervisors) and health care practitioners (teachers). According to Slater *et al.* (2005) the creation of such partnerships might expand the theoretical framework and contextual relevance of any dissemination research project.

Berge (1995) is of the opinion that facilitators typically fulfil a social role that includes the provision of opportunities for the group to develop a sense of group cohesiveness, group unity, and working together towards a mutual cause. In terms of Berge's (1995) findings, participants in the current study adhered to this suggested role of being facilitators in the sense that they reportedly experienced a sense of group cohesiveness and unity. The possibility that this sense of family/being part of a family may extend to fellow teachers, parents and other school-community members deems further inquiry.

#### **4.4.3 Being peer-facilitators**

In this section I discuss teachers' experiences of being facilitators disseminating STAR as a team, their attempts to apply creative problem-solving in dealing with potential challenges, and the manner in which they attempted to involve broader audiences.

#### 4.4.3.1 Dealing with uncertainty and concern

Participants seemingly experienced uncertainty about the way their fellow teachers would respond to their facilitating the STAR intervention. Participating teachers also experienced uncertainty and concern regarding their professionalism, and skills and expertise to be facilitators. Gradually these feelings reportedly changed into feelings of excitement as the participants gained confidence in themselves and their skills, which became apparent to them through the facilitation of STAR. In this manner, the teachers' belief or perceived confidence for coordinating and carrying out STAR resulted in their being confident facilitators (Bandura, 1986). Ferreira's (2004) statement that facilitation is an art that can be learned and practised suggest that the participating teachers might have gained confidence in themselves as facilitators as they practiced their facilitation skills during the STAR intervention sessions. This hypothesis, however, requires further research.

Wilkenson (2004) agrees with Ferreira (2004) with regard to the art of facilitation by explaining that a facilitator requires considerable skill and expertise in fulfilling the various roles applied during a facilitation process. Applying Wilkenson's (2004) work to the current study, participating teachers also initially appeared to have experienced uncertainty in their role as facilitators, but seemed to acquire new skills as the facilitation progressed. In addition to skills acquisition, positive responses from fellow teachers reportedly influenced facilitators' expertise. It seemed as if the participants' high levels of self-efficacy beliefs might have had yet an additional positive influence on the way that they experienced themselves as facilitators. This possibility can be investigated further in future research.

In line with feelings of uncertainty and concern, Rohleder *et al.* (2007) report on students' experiences as facilitators in a research project, indicating that although the students initially experienced the facilitation process as challenging, they viewed the process of facilitation as positive as the process progressed. One of the initial concerns of the participating teachers in this study was about being presenters/facilitators of

STAR. However they experienced themselves as “genius presenters” and demonstrated professionalism as the study progressed. Gerber (2008) supports this finding and considers professional appearance and a sense of humour as important attributes of a facilitator.

#### **4.4.3.2 Importance of teamwork**

The results of this study indicate that the participating teachers monitored their facilitation of STAR on a continuous basis, and followed a distinct plan of action as a team in preparation of the sessions they facilitated. Organising and operational skills were reportedly acquired as a by-product of facilitating STAR sessions, providing an indication of their teamwork. The participating teachers appeared to share leadership with regard to the facilitation of STAR.

As facilitators, they appeared to take joint ownership of the co-ordination of the facilitation sessions as a team. The teachers indicated that at first, one of them took on the role of leader for the co-ordination of the STAR sessions, but that, as the process progressed, they started acting as a team with each member taking some responsibility, thereby sharing the leadership role. Feenberg and Xin (2004) support this finding and explain that any facilitator needs to be able to fulfil a leadership role during a facilitation process.

Bentley (2004) agrees with Feenberg and Xin (2004) on the leadership role of a facilitator and states that a facilitator needs to review what is happening on a continuous basis, in order to assess which changes certain actions might have on the progress of the group. Reviewing and monitoring is included in such a leadership role, which were reportedly also crucial to facilitators coordinating the STAR intervention. The participating teachers indicated that they worked as a team and adapted the operational requirements of STAR (such as presentation and travelling arrangements) to suit all facilitators as the process progressed. In line with this finding, Bentley (2004) states that facilitators can choose to adapt their actions when things are changing, to suit their own

needs and processes. According to Bentley (2004) this skill of adapting could allow facilitators to adjust actions and ideas to suit the needs of a given group. In the current study the participants seemed to continually employ adaptation skills, based on the progress of the intervention.

#### **4.4.3.3 Solving problems in creative ways**

Participating teachers experienced challenges with regard to the implementation of STAR. In their role as facilitators, teachers came up with creative ways to overcome problems, indicating creative problem-solving abilities. Challenges included an initial school of withdrawing, transport problems, and facilitator absenteeism.

Participating teachers emphasised problem-solving abilities rather than challenges. In line with this focus on solutions, Ferreira (2006) refers to a study undertaken by Lucas (2004), who placed emphasis on local community members' resourcefulness and innovative ideas in addressing challenges or difficulties. The study by Lucas (2004) supports the findings of the current study in the sense that the participants seemingly found creative ways to address potential challenges associated with their facilitating STAR. Findings from Duvenhage (2009) further correlate with this finding, where volunteer workers reported on their flexible approach and continuous adjustment to unforeseen situations. In further support, the Alberta Occupational Profiles (2009) state that care workers are required to be flexible and creative in order to adopt new ways to do things and find innovative solutions to problems.

Bentley (2004) supports this finding by regarding the core of facilitation as being a process that can assist or help a person overcome an obstacle or difficulty. Accordingly Gerber (2008) and Schwarz (1994) believe that facilitators need to be able to deal with problem situations. In further support Wilkenson (2004) describes one of the roles of a facilitator as that of peacemaker, which involves resolution of problems or conflicts.



#### 4.4.3.4 Involving broader audiences

The teacher-participants expressed the need to facilitate STAR to broader audiences. In this way, the essence of facilitation, is similar to that described by Bentley (2004) and Rees (2001) who is of opinion that in order to feel that they, as facilitators, are contributing to a process, they need to involve participating members (of a community). Participants in this study were involved in dissemination research as Lomas (1993) explains this need of action and extension to broader audiences as typical of dissemination research. The need to involve broader audiences in facilitation initiatives correlates with many other studies advocating the transference of knowledge as part of the typical role of facilitators. Gerber (2008) for example believes that knowledge transfer can be promoted by a facilitator during a facilitation process. Accordingly Kerner *et al.* (2005) state that the dissemination of evidence-based interventions (such as STAR) is critical to improve the public's health. In line with these examples, the teachers in the current study indicated that their need to involve broader audiences in facilitation was aimed at supporting vulnerability in their school-communities.

The need to involve broader audiences can be compared to a “snowball effect”, a term which is often used within the context of the asset-based approach to intervention (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). These authors argue that the possibility exists that one change in an individual might lead to many changes in the entire system because of the interactive relationship between different systems. The teachers in this study namely indicated the need to assist their community, for example by involving the parents, speaking at church meetings, and utilising assets in the broader community.

The essence of dissemination research supports the snowball effect which seemingly developed through the facilitation of STAR. According to Glasgow *et al.* (2003) dissemination research involves a process which involves the examination of strategies to promote adoption and maintenance of an effective program in settings and populations other than that of the original study. In line with this belief the teachers in this study indicated that they wanted to facilitate STAR to other settings (school,

churches) or populations (teachers and parents). This decision or goal seemingly developed by investigating the experiences (examination of strategies to promote adoption and maintenance of an apparent effective program namely STAR) of the participating teachers in their role as facilitators. Furthermore the participating teachers reportedly experienced facilitating STAR as sustainable and applicable to multiple settings (snowball effect), thereby adhering to Lomas's (1993) view of such an extension being a desirable outcome of dissemination research.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I provided an overview of my involvement in the research field. I reflected on the research processes in which I had participated. I then presented the research results in terms of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged subsequent to the data analysis I conducted. Thereafter I discussed the results in terms of existing literature, thereby presenting the findings of the study.

In the next chapter, I come to final conclusions. I reflect on the potential value and limitations of this study, and conclude the chapter with recommendations which evolved from it.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I reported on the results and findings of the current study. I aimed to highlight correlations as well as possible contradictions in situating the results I had obtained within the framework of existing literature.

In this chapter I provide an overview of the preceding chapters. By re-visiting the research questions, as formulated in Chapter 1, I come to final conclusions. I then reflect on the possible limitations as well as the potential value of this study, and conclude by formulating recommendations arising from the study.

#### 5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

In **Chapter 1** I provided an introduction and my rationale for undertaking this study. In providing an orientation for the study, I presented research questions and stated assumptions. I defined the key concepts of the study, namely experiences, teachers as STAR facilitators, facilitation, dissemination research, the STAR intervention and teachers in neighbouring schools. I then provided a brief overview of the paradigmatic perspective I had selected, as well as the research methodology and strategies I had employed. I concluded Chapter 1 with an overview of the chapters of this mini-dissertation.

In **Chapter 2** I explored existing literature on the theoretical aspects that underpinned this study. I aimed to provide the reader with the context from which I planned and undertook the study, and interpreted the results. I discussed the concept of facilitation and the profile and skills of a facilitator. I then explored the potential roles and responsibilities of facilitators with specific reference to experiences of facilitators involved in research. Thereafter I discussed dissemination research by firstly defining

the concept, and then explaining the interrelated processes, models and methods of dissemination research. After describing potential challenges and suggestions involved in dissemination research, I concluded Chapter 2 with an overview of the theoretical framework, namely Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory.

In **Chapter 3** I described the research process and the manner in which I had conducted the empirical study. I discussed the interpretivist paradigm as underlying philosophy of the study. I aimed to relate the selected data collection strategies to the paradigmatic lens of Interpretivism and the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. I then discussed the instrumental case study design which I had selected, and explained the selection of four teachers of a primary school, located in an informal settlement community in the Eastern Cape. I provided an overview of the multiple data collection and documentation strategies I employed, namely an analysis of the transcripts of a related study, focus group discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, field notes and visual data documentation techniques. Hereafter I described the manner in which I conducted thematic data analysis and interpretation, and reflected on my role as researcher. I concluded the chapter with a discussion on the ethical considerations and quality criteria I strived to adhere to in an attempt to produce a rigorous study.

I presented the research results in **Chapter 4**. Firstly, I reflected on field work in fulfilling the role of researcher, co-facilitator of focus groups and observer. I then presented the three themes that emerged subsequent to the data analysis I had completed. The first theme relates to the participants' positive personal experiences of being peer-facilitators. The second theme focuses on responses to peer-facilitation, and the third theme entails practical considerations and actions to be peer-facilitators. I concluded Chapter 4 by situating the research results in terms of relevant literature and research, thereby presenting the findings of this study.

## 5.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to explore and describe the experiences of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators when disseminating STAR to peers (fellow teachers) in two neighbouring schools. Four teacher-facilitators reported on their experiences. In the following subsections I present the conclusion, by revisiting the research questions.

### 5.3.1 Secondary research question 1: *Which positive experiences or value did the teachers gain by fulfilling the role of facilitators, if any?*

In this study teachers, as peer-facilitators, enjoyed sharing knowledge to enable fellow teachers to provide support to their school-communities. It seemed as if they discovered that they possessed certain attributes (such as acceptance, sensitivity, a passion for people, knowledge and skills, leadership qualities and abilities) which enabled them to facilitate STAR. This is, however, a hypothesis that requires further research.

The findings of the current study suggest self-efficacy as indicated by motivation, creative problem-solving abilities and self-reflecting enabling the teachers to have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions. These self-efficacy beliefs in turn might have led to the teachers' demonstrated self-confidence as facilitators. I found that, based on self-efficacy and self-actualisation beliefs, teachers were able to solve problems they had faced by using problem-solving skills creatively. The manner in which the participants dealt with potential challenges can be indicative of high levels of self-actualisation and self-efficacy because they believed in their abilities and knowledge and skills to address these challenges. This hypothesis, however, requires ongoing research.

The teachers' self-actualisation beliefs seemed to be influenced by self-awareness. Self-awareness related to teachers being aware of their knowledge and skills as facilitators. A secondary process of awareness related to different systems involved (systemic awareness), their fellow teachers, parents and the school-community

(church). The secondary awareness means that teachers were aware of needs of their broader environment and supporting these environments in a psychosocial manner. In this study a mutual trusting relationship seemingly developed between the teacher-facilitators and their peers. The participating teachers reported a sense of community characterised by positive experiences shared as a group of facilitators. Fellow teachers referred to *Ubuntu* based on their experience of feeling part of a family.

I found that the participating teachers fulfilled their role as peer-facilitators in a committed and professional manner. In this regard, they were committed and motivated to be facilitators. In addition, teachers' initial commitment and motivation were positively influenced by colleagues' acknowledgement, appreciation and trust of them as peer-facilitators. Consequently the participants expressed the need to also facilitate STAR in their school-communities. This potential extension of facilitation can be explored further during a follow-up study.

### **5.3.2 Secondary research question 2: *Which challenges did the teachers experience in facilitating the STAR intervention programme with peers?***

Participants reported that they had initially commenced their journey as peer-facilitators with feelings of uncertainty and concern. Despite being uncertain, their motivation to be competent peer-facilitators and their commitment towards STAR and their colleagues resulted in feelings of excitement. Despite feeling uncertain in terms of their own skills, knowledge and abilities, through facilitation, the teachers' ability to empower, being competent facilitators and the joy they experienced in facilitating were in the foreground. For them to be peer-facilitators, to transfer knowledge to peers, personal development (namely empowering others, enhanced self-actualisation and self-efficacy beliefs), becoming aware of certain accomplishments and their own abilities through the facilitation process, professional development (namely being a facilitator, lecturer, problem solver and leader) as well as colleagues appreciation, acknowledgement and trust seemingly changed initial feelings of uncertainty into feelings of excitement.

Teacher-facilitators relied on their own problem-solving skills and creativity when faced with problems. This tendency resulted in the participants not viewing incidences like transport and absenteeism as challenges. Rather, they focused on how to solve problems. Hypothetically it seems plausible that participants followed an asset-based approach (the underlying philosophy of STAR), to rely on existing resources to solve potential challenges. This hypothesis requires ongoing investigation.

Specific examples of challenges that were mentioned by the participants include the withdrawal of one of the initial schools that was supposed to form part of the intervention, transport problems, and absenteeism of both the facilitators and fellow teachers who attended the sessions. In response to these challenges, the teacher-facilitators found another school and replaced the initial school as they reportedly did not focus on specific participants, but on the possibility of transferring their knowledge to others. In terms of transport problems the participants relied on themselves, travelling together from a certain point of departure and as a group. With regard to absenteeism, the teacher-facilitators and fellow teachers reported that their interest in STAR and a fear of missing out on anything usually prevented absence from sessions. I therefore conclude that participants used creative problem-solving abilities to address challenges due to motivation, commitment to facilitation, as well as a sense of community characterised by mutual trust and acknowledgement. Possibly the facilitators used the asset-based approach to solve problems by assessing and identifying their personal and communal assets and resources, and then mobilising these assets and resources to overcome challenges.

### **5.3.3 Reflecting on the primary research question**

The current study was directed by the following primary research question: ***What are the experiences of teachers as facilitators during dissemination research of the STAR intervention?***

I relied on Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy as theoretical framework. Based on this theory, I suggest that teachers believed they could carry out the task of being STAR facilitators, as they gained confidence in their ability to coordinate and facilitate STAR to their fellow teachers. Consequently teachers and their colleagues experienced the peer-facilitation endeavour as joyful and enabling.

I found that the participating teachers experienced being peer-facilitators positively, both personally and professionally. Teachers' joy to share their knowledge of STAR and enabling peers arguably impacted their self-worth and self-confidence positively. Participating teachers also enjoyed their colleagues' appreciation and acknowledgement of them as peer-facilitators. I postulate that teachers' perceived self-efficacy (regarding them being facilitators of STAR) arose, not only from themselves but also from other sources of information, such as the vicarious experience from the colleague teachers for whom they facilitated STAR, verbal persuasion from their fellow teachers, the original researchers and the school-community (Bandura, 1986).

As a result of facilitators' positive experiences, they seemed to become even more committed and motivated to support vulnerability by being facilitators of STAR. Based on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986), I postulate that motivation and commitment enabled teachers to control their thoughts, feelings and actions (as facilitators and as evident in their ability to address challenges). In turn, these regulated thoughts, feelings and actions apparently influenced their perceived development in terms of self-efficacy beliefs and actualisation, plausibly enhancing their personal and professional growth and resulting in a cycle of positive experiences on various levels. This hypothesis needs to be explored with a larger sample. Furthermore the participants experienced self-development in terms of interpersonal skills (namely appreciation and trust, enthusiasm, a sense of community and problem-solving abilities), thereby contributing to their knowledge and skills to interact with people. Teacher-facilitators' beliefs that they could support fellow teachers and school-communities by being peer-facilitators led to them being more determined to implement STAR.



In addition teachers seemingly became aware that they possessed certain attributes and abilities to be facilitators (such as acceptance, sensitivity and a love for what they did as teachers). It seems as if their knowledge and skills (competencies) of being peer-facilitators were affirmed during the STAR intervention. The teachers experienced a sense of community and being part of a family in response to the dissemination of STAR. Teachers' need to extend facilitation aligns with the essence of facilitation, namely a need to involve broader audiences.

Although teachers initially experienced uncertainty and concern regarding their level of professionalism and the response from their fellow teachers (with regard to the facilitation of STAR), they gradually became aware of skills amongst themselves such as problem-solving abilities and personal attributes such as leadership qualities, which assisted them in fulfilling the role of peer-facilitators. In this regard, I postulate that the positive response from their colleagues, as well as their own feelings of self-fulfilment, resulted in feelings of excitement. I suggest that the teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs, at the onset of the study, were enhanced as a result of them facilitating STAR, based on their self-decision about positive outcomes resulting from the facilitation of STAR (Bandura, 1986).

Working as a team was important to the teachers, in fulfilling the role of STAR facilitators. By making use of their creative problem-solving abilities, teachers were able to divide the work in terms of STAR's operational requirements. Based on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986), I conclude that teachers' elevated sense of efficacy influenced their effort and persistence to facilitate STAR with fellow colleagues. I conclude that the participating teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were strong determinants of the level of accomplishment they finally attained (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002).

## **5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The current study might contribute to the existing knowledge base in various areas of interest, both in terms of theory building and the application of facilitation skills, as practised by the teacher-facilitators in this study.

### **5.4.1 Theoretical value**

This study adds to the theoretical knowledge base of facilitators' personal experiences while involved in dissemination research. Potential contributions of the study include teachers' experiences of their skills and knowledge (competencies), self-efficacy and self-actualisation beliefs, problem-solving abilities, as well as extending psychosocial support by facilitating STAR for fellow teachers, parents and the school-community.

With regard to existing theory on facilitation, the findings may elaborate on typical characteristics of skilled facilitators. This study provides a nuanced theoretical understanding of the potential experiences of teachers facilitating an intervention programme to peers to support systemic vulnerability. In this manner the findings may not merely add to the knowledge base on facilitation, but also to existing theory related to dissemination research. As such a potential contribution exists in terms of the practice of dissemination research concerning the teachers' experiences, as well as the value they gained and the challenges they addressed. Awareness of these aspects, and the findings obtained, may further be extended to facilitators in other related professions. Through dissemination of STAR the facilitator-teachers became aware of the knowledge and skills they did not know they possessed. They became aware of their own abilities as well as awareness in terms of the broader system. In addition the manner in which STAR was communicated during implementation and the manner in which the message of STAR was tailored for the teachers' colleagues created an opportunity for an enthusiastic response.

By addressing the need for ongoing research in translating research findings into evidence-based public health and clinical practices, this study may elaborate on the theory of dissemination research. Finally, findings in the current study may provide scholars in helping professions (such as Educational Psychology) to extend insight into the role of what being a facilitator amongst peers entails. People in helping professions may subsequently rely on such knowledge in mobilising teachers (or other role-players) in supportive or preventative initiatives.

#### **5.4.2 Practical value**

Insight into the skills and experience that teachers use as peer-facilitators is meaningful in education and public health interventions. By applying the findings of this study in practice, practitioners (in for example Educational Psychology, Social work, Education, Counselling and Health) could assist others in equipping themselves to support and guide peers when becoming involved in facilitating intervention programmes. Insights into peer-facilitator characteristics and requirements (communication and problem-solving skills, leadership abilities, participation in their own development, promoting knowledge transfer, motivation, caring and encouraging) may inform other teachers (especially those new to the facilitator role) with regard to the skills required for facilitation of an intervention programme.

#### **5.5 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Due to the limited number of teachers involved as participants from a selected school in one informal settlement community, generalisability of the findings cannot be assumed. However, due to the interpretivist paradigm used, I did not aim to obtain generalisable findings, believing that the creation of knowledge is a process of interaction that occurs within a specific context. I attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, providing rich descriptions of the experiences of the participating teachers in one specific context. In this way I provided ample information for transferability where

the reader can determine the similarities between teachers, parents, communities and challenges. I am of the opinion that I succeeded in reaching this objective.

Secondly the difference in culture, experience and language between the participants and me might have led to the possible limitation that the interpretations and findings could be subjective and influenced by my repertoire of knowledge and experience. I aimed to provide a rich description of the participating teachers' experiences in fulfilling the role of facilitators during the STAR intervention. I included a member-checking session, attempting to ensure that the themes I identified were a true reflection of the participating teachers' experiences. Furthermore, I continuously reflected on my experiences in my research diary to monitor my interpretations during data collection, analysis and interpretations. Finally, based on the participants' involvement in the STAR project since 2003 and the firm relationships of trust between them and the core research team, differences in culture, language and experience seemed marginal in their sharing of views and perceptions.

In terms of another potential limitation relating to data collection, the inclusion of reflection diaries by the participating teachers might have ensured richer data. However, participants seemed eager to share their perceptions and provide in-depth explanations. Once again the fact that the participants have been involved in similar research activities since 2003 was most probably beneficial to data collection in the current study. Due to technical problems I lost the last three minutes of my audio recording of the member-checking session. Although I view this as a limitation, I believe that I managed to present a detailed account of what had transpired during this session due to my extensive and detailed field notes. In addition I relied on my supervisors' field notes and reflections, which co-facilitated the sessions with me. As such, I am of the opinion that the results were not negatively influenced as a result of this technical problem.

A final aspect that could have had an influence on the findings of the study relates to the fact that only female teachers participated. A similar study in another context, involving male teachers, may provide another perspective on being a teacher and peer-facilitator.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, I make recommendations for training, practice and future research in the following sub-sections.

### **5.6.1 Recommendations for training**

Based on the findings of the study, I recommend that theory on facilitation and facilitators be included in the training programmes of people in helping professions (such as psychologists, social workers, nurses and teachers). Learning content can include material on the experiences of teachers as facilitators amongst peers, as well as the perceived value and challenges experienced by teachers when fulfilling the role of facilitators of intervention programmes. Training programmes of both undergraduate and postgraduate students may aim to expand on the practical training of students in helping professions that might be involved in facilitation practices. Observation of teachers as facilitators in action could assist in demonstrating theory to students.

Training institutions may consider teaching students about resilience promoting programmes (such as STAR) and using the asset-based approach (underlying theory of STAR) to develop and facilitate their own intervention programmes to support vulnerability in schools. The training of teachers might also be expanded in terms of their role as potential facilitators amongst peers. Teachers' expectations and experiences can be emphasised and their knowledge and skills (competencies), self-efficacy and self-actualisation beliefs can be highlighted as attributes that could enable teachers to fulfil the role of facilitators in support of others.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations for practice**

Based on the findings of the study, I recommend that teachers and people in other helping professions receive in-service training to facilitate intervention to support systemic vulnerability. Such proposed training opportunities might assist people in their

daily interaction with colleagues. Practicing educational psychologists could also benefit by becoming involved in interventions such as STAR to enable others such as teachers to act as facilitators.

From the findings of this study I concluded that the experiences and responsibilities of teachers facilitating an intervention programme entailed primarily positive experiences and that these teachers seemingly received much more from fulfilling the role of facilitators than they expected. Based on this finding, it may furthermore be useful to advocate these positive experiences for other teachers in order to motivate their involvement in the facilitation of intervention programmes to promote resilience and support vulnerability.

In an attempt to enhance teachers' sense of competence, self-efficacy and actualisation beliefs in fulfilling the role of facilitators to support the communities they live in, it could be valuable to initiate and facilitate intervention programmes (such as STAR) to teachers in surrounding schools and communities of those already involved in the project. Furthermore it may add further value if teachers are educated regarding the theoretical aspects underlying an intervention (such as the asset-based approach) in order to enable them to develop and implement support initiatives in the schools where they teach.

### **5.6.3 Recommendations for further research**

Based on the findings of this study and the hypotheses that were subsequently formulated, the following studies could be undertaken in future:

- Case studies on the potential relationship between self-confidence, self-worth, self-efficacy and self-actualisation, and the experiences of facilitators of an intervention programme (such as STAR) with teachers or parents.
- Case studies on the potential effect of commitment, motivation or an increased awareness of the effect of enablement on the outcome of an intervention

programme (such as STAR) or training course with teachers, parents, learners or community members.

- Multiple case studies exploring the levels of teachers' interpersonal knowledge and skills after fulfilling the role of facilitators of an intervention (such as STAR) or other educational training programmes.
- Case studies of the dynamics surrounding colleagues' (teachers'), parents' and wider community members' trust of teachers as facilitators of an intervention (such as STAR) and other educational programmes.
- Meta-analytical studies on the roles and responsibilities of teachers fulfilling the role of facilitators of an intervention (such as STAR).
- Case studies investigating a secondary process of awareness (systemic awareness) amongst teachers through the facilitation of STAR, or individuals rendering support to their communities, learners or students.
- Case studies investigating the relationship between creative problem-solving and potentially enhanced levels of self-efficacy and self-actualisation beliefs, as a result of the STAR intervention, or other training or workshops.
- Comparative studies on the sustainability of the psycho-social support initiatives associated with the STAR project, with the participating schools.
- A case study investigating the outcome of the dissemination of STAR to neighbouring schools in terms of support to the wider community.

## **5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of teachers in fulfilling the role of facilitators when disseminating STAR to fellow teachers at neighbouring schools. The findings of this study indicate that participating teachers experienced the facilitation of STAR as positive on both a personal and professional level. Facilitating an intervention in support of others therefore seems to hold the potential of providing teachers with confidence in terms of the support they might provide to others, which in turn probably culminate in feelings of self-worth and fulfilment.

In this study I found that being confronted with their experiences as facilitators, teachers became aware of certain competencies they possessed. This finding adheres to the core meaning of facilitation, where literature advocates a process of becoming aware of and thinking for oneself through a facilitation process. In the current study this process was demonstrated by participating teachers becoming aware of certain attributes and competencies (a passion for what they do, knowledge and skills regarding being a peer-facilitator, leadership qualities and personal and professional development by being facilitators). It seems that through the facilitation process, the participating teachers realised that they possessed skills and knowledge to be peer-facilitators and that this realisation sparked a process of self-actualisation and enhanced self-efficacy beliefs, contributing to their personal growth and development.

Furthermore I found that increased levels of self-efficacy and self-actualisation beliefs in turn seemed to motivate teachers to overcome challenges and obstacles as facilitators. The participating teachers' motivation and levels of commitment to be peer-facilitators (and support vulnerability in school-communities) was positively impacted by their involvement as facilitators of STAR. In this manner their involvement proved not only to have a positive effect on their own professional growth and self-actualisation beliefs, but also indirectly on positive change amongst peers and, plausible resilience in school-communities (their environment).



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Permission to conduct research and informed consent**

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Field notes (extracts)**

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## COLOURS FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FIELD NOTES

### Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer- facilitator

- Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others
- Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth
- Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation

### Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation

- Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in various school-community systems
- Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation

### Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and action

- Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern
- Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team
- Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges
- Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation

### Abbreviations used in the field notes

- P1: Participant 1
- P2: Participant 2
- P3: Participant 3
- P4: Participant 4
- R1: Researcher 1
- R2: Researcher 2
- R3: Researcher 3



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## APPENDIX C

### Extracts from reflective journal

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## COLOURS FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

### Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer-facilitator

- Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others
- Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth
- Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation

### Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation

- Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in various school-community systems
- Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation

### Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and action

- Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern
- Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team
- Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges
- Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation

### Abbreviations used in reflective journal

- P1: Participant 1
- P2: Participant 2
- P3: Participant 3
- P4: Participant 4
- R1: Researcher 1
- R2: Researcher 2
- R3: Researcher 3

## Extracts from Reflective journal

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### 22 November 2008

Ek het vandag Ronél se PhD tesis geleen en besluit om deur die (massas) werk te gaan om 'n 'gevoel' te kry van die tyd wat voorlê. Ek het die volgende aantekeninge aangaande haar tesis gemaak om in gedagte te hou wanneer ek my hoofstukke aanpak:

- Theoretically conceptualised: Asset-based programme
- Conceptual framework: HIV pandemic, coping theory
- Qualitative approach
- Interpretive epistemology
- Case study design, applying PRA & PAR principles
- Data collection: focus groups, workshops (PRA technique)
- Interview, observation, field journal
- Themes (4 prominent) emerged subsequent to inductive data analysis
- Chapter 1 and 3: NB

### Die volgende notas is oor 'Focus groups' gemaak:

- Focus group interviews: guided/unguided discussions addressing a particular topic or interest to the researcher
- Explaining or gaining insight into the views and experiences of the life worlds of a small group of participants
- Informal atmosphere: personal attitudes and opinions, sharing views, ideas and perception
- Speak openly, all options are important, and no correct or incorrect answers
- Positive and negative remarks will be valued and consensus is not important
- Respect others, no interruptions



- Observations is NB, non verbal cues, some may dominate, handle in appropriate manner
- Look in their eyes, ask them...
- Move tape recorder around, so the silent one also gets a turn
- Respect individual turns, learn/write down their names
- Field journal, camera
- Informal/conversational, respect them to share their stories
- Respond in neutral way
- Avoid leading and biased questions

### **Die volgende notas is oor 'Observation' gemaak:**

- Don't over interpret body language
- Casual: field journal, photo's and formal observation: audio recorder, reflective thoughts

### **Hou in gedagte vir P.E...**

- Kry fokusgroep vragies reg
- Kry soveel as moontlik inligting vanaf fokusgroep
- Kom by die KERN uit, wat was hulle EXPERIENCES
- NB: moenie laat iemand oorheers
- Hou 'barriers' in agterkop (bv vervoer, skryfbehoeftes, kommunikasie, selfone ens) maar moenie hulle in die rigting stuur nie

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### **28 November 2008: On the airplane to P.E**

Sitting here on the plane got me thinking...this is it...here I go! I'm on my way to P.E for my first field visit to the community who will assist me in my research for my dissertation. I talked to Ronél and she clarified a few things, but I can't help feeling a bit anxious towards the focus group that needs to be conducted today. And I am thrilled because I got bumped to Business class! 😊

I've read some books and articles on facilitation and focus groups, but I think (as with so many other experiences in my journey) that the theory only starts making sense once you have applied and experienced it for yourself. I am looking forward to meeting these **enthusiastic teachers** that Ronél has talked about so often. I admire that **they want to support their community**. After reading Ronél's PhD I feel like I already know them. I do wonder how they will react towards me and how they will accept me as the newcomer in the project. I really want to establish a trusting relationship with them, so they feel free to share their world and experiences with me. Honestly... I am a bit apprehensive about their culture and community and afraid that I won't understand all that will be communicated and miss important cultural remarks. I decided to listen carefully and make use of "easy" English, and ask if I am not clear about something.

I feel that I need to be THERE...emotionally, physically and mentally and it is NB for me to convey this message to them. I feel incredibly lucky to be accompanied by Dr Ronél and Prof Ebersöhn. They are so experienced in the field and I want to provide the participants with the same level of professionalism and empathy that they are used to. It is huge shoes to fill, but I will do my best...I have to remember that this is a learning experience and that they will be there to assist me in my journey.

I think the most important thing this stage is to be totally myself, non-biased and be aware not to lead the teachers, but to facilitate and guide them. My focus today is to get to the essence of their experiences and I will try to achieve this by asking them formal and informal questions in the focus group. I am excited! Real life, hands-on research! I've learned about epistemology and personal experience and collecting data for the above, but actually doing this (focus-group) on a phenomenon is very thrilling and exciting. Here I go!

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## **28 November 2008: Meeting the teacher-participants at their school**

Choosing to work from a qualitative framework enabled me to be PART of the group and community. It allowed me to do my research hands-on and focus on experience. It was an interactive process between me and the participant teachers. I experienced the

qualitative framework much more emotionally and subjective as quantitative research, which I experienced as cold and clinical. This is warm, inviting, and I feel part of the group. No numbers or stats, but sharing stories and ideas. I felt part of the family and enjoyed the tour of their school. They seemed so proud of what they had accomplished.

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## **28 November 2008: Focus group**

### **Before**

Well, this is it....I found it strange that I am again now apprehensive before the focus group, although I forgot about this during the observation of the facilitation session. I think it is because I know I have this one shot, and it is not as if I can fly back to P.E and capture their experiences again. I really want to get to the crux or the essence of their experiences and be as natural as possible. I also want to ask all the questions and give everybody a chance to participate, and not get swept up in an explanation or one participant. Luckily, Ronél and Liesl are with me!

### **After**

Thank heavens! It went really well, we were busy for almost an hour and a half, and I feel as if I got more than enough information out of them. Actually I feel as if they could have gone on for another hour, if we let them, but luckily Ronél steered them into a closing and summarised everything they said. She was so natural, and I admire the way she steered the focus group. For the first few minutes I was so paranoid about my Dictaphone that I had to remind myself to be totally present! I was afraid something would go wrong and then I don't have the data that I needed. After the first few minutes, I relaxed and stepped into the role of facilitator of a focus group with ease (I think!) well, that is the way I felt...it was as if I forgot about the recording and the dissertation and the data, and just enjoyed the experience of them sharing their world's and experiences of being facilitators with me. **They seemed self assured and even when they talked about the challenges....it seemed as if they know how to do what is suggested as if they've**

done it before...they did not even think about it, as if...of course we will recycle”... they seem so self-assured in their abilities.

The teachers really shared valuable information and the conversation was like telling stories and sharing, it had a nice flow. Already I can imagine the themes that will come out during the data analysis...I made some notes, and am very excited to listen to the recording over the weekend before conducting the member checking session on Monday (1 December 2008). I have a lot of information to analyse now, but I am very excited about this valuable information. Today was definitely a success and wonderful experience! The time went by quick and before I knew it, we were at our last question and wrapped up the session.

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## **1 December 2008: Member checking**

### **Before**

I am so excited! Firstly, I had a wonderful weekend in P.E and more than enough time to listen the recording of the focus group, I have scribbled some notes on possible themes and discussed these with Liesel and Ronél before the member checking session this morning over a cup of coffee. I think we talked the same language in terms of themes, but they just assisted me to put it into the correct words and present it to the participant teachers in a more structured way. Three main themes came out from the focus group and 3-5 sub-themes to each main theme. I will revise and refine these themes (obviously) when I start analysing the data, but I feel that what I have is sufficient for today's meeting.

So, today is another big day for me. I am excited to share my preliminary themes with the teachers-participants. I am not so tense today, because I knew what to expect, and this session was mainly to confirm my preliminary themes with them.

## **After**

As anticipated, the teacher-participants agreed upon the themes and the information I shared with them. Participant 1 did get a bit carried away about AIDS day (it is 1 December and international AIDS day....big celebrations at their school). We attended a part of the celebrations and 'song and dance' at their school. I felt that this was also special, as this was just another example on how to support your community with AIDS. There were no new themes, but my current themes can be refined.

I am happy about the way today went and also that I succeeded in my goal to really listen to them and hear what they shared with me regarding their experiences. They agreed on all I said, and there were less talking from their side and more from mine. Participant 1 was very excited about the happenings at their school today, and talked about that a lot towards the end.

## APPENDIX D

### Focus group protocol: research questions

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My study was directed by the following primary research question:

*What are the experiences of teachers as facilitators during dissemination research of the STAR intervention?*

In order to address this question, the following secondary questions were explored:

- Which positive experiences or value did the teachers gain by fulfilling the role of facilitators, if any?
- Which challenges did the teachers experience in facilitating the STAR intervention programme with peers?

I asked the above questions in the following manner as protocol:

- What did you enjoy about facilitating (bringing) STAR to your colleagues?
- What was challenging or difficult (hard) in facilitating STAR to your colleagues?
- What would you change about the STAR programme, what will you do different next time?



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## **APPENDIX E**

### **Thematic analysis of focus group discussion**

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## COLOURS FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer- facilitator

- Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others
- Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth
- Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation

### Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation

- Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in various school-community systems
- Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation

### Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and action

- Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern
- Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team
- Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges
- Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation

### Abbreviations used in the focus group

- P1: Participant 1
- P2: Participant 2
- P3: Participant 3
- P4: Participant 4
- R1: Researcher 1
- R2: Researcher 2
- R3: Researcher 3





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## **APPENDIX F**

### **Thematic analysis of member checking focus group discussion**

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## COLOURS FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF MEMBER CHECKING

### Theme 1: Positive experiences of being a peer- facilitator

- Sub-theme 1.1: Joy in sharing knowledge and enabling others
- Sub-theme 1.2: Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Sub-theme 1.3: Personal development and growth
- Sub-theme 1.4: Confirmed commitment and motivation

### Theme 2: Response to peer-facilitation

- Sub-theme 2.1: Appreciation and trust inspires enthusiasm for participation in various school-community systems
- Sub-theme 2.2: Sense of community as outcome of facilitation

### Theme 3: Being a peer-facilitator: practical considerations and action

- Sub-theme 3.1: Overcoming feelings of uncertainty and concern
- Sub-theme 3.2: Working as a team
- Sub-theme 3.3: Relying on creative problem solving in dealing with potential challenges
- Sub-theme 3.4: Extending the scope of facilitation

### Abbreviations used in the member checking focus group

- P1: Participant 1
- P2: Participant 2
- P3: Participant 3
- P4: Participant 4
- R1: Researcher 1
- R2: Researcher 2
- R3: Researcher 3



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## APPENDIX G

### Visual data

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