

**PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF
THE FUTURE SEARCH CONFERENCE AS AN
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE STRATEGY IN THE
NURSING BOARD OF NAMIBIA**

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Abstract

Future Search is a new concept in Namibia. This study looks at the application of a Future Search Conference (FSC) with the Nursing Board of Namibia with a view to investigating participants' experiences and perceptions of the FSC as an organizational change strategy. I conducted a case study in the interpretive paradigm, since I was interested in understanding the subjective experience and individual perceptions of five respondents with regard to the FSC. To obtain in-depth information on how participants felt about the FSC, I employed two data gathering tools: un-structured individual interviews and observation.

The findings confirmed that the Future Search is a new concept in the Ministry of Health in particular and in Namibia as a whole. Participants are of the opinion that leaders and managers are key figures in the success or failure of the Future Search. They showed a tremendous interest in the process and are willing to embrace and master the tool so they could try it in their various areas of work. Emphasis was put on the need to get the FSC introduced to leaders and higher management cadres on a wider scale, because they are decision makers and can decide whether or not the Future Search could be institutionalized.

This study concludes with an appeal from respondents to be exposed to the Future Search again in a better time frame than the short time we had.

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DECLARATION

I, Nelao Layne, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University.

Signature.....

Date.....

ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

EN / M	Enrolled Nurse / Midwives
FSC	Future Search Conference
MHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
NBN	Nursing Board of Namibia
NHTC	National Health Training Center
OD	Organization Development
S.A.	South Africa
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SWA	South West Africa
SWAPO	South West Africa Peoples' Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

Search in your past for all that is good and worthwhile and build your future on it – Cecil John Rhodes

1.1 Introduction

I have prepared this chapter to give the reader a brief political background of Namibia, mainly because of the historical impact politics had on the institution in which my study is based, the Nursing Board of Namibia. This study is mainly made possible by the pioneering work and writing of Professor Agnes Van Dyk of the University of Namibia, on the history of nursing in South West Africa and now Namibia (from 1800-1996). This is history, looking into the past to see what is worthy and building our future on that. Next in this chapter is the impact politics had on the Health and Training of Nurses in Namibia (SWA) which led to the establishment of the Nursing Board of Namibia (NBN) which provides part of the context of my study. I will also explain the rationale behind conducting the Future Search Conference workshop prior to an explanation of individual interviews and observation as methods of this study. Lastly I will give an outline of the study.

1.2 Context of the study

Namibia, formerly known as South West Africa (SWA), was a German colony from 1915 to 17 December 1920 when it became a protectorate of South Africa under the mandate of the League of Nations and later the United Nations (Kaimu 2002: 2; Van Dyk 1996: 36). The historical events that led to the independence of Namibia will not be dealt with since they are not part of my study.

According to Van Dyk (1996) SWA was regarded as a fifth province of the Union of South Africa (S.A.). This was a socio-political reality that influenced the development of Nursing and Nursing Education. The mandatory territory had to follow the laws of the Union of S.A.

Hence laws providing health care as well as regulations on Education and Training of Nurses and Midwives modeled that of the mandatory power up to the first two years of Namibia's independence (Van Dyk 1996: 36). The Nursing Council of South Africa remained the governing body of nurses in Namibia until 1993.

Two years after the independence of Namibia from South Africa, the Ministry of Health and Social Service (MOHSS) established the NBN under the Nursing Act 30 of 1993. The government gave statutory recognition for the Board to serve the state by exercising control and regulation of the nursing profession on behalf of the state (Van Dyk 1996: 132).

As part of the restructuring, health training centres were also established in 1994 to upgrade auxiliary nurses to become Enrolled Nurse/Midwives (EN/M). The role of the NBN in the training of EN/M is to:

- Approve qualifications of trainers/tutors/educational institutions
- Set criteria/requirements for enrollment
- Regulate enrollment as a pre-requisite for practice
- Appoint examiners/moderators and to grant certificates
- Consider matters affecting nurses and set standards for practice (Van Dyk 1996: 133)

By 2001 the training centres started experiencing some constraints in management and training of EN/M, due to two main factors:

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and resignation of nurses in favour of other jobs, prompted communities to demand more nurses. The Ministry of Health gave the training centres a mandate to enroll school leavers, i.e. people with no previous nursing experience, onto the course.

The second issue arose when auxiliary nurses and people with disabilities, such as a missing limb, demanded the right to be upgraded or enrolled for the course.

These two factors caused tension in management and training of EN/M. The training centres looked to the NBN to set criteria and standards concerning how to deal with school leavers, and how to go about assisting disabled learners, especially with the practical aspects of nursing, in order to meet the necessary requirements.

My interest in this research was both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated. Extrinsically, I was motivated by the writing of my lecturer, Professor Van Dyk, on the narrative history of nursing in Namibia from 1800 to 1996 (Van Dyk 1996: v): "The pioneers in Nursing Education at University level laid secure educational foundations for Nursing, first at Nursing schools, then at Nursing Colleges and finally at University level" (p. 164). I was further touched by the words of Professor F. Amaambo (cited in Van Dyk 1996: iv) praising the writing of Professor Van Dyk:

Indeed a very beautiful tree of history was planted in a fertile soil. Nurses should take up the challenge to be active in their honorable profession rather than being passive observers...through this book many are challenged to make individual as well as collective contributions to nursing.

Intrinsically my interest emanated from my personal experience as a registered nurse and a nurse/tutor for several years.

Van Dyk's work indicated evolution, change and development in Nursing and Nursing Education. I observed that since the creation of the NBN in 1993, its work has never been reviewed. Experience has also shown me that management of health training centres has particular issues like dealing with school leavers and people with disabilities, which need attention. The training centers looked to mainly the Nursing Board in conjunction with the Ministry and other stake holders to lay down some guidelines with regard to matters pertaining to the training and education of nurses. In searching for information that could be useful to my organization (the training) and the NBN, as well as the Ministry of Health that sponsors my study, I found it worthwhile to employ a strategy in which the NBN has to re-visit its role in the training of EN/M through Organizational Development strategies like Future Search. My study of leadership and management in the area of Organizational

Development has revealed that “the spirit of Future Search is self management and discovery” (Weisbord and Janoff 2000: 12), which further motivated me to carry out Future Search with the prime motive to empower other management cadres.

My purpose is to expose participants to Future Search as an approach to change. I am interested in the possible role of the Future Search Conference in organizational transformation in the Nursing Board of Namibia.

1.3 Research goal

I conducted a Future Search Conference with the NBN with a view to investigating participants’ experiences and perceptions of the FSC as an organizational change strategy.

1.4 Research approach

This study is located within an interpretive research approach. Interpretive researchers, “are interested in the meaning that people make of phenomena” (Janse van Rensburg 2001: 16). Creswell (1994: 163) and Cohen and Manion (1994: 164) all write that the focus of interpretive research is on participants’ perceptions and experience and the way they make sense of their lives’ settings. Since my participants were not aware of the Future Search Conference, my methodology required me to conduct such a conference to take participants through the Future Search process prior to investigating their perception of the concept.

To get detailed information on participants’ experiences and perceptions, I employed an individual, unstructured interview with five participants who met the following criteria. They had been:

- In the office of the NBN for at least three years
- Trainers of Enrolled Nurse/Midwives category for more than five years
- Registered nurse/enrolled nurse with paid up membership of the Board

- Attending the workshop full time (from the beginning to the end of the workshop)

The interviews were tape-recorded; the data were transcribed verbatim. The interview turned out to be good for various reasons; it allowed me the opportunity to probe for in depth information and the interviewers were able to clear up any misunderstandings. The interview also allowed me to test the limit of the respondents' knowledge, their understanding of Future Search, which is the central theme of my research. I also kept a journal of my observations of the workshop. I first looked for patterns and synthesized these into themes. For ethical reasons I have used pseudonyms for participants.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

Chapter two is designed to present an overview of the literature in order to gain insight into general theories on organizational change and Organizational Development in particular.

In chapter three I outline three main paradigms and give reasons why this study is located in the interpretive paradigm. I also demonstrate my awareness of weaknesses identified in the interpretive approach. Account is also given of observations and individual unstructured interviews as methods suitable for my research. The account of my research journey is also given in this chapter.

In chapter four is included data presentation and discussion. Data is presented, quoting participants in their own words. I interpret participants' experiences of the Future Search Conference from my findings in light of what the literature says about Organizational self-assessment, change and renewal and what other studies have found out about Organizational Development.

In chapter five I give a summary of my main findings on how participants experienced and perceived the Future Search Conference. The limitations of the study are also discussed in this last chapter. References and relevant Appendices follow.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations come into existence when we talk and act with others. They are patterns of living, ways of seeing the world. They are the rules we choose to live by; they are also the rules others have chosen for us and that we accept – Greenfield and Ribbins (1993)

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one I wrote about my interest in the Nursing Board of Namibia (NBN), and the need to revisit its role in the training of enrolled nurses/midwives (EN/M). One expects a change or renewal of either its task or structure or a new way of doing things. The concept “change” is an abstract, universally used word. French and Bell (1999:2) write that change means the new state of things is different from the old state of things.

2.2 Types of planned change

Smith (2003) states “change and renewal is a universal requirement for on-going group and organization life.” He further indicates that change has mainly two facets – it is either purposeful and planned or un-planned. Hanson (1986 as cited by Smith 2003) identifies three types of change: **spontaneous** is un-expected and un-planned; **evolutionary** change is usually slow and one may not even notice the change (people evolve slowly and adapt themselves as change takes place); **planned** change, which is a change with choice e.g. planning for extra science classes for slow learners. Literature reveals that effective change is renewal; it entails improvement in organizations (Smith 2003).

According to traditional scientific theories, organizations have been treated as something that

existed before man or as a “natural entity” (Hoy and Miskel 1985: 9, 23). They have structure in which man is to be fixed, in order for him to render a service without involvement.

Contrary to the scientific notion of the organization Greenfield’s study (as noted in Sergiovanni 1986:150) has shown that the organization is not a “natural entity”. It is a created, man-made product. People construct and deconstruct organizations by developing certain goals and setting up activities and programmes to achieve these goals (*Ibid.*). As Greenfield says, “Organizations structure themselves in response to their internal and external environment” (in Sergiovanni 1986:150).

The study by Chin and Benne (1976) (cited in Smith 2003) explains three types of planned change as discussed below.

2.2.1 Empirical-rational change

The assumption is that people are rational and follow their rational self-interest. They change when they realize the benefit of change. Individual experts from outside or inside the organization usually initiate this. The rest of the organization depends on that individual. Readiness of the people is taken for granted. They change when they come to realize that the change is advantageous to them (French and Bell 1995: 102).

2.2.2 Power-coercive change

The assumption of this type of change is that change occurs when those with less power comply with demands of those with more power. The process of change is through authority and is initiated externally. This does not empower the members. Participants’ readiness is irrelevant. Decision-making is off-site; typically distant.

2.2.3 Normative re-education change

This type of change is based upon group norms. Change occurs when groups realize existing

norms are dysfunctional and replace them with new norms. The process of change involves participants and it is usually internally initiated. Participants' readiness to change is crucial. The change process is usually on-going. Decisions are made on site.

In practice, more than one type of planned change and even un-planned change may be happening simultaneously. My study is grounded within Organizational Development (OD) that is based primarily on a **normative re-education**, or cultural, change strategy and secondarily on an **empirical rational** change (Smith 2003). This takes me to a description of OD.

The rest of this chapter serves to introduce the reader to the topic of Organizational Development in general and Future Search in particular. I will therefore highlight the origin of OD, its values and some of its related concept that are relevant to this study, and I will single out the Future Search Conference as one of the OD comprehensive methods for organizational change and improvement.

2.3 Origin of Organization Development (OD)

OD is a social science of managing change and is credited fundamentally to the work of Kurt Lewin. Weisbord (1987: 22) wrote about Kurt Lewin as a legendary social scientist, an inspired teacher. He provided the conceptual tools needed to bring change to the work place in ways both practical and ethical. His life was marked by a passion for experimentation and faith in science.

Lewin strove to free the world from prejudice, ignorance and self-hate through social science. Lewin uncovered a novel form of problem solving that might be called "doing by learning" – core methods for helping people find meaning in work (*Ibid.*: 71).

Lewin showed that all problems, even the technical and economic, have social consequences that include people's feelings, perception of reality, sense of self-worth, motivation and

commitment (*Ibid.*). His practice of organizational development was adapted by many corporations and government agencies. Colleges and non-profit organizations of all kinds are Lewin's living monument. He believed that Taylor's methods reinforced boredom and reduced learning; according to Lewin, work must have "life value"(*Ibid.*). He shifted interest toward social sciences to solve social problems

Several key studies fed into a shift in management thinking, away from the scientific rational model.

2.3.1 The Hawthorne Studies

French and Bell (1995: 9) explain the Hawthorne study as one of several scientific studies interpreted as showing that workers respond favourably, with higher production, to interested and sympathetic attention from supervisors and managers. This study indicates that group norms have more powerful effects on productivity than economic incentives (French and Bell 1999: 64).

2.3.2 The Laboratory Training Movement

Laboratory Training refers to essentially unstructured small group situations in which participants learn from their actions and the group dynamics began to develop. It was the initiative of Benne, Bradford and Lippit (French and Bell 1999: 32).

Since the emergence of OD as a field there has been a focus on intact work teams. This interest has intensified, particularly in self-managed or self-directed teams. French and Bell (1999: 48) explain that this interest has accelerated due to converging pressures on organizations to improve quality, to become more flexible, to reduce layers of management and to enhance employee morale.

The Laboratory Training methods have proved highly useful in training team members in effective membership behaviours, and in training supervisors, and managers in the arts of

delegation and empowerment (*Ibid.*). Training experiences include:

- Self-insight
- Understanding the conditions which inhibit or facilitate group functioning
- Understanding interpersonal operations in groups and
- Developing skills for diagnosing individual, group and organizational behaviour (French and Bell 1999: 34)

These are the values found in OD. OD strives for team building self-managing, recognition of the individual in the organization through empowerment, and ability to diagnose the individual and the organization, the 'human side' of the organization (Weisbord 1987). This is regarded as a direct precursor of OD and it has that improved interpersonal relations, increased self-understanding, and awareness of group dynamics are crucial for organizational change (French and Bell 1999; Weisbord 1987).

2.3.3 The Human Relations Movement

The Human Relations Movement advocated participative management, greater attention to workers' social needs, training in inter-personal skills, and general "humanizing" of the work place. These democratic values were a reaction to authoritarian, autocratic and arbitrary management practices as well as the dysfunction of bureaucracy.

These three developments demonstrated a successful shift to the management paradigm of involving all participants in planning and implementing change. My study is grounded within Organizational Development (OD) values.

2.4 Organizational Development

There are various descriptions of OD. For the purpose of this study I will present three authors' descriptions of OD. Porras and Robertson suggest that OD is a set of behavioural-

based theories, values, strategies, and techniques aimed at the planned change of the organizational work setting for the purpose of enhancing individual development and improving organizational performance through the alteration of organizational members; on the-job behaviours (cited in French and Bell 1999: 24–25).

Similarly, Bennis (1969) describes OD as a strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values and structure of the organization so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself (French and Bell 1999: 24).

Fullan, Miles and Taylor (cited in Schmuck and Runkel 1985: 5) offer a description of OD derived from dozens of definitions in the literature:

Organizational development (OD) in schools districts (or colleges) is a coherent, systematically planned, sustained effort at system self study and improvement, focusing explicitly on change in formal and informal procedures, process, norms, or structures and using behavioural science concepts.

Several descriptions of OD overlap, but they all contain unique insights about OD. All authors agree that OD applies behavioural science to achieve planned change and the target of change is the total organization or system. Likewise, they agree that the goals are increased organizational effectiveness and individual development (French and Bell 1999: 25). I now discuss the distinctive features of OD.

2.4.1 Cultural or normative aspect of OD

Culture is defined as the values, assumptions and beliefs held in common by organization members that shape how they perceive, think and act. Every organization has a culture and organizational culture strongly influences individual and group behaviours. The culture must be altered if permanent change is to occur (French and Bell 1995: 5).

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 59) declare that introducing OD into an educational system (or

any organization) requires abandoning some of the old norms and creating new ones. Concern for the workplace is not new. In the 1930s and 1940s both Chester Barnard and Elton Mayo were stressing the importance of work-group norms, sentiments, values and emergent interactions in the workplace as they described the nature and functions of internal organization (*Ibid.*:127–129).

Alan Wilkinson and Kerry Patterson (1985: 265) maintain that an organizational culture consists largely of what people believe works and does not work. Joanne Martin (1985: 95) argues that culture is an expression of peoples' deepest needs, a means of endowing their experience with meaning.

Weisbord (1987: 255) finds it worthwhile for the OD practitioner to work primarily on perceptions, feelings, relationships, attitudes, group norms and communication skills among people at the top and middle of organization.

2.4.2 Humanistic and optimistic values

OD celebrates the importance of the individual in the organization. Humanistic and optimistic values posit that people are basically good, that progress is possible and desirable in human affairs and that rationality, reason and goodwill are the tools for making progress. Peter Drucker supports the above ideas: "Man has free will and normally uses it positively" (Van der Westhuizen 1999: 199). People must therefore be treated with respect, as embedded in McGregor's Theory Y (Van der Westhuizen 1999: 198; French and Bell 1995: 67–68). These authors agree that everyone has intrinsic worth and has the potential for growth and development. Humanistic values prompted a search for better ways to run organizations and develop the people in them (French and Bell 1995: 74).

2.4.3 Participative democratic values

OD adopts a participative or collective approach to change (Weisbord 1987, Schmuck and Runkel 1994, French and Bell 1999, Weisbord and Janoff 2000 and Smith 2003). An

underlying principle is that all those groups and individuals who are likely to be involved in the implementation of any decisions should actively participate in that process from the beginning. As such, it falls within a participative democratic approach to decision making (Smith 2003). Democratic values prompted a critique of authoritarian, autocratic and arbitrary management practices, as well as the dysfunction of bureaucracy.

Kurt Lewin discovered that “we are likely to modify our own behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution and likely to carry out decisions we have helped make” (Weisbord 1987: 89). Smith (2003) explains that group dynamics research that began in the 1940s has repeatedly shown that:

- Most organization members desire increased participation in organization decision-making and processes
- Participation is energising and enhances performance
- Participation produces optimum solutions to problems
- Participation enhances acceptance of and commitment to decisions
- Participation overcomes resistance to change, increases organization commitment, reduces stress levels, and meets organizational members’ need for a sense of belonging, achievement and recognition, and influence
- Participation over all enhances feelings of self- worth and satisfaction

Smith concludes that it is only when stake holders and role players come together that we can begin to appreciate the wealth of experience, knowledge, expertise, skill, leadership and vision that exist in our groups and organizations (2003: 4–5).

2.4.4 Empowerment

The fourth feature of OD, empowerment, is often used to mean that someone or a group of individuals with power gives that power to, or shares it with, those with less power or no power. Rather empowerment in this context means to create conditions conducive to realization of our intrinsic potential, the power within (Smith 2003: 6).

French and Bell (1999: 87–88) have this to say about the empowerment process:

We mean those leadership behaviours and human resources practices that enable organizational members to develop and use their talents as fully as possible toward individual growth and organizational success – we also mean involving large numbers of people in building the vision of tomorrow, develop the strategy for getting there, and making it happen.

OD is designed to create such conditions. The concern in OD is to allow individuals, groups and organizations to take responsibility for their own future, not to depend on some external agency to prescribe their future. In the next section, I explain four OD theories/concepts that are relevant to my study.

2.5 Some key theories and concepts that inform OD

The theory and practice, art and science of OD are informed by many concepts that form the knowledge base upon which OD is constructed. For the purpose of this study, I am going to look at four of these concepts: Lewin's Three-stage Model of Change, Readiness, Systems Theory and the Learning organization.

Literature reveals several models of planned change including:

- Porras and Robertson Model of Organizational Change
- The Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Development
- Ralph Kilman's "Beyond the 'Quick Fix'"
- Kurt Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Organization Development (French and Bell 1999: 73–82).

I prefer Kurt Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Organizational Development.

2.5.1 Lewin's Three-stage Model of Change

Lewin (in Weisbord 1987) conceptualises three stages of change:

Unfreezing: This includes reducing negative forces through new information or provision of data and proper diagnosis of the system (Weisbord 1987: 94). A certain amount of readiness is essential at the start of any OD effort in an organization.

Moving: Changes occur in attitudes and values, feelings and behaviours and so on (*Ibid.*).

Refreezing: This means reaching a new status quo with support mechanisms to maintain the desired behaviour (*Ibid.*). Schein (in French and Bell 1999: 94) has this to say:

The new behaviour is integrated in a person's personality and attitudes. That is, stabilizing the change requires testing to see if they fit – fit with the individual, and fit with the individual's social surroundings.

That is, do the significant others (important people in the person's social environment) approve of the change?

This three-stage model is a powerful tool for understanding the change situation. The next key concept is readiness.

2.5.2 Readiness

Weisbord (in Smith 2003) views readiness as being well motivated, as in caring enough to be ready to do something. French and Bell (1999: 74) describe Schein's explanation of the psychological mechanism involved in change states. Schein (in French and Bell 1999: 64) specifies the psychological mechanism involved in each of these stages:

Unless the person feels comfortable with dropping the old behaviours and acquiring new ones, change will not occur. That is, the person must develop a sense of psychological safety in order to replace the old behaviours with the new behaviours.

Van der Westhuizen (1999: 611) justifies the need to attend to human need satisfaction in

order to raise readiness:

the individual enters the organization as a complexly equipped person with his needs, expectations and personality; when the individual is deprived of job satisfaction, then the organization is likely to have problems in achieving its goals. This means that if we satisfy our organization members' needs, then we also guarantee ourselves success in the organization.

In support of the above ideas, Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 8) write that it is important to know individual members' own goals, motives, satisfaction and feelings since all of these have an effect on the change process within the group or organization. This is to make sure those individual goals and motives are met and are in line with the organizational goals.

Eby *et al.* (in Weber and Weber 2001: 291) write that participants' perceptions of organizational readiness for change can serve to facilitate or undermine an organizational change effort. This means that if participants have not shown a sign of readiness for change then it is worthless to initiate the change programme.

According to Smith (2003: 7-8) indicates that readiness to participate in an organization change process refers to:

Willingness as a form of readiness – groups and organizations might not want to change due to various reasons; e.g. previous disappointments, where promises of change have proved to be empty; fear of the unknown outcome of the change, e.g. learning new skills or loss of status.

Capability as a form of readiness – groups and organizations might know that they need to change or might even want to change, but do not know how to change.

Belief – Schein (in French and Bell 1999: 75) explains that at this stage a person undergoes cognitive restructuring as he/she acquires information and evidence showing that the change is desirable and possible.

Confidence as a form of readiness – the individual must be confident that he/she can make a difference. The person develops confidence and has a sense of urgency to change instead of regarding himself/herself as a helpless victim of circumstances. This might be hindered by

prescriptive management practices, where subordinates are expected to obey directives from above in the hierarchy, which fosters a culture of dependency, passivity and fear.

Support of gatekeepers as a form of readiness – people who hold the gate keeping role need to be willing to support and participate in the change process.

Smith (2003: 9) argues that getting people to want to change, to believe change is necessary and possible, to commit to abandoning the status quo for an uncertain future is the first step in creating readiness for them to participate in an organizational change process. The OD consultant must therefore work together with organization members to raise a certain degree of readiness before the beginning of any OD programme.

2.5.3 Learning organization

The *learning organization* is a key concept in OD. “One can not learn without change or change without learning” (Wick and Westly 1999: 58–61). In the same vein, Peter Senge (cited in Gultig *et al.* 2002) states that learning organizations are organizations where:

- People continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire
- New and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured
- Collective aspiration is set free
- People are continually learning

Senge (2002: 33) further explains that what distinguishes learning organizations from traditional authoritarian “controlling organizations” will be the mastery of certain basic disciplines. Senge believes that for an organization to develop, five learning disciplines must be mastered to create a learning organization capable of embracing change, renewal and development. They are as follows:

Personal mastery – is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience and of seeing reality objectively. “An organization’s commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members” (Senge 2002: 34). The development of the organization is proportional to the

individual's development and learnt ability. Therefore by developing an individual, one is developing the organization.

Mental model – Senge (2002: 34) holds that every organization is a product of how its members think and act according to deeply ingrained assumptions or generalizations. There is a need for members to learn how their actions affect their world. Individual members with a vision are likely to want to see development taking place in the organization.

Shared vision – Senge (2000: 72) warns that vision is not the top leader's job because "visions based on authority are not easily sustainable".

Team building – Senge (2002: 34) is of the opinion that learning starts with the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into "genuine thinking". This involves developing the skill of the group to look for the larger picture that lies beyond individuals' perceptions which in turn leads to systems thinking.

Systems thinking – Senge (2000: 77–79) advises individuals in the organization to develop awareness of complexity, interdependencies, change and leverage in order to be highly skilled in solving crises in the organization and to enact change throughout the system instead of in one narrow domain.

Prewitt (2003: 58) writes: "Leadership may play the single and most important role in determining the success or failure of learning organization efforts". He recommends developing "leader learners" first before attempting to develop the whole organization. Prewitt concludes that a learning culture is one in which learning is valued and rewarded and elements that impede learning are not tolerated (*Ibid.*: 58–61).

2.5.4 Systems theory

French and Bell (1999: 3) define an organization as a system comprising elements of which some are more important and provide the key to determining the organization's effectiveness or ineffectiveness. These are: structure, organizational culture and process. These three must be congruent if change is to take place. Systems theory regards an organization as an open system in active exchange with its environment. In the same vein Katz, Kahn and Hanna (cited in French and Bell 1995: 89) consider every system to have a permeable boundary,

which delineates the system. Feedback from the internal parts of the organization, as well as from the external environment, is important, because it determines to what extent goals and the purpose of the organization are achieved.

Von Bertalanffy (in French and Bell 1999: 82) refers to a system as “a set of elements standing in interaction”. Hanna (also cited in French and Bell 1999) defines a system as an arrangement of interrelated parts. The words “arrangement” and “interrelated” describe interdependent elements forming an entity that is the system. Thus, when taking a systems approach, one begins by identifying the individual parts and then seeks to understand the nature of their collective interaction (French and Bell 1999: 82).

Patton (1994: 79) has this to say about systems theory:

A system is a whole that is both greater than and different from its parts. Indeed a system cannot validly be divided into independent parts as discrete entities of inquiry, because the effect of the behaviour of the parts on the whole depends on what is happening to the other parts...change in one part leads to changes among all parts and the system itself.

All these definitions of systems theory depict the organic nature of any organization, including the organization at which my study is based. Staff work in different sections, or divisions, but ideally form a composite unity. An organization, as an *organic* entity, is able to excel and to grow; it has parts that need to be coordinated in order to fulfill its goals. A systems perspective therefore directs the OD practitioner to be aware of interdependencies, inter-relatedness, multiple causes and multiple effects.

French and Bell (1999: 190) identify various types of system-wide OD interventions one can employ to bring about organizational change, among them are: Future Search Conference, Beckhard's Confrontation Meeting and Strategic Management Activities. They are comprehensive in terms of the extent to which the total organization is involved and/or the depth of cultural change addressed. For the purpose of this study I concentrate on the Future Search Conference (FSC) as a comprehensive OD interventions.

2.6 The Future Search Conference (FSC)

Weisbord and Janoff (2000: preface) define Future Search as a large group planning meeting that brings a “whole system” under one roof to work on a task-focused agenda and as an action guide to finding common ground in organizations and communities.

According to French and Bell (1999: 190) the rationale for inviting all the key actors of a complex system to meet together is congruent with systems theory and an extension of the assumptions underlying team building mentioned in Senge’s five disciplines (2.5.1).

Weisbord (1987: 281) describes Future Search as “an extremely promising method of getting the whole system in one room and focusing on the future”. He further states (*Ibid.*: 285) that Future Search is based on three assumptions:

- Change is so rapid that we need *more*, not less, face-to-face discussion to make intelligent strategic decisions
- Successful strategies for quality goods and services, lower costs and more satisfying ways of working come from envisioning preferred futures
- People will commit to a plan they have helped to develop.

Higginson (2003: 1) describes FSC as a way for a community or organization to create a shared vision for its future. It is a highly structured event usually lasting two to five days at which a cross section of community members and stake holders create a shared vision for the future. Following is the history of the FSC.

Future Search has been largely an American phenomenon stemming from the interaction of Tavistock and US Group Dynamics/OD practitioners over the years and this was extensively influenced by the work of Kurt Lewin discussed earlier in this chapter. In the United States, Marvin Weisbord has built extensively on the work and experience of the Future Search

Conference, integrating ideas from Ronald Lippitt, Edward Lindaman, Eric Trist, Fred and Merrelyn Emery and Evaschindler-Raiman (French and Bell 1999: 191).

Particularly useful were Lippitt's and Lindaman's findings that "when people plan present actions by working backward from what is really desired, they develop energy, enthusiasm, optimism and high commitment" (French and Bell 1999: 191).

French and Bell (1999: 191) further explain that the experience of Trist and the Emerys in conceptualising conferences for European managers, which include a participative environmental scan and the development of a common vision, has also contributed to the evolution of FSC.

Lewin, Emery and Trist all sought to extend group dynamics learning to large organizations, networks and communities. Lippitt also moved from small group problem-solving to future oriented conferences for huge networks. He believed that diverse interest groups could jointly envision desirable futures. His idea was supported by Lindaman who wrote that "the future is created by our present ways of confronting events, trends and development" in the environment, futuring focused awareness away from interpersonal relationships and toward the experiences and values of everybody (Weisbord 1987: 283–284).

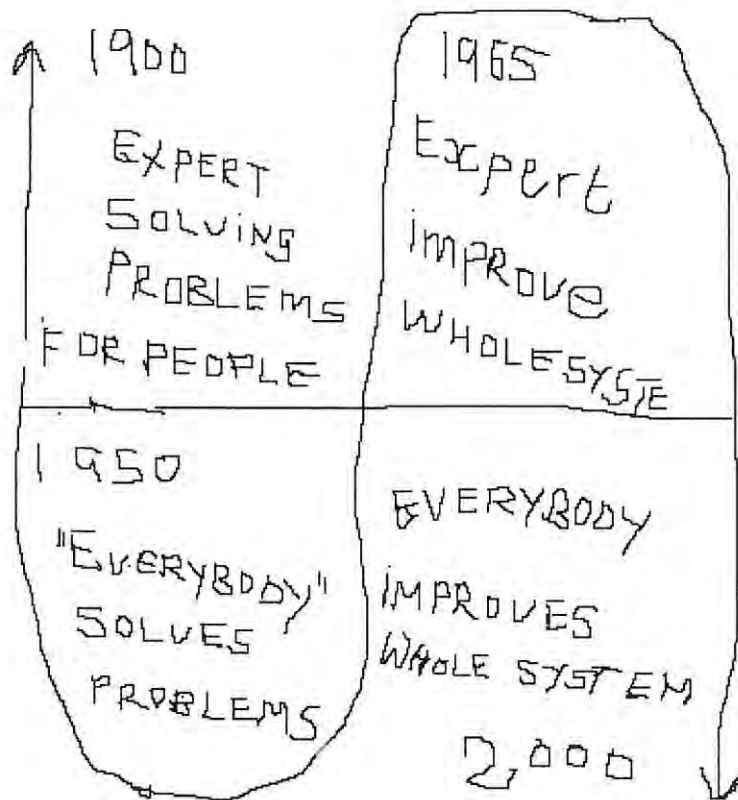
According to Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 3) Future Search is seen as a learning laboratory for "getting everybody improving whole systems". Evidently "everybody" is a metaphor, but in practice a variety of people are consistent with the purpose. In Future Search people learn to think of the future as a condition created intentionally out of values, visions and what is technically and sociably feasible (Weisbord 1987: 284). Such purposeful action greatly increases the probability of making the desired future come alive because repeating the process regularly becomes a way of life.

Future Search was applied in North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, India, Africa, Asia and Australia to carry out projects such as reducing infant mortality, regional economic development, cooperation between timber, economic and environmental interests,

community development, implementing city-wide consensus, nation building in Bangladesh and organizing a state-wide Voluntary Action for National Children's Literacy initiative (Weisbord and Janoff 2000: 30–42).

Recent users of Future Search include: EMDA (East Midland Development Agency) and NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) in England. In her talk entitled "The School Library Team: How does it influence Learning and Teaching" (IASL Conference, Durban 7–11 July, 2003), Mary Lister reported on the politics of making new space for school libraries in South Africa, and the application of Future Search in this venture. In South Africa, Irvine (1999) demonstrated the power the Future Search to bring meaning to the working lives of NGO employees.

Weisbord (1987: 262) and Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 3) used a **learning curve** to illustrate how management has evolved from **experts** solving problems for people, **towards everybody**, experts included, improving the whole system:



The above diagram is in line with how management and organizational thought has evolved through the years. The beginning of the 20th century was dominated by Taylor's "scientific management" and Max Weber's "bureaucracy" as prevailing paradigms to manage work and people: experts solved problems (Weisbord 1987: 261). Much of the research, theories and practice in the late 1920s focused on the shortcomings of these two paradigms and how to overcome their limitations (French and Bell 1999: 65).

As shown in the diagram, the 1950s experienced a shift in the approach to managing work and people. Lewin's work revealed the possibility for everyone to solve their own problems through participative management (Weisbord 1987: 261).

By 1965 further studies had brought the development of management strategies to the point where experts had discovered systems thinking and began improving whole systems for other people. This was the result of many studies such as Carl Roger's 'client-centred therapy', Eric

Trist's 'organization as a sociotechnical system' and the work of various motivational theorists such as Abraham Maslow and McGregor.

In the intellectual climate of the early 21st century emphasis is on learning how to get everybody involved in improving whole system: both experts and participants solve problems together. The appendices at the end of this paper contain an overview of a typical FSC.

2.7 Summary

This chapter provides insight into what change is and types of change (as discussed under section 2.1). I have also brought to light some assumptions about what the organization is: a "natural entity" according to scientific management theory; an "un-natural entity or man-made" according to Peter Senge. Organizations as man-made products are subject to change, improvement and growth, otherwise they face stagnation and die. This chapter has shed light on Organizational Development and its origin. OD as a normative re-educative planned change strategy is credited to the work of Kurt Lewin and behaviourists and psychologists who developed Lewin's ideas.

I undertook a brief discussion on distinctive features of OD – the cultural-normative, humanistic-optimistic, participative and empowerment aspects (discussed under 2.4). The chapter also covered some OD concepts important to my study; Kurt Lewin's conceptualisation of the change process, systems theory and the learning organization (under section 2.5). This brought me to the Future Search Conference as one of OD's comprehensive methods for organizational change and improvement. Future Search was a result of management evolving over the years (as indicated in the learning curve under section 2.6).

The next chapter will identify and justify the research methodology and methods selected as appropriate to achieve the goal of my research, which is to investigate participants' experiences and perceptions of the Future Search Conference as a tool for organizational change and development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

If we can make decisions at work, surely we can make decisions about work...If we are talking about job redesign to make our jobs more interesting, we have to be concerned about company effectiveness. That is not just a management concern, its part of our increased responsibility for ourselves. Our livelihood is too important to leave to managers
– Judy McKibbin

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to conduct a Future Search Conference with the Namibian Nursing Board with a view to investigating participants' experiences and perceptions of the Future Search Conference as an organization change strategy.

In this chapter I provide a description of research orientations and the case study as the method of this study. This will include what I am doing, why I am doing it, how I am doing it and the reason for doing it in that specific way.

3.2 Research orientations

Janse van Rensburg (2001) makes a clear distinction between *methodology* and *method*. Gough (2001: 3) states that many people (including experienced researchers) use the terms 'method' and 'methodology' as if they were interchangeable. The term *method* is used to refer to particular design structures such as surveys, case studies, ethnographies and action research. Each method can be approached within a different theoretical framework, which is the same as methodology, paradigms, traditions or research orientations (Janse van Rensburg 2001; Harding 1987; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Terre Blanche and Durheim (1993: 3–7) describe paradigms as all encompassing systems of inter-related practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three dimensions: (1) **Ontology** which specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can be known about it. (2) **Epistemology** which specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known. (3) **Methodology** which specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he/she believes can be known. They further clarify that paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection (1993: 36). The three aforementioned dimensions may be viewed from three broad perspectives: (1) Positivist view, (2) Constructionist view and (3) Interpretive view.

Other researchers, for example Connole (1993); and Lather (1992) offer four research approaches. For the purpose of my study I focus on Terre Blanche and Durrheim's three paradigms. I touch briefly positivism and constructionism in an effort to illuminate my own position, which is interpretive.

3.2.1 Positivist paradigm

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1993); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001); Taylor and Bogdan (1998), credit positivist doctrine to the French philosopher August Comte's position which held that all genuine knowledge is based on sense and experience and can only be advanced by means of observation and experiment (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001: 11). In support of the same description of the positivist view, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1993: 6) state that if a researcher believes that what is to be studied consists of a stable and unchanging external reality he/she has to employ a methodology which relies on control and manipulation of such reality. The aim of such research is to provide an accurate description of the laws and mechanisms that operate in social life. This is clearly an inappropriate approach for my research, since my goal is to seek others' understanding of an experience.

3.2.2 Constructionist (deconstructive) paradigm

Janse van Rensburg (2001) explains the constructionist perspective as one of reality consisting of a fluid and variable set of social constructions. The researcher employs methodologies that allow him/her to deconstruct versions of reality (2001: 18). Thus constructionism (or critical science) is a perception or research that emancipates people through a critique of ideologies and the exposure of power relations. Again, this is not the intention of this research, though some form of empowerment is a desirable outcome (Carr and Kemmis 1983, Guba and Lincoln 1981 and Smith 1989).

3.2.3 Interpretive Paradigm

The interpretive view, as explained by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1993: 123), holds that the reality to be studied consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world (ontology). The researcher may adapt an inter-subjective or interactional epistemological stance towards that reality. The data gathering tools likely to be employed are interviews or participant observation, which rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and the researched. The aim of this research is usually to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1993: 37) in their conclusion concerning these paradigms state, however, that since all paradigms rest on unstable (metaphysical) assumptions, none could be "incontrovertibly right". The important thing is that researchers must recognize that their findings and conclusions are embedded in paradigms and employ research designs that are coherent.

3.3 My research paradigm

This study is located within an interpretive research approach. Interpretive researchers "are interested in the meaning that people make of phenomena" (Janse van Rensburg 2001: 16). Creswell (1994: 163) states that the focus of interpretive research is on participants'

perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives. Interpretive designs are usually naturalistic, in that the researcher does not manipulate the research setting. My purpose, as indicated in my goal, was to understand participants' experiences and perceptions of a Future Search Conference, and it could be argued that this was not an example of a "naturally occurring phenomenon" (Patton 1990: 40). In this sense my study is perhaps not purely interpretive, since a Future Search is indeed an intervention. I would argue, however, that whereas this may be regarded as a critical dimension to my study, my overall intention was simply to understand what sense participants made of the intervention. Habermas refers to such research as having "a practical knowledge interest, in reference to the assumption that if people understand their own situation better, they would be able to take practical actions within it" (cited in Janse van Rensburg 2001: 17). Janse van Rensburg indicates further that research which empowers participants to make changes in their circumstances has gained much popularity in South Africa since the late 1980s.

I decided to take an interpretive stance, because I assumed that the NBN participants' experiences are real and should be taken seriously if change and improvement is to be attained in that organization. I was interested in understanding their subjective experience and individual perceptions of the phenomenon 'Future Search Process'. I interacted with them in the Future Search Conference workshop, observed their reactions and listened to what they told me during the individual interviews. Patton (1990); Taylor and Bogdan (1998) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1993: 128) assert that "Interpretive research relies on first hand accounts, tries to describe what it sees in rich detail and present its findings". My purpose is to get this first hand information, the meaning participants attached to the FSC, in their natural setting.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Case Study

Since the purpose of my study was to investigate participants' experience and perceptions of the Future Search Conference I was bound by my methodology to create a natural occurrence

where participants were exposed to and engaged in the Future Search Conference prior to my interviewing them since it was a new concept to them. The conference workshop was held on 29 July 2004, in Oshakati Regional Health Training Center, in Namibia. Participants were engaged in five simple tasks involving viewing the past; exploring the present; creating an ideal future scenario; identifying common ground; and making an action plan. (See Appendix 3 for an outline of the Future Search Conference). Yin (2003: 4) calls this a “single exploratory case study”.

A case study is described by Yin (cited in Winegardner 2002: 4) as an investigation into a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context, in this case the application of Future Search as an organizational change and development strategy. Merriam (cited in Winegardner 2001:14) also indicated that a case study is particularistic, which means that it focuses on a particular situation or even on evaluating programs and inventions, in my case application of Future Search to an organization (the NBN). Yin (1993: 40) explains that “case studies have been the method of choice among experienced investigators in education for analyzing educational innovation”. However, case studies are not without their weaknesses. Guba and Lincoln (cited in Winegardner 2001:10) state the limitation of a single case to be that it can “over simplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to distorted or erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs as distinct from the report itself”. Clearly the researcher has to guard against this temptation, and part of the answer will lie in rigorous and comprehensive data collection and analysis. My chief data collection tools, suitable for interpreting my case study – the organization’s experience and perception of Future Search – were observation and interviews.

3.4.2 Site of the study

My research needed a natural setting and exposure of participants to the phenomenon. I communicated my request in early March 2004 to the president of the NBN. Since most of the stakeholders were nurses and nursing tutors/lecturers, I also wrote another request to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. I was granted permission by both authorities to carry out my research.

In June 2004 I visited the office of the secretary of the NBN to arrange a Future Search workshop in Windhoek. She referred me to the Nursing Board members in Oshakati, which is also my home town. On my arrival, I contacted the relevant authorities and individuals personally via fax and telephone. It was not easy for people to fit me into their existing schedules. Luckily, an agreement was reached and 29 July was chosen as convenient for most participants. On the day of the workshop 18 of the 25 people I had targeted attended.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Selection of participants

Patton (in Mrazek 1993: 91) talks about the researcher's obligation to discuss how the sample affected the findings and the strength and weakness of the sampling procedures. I selected my respondents through purposeful sampling.

Firstly, because I wanted a research project that empowered people, I decided to work on an organization. I could not choose the Health Training Schools, because a fellow MEd student had taken this area of focus. I diverted my interest and attention to the Nursing Board of Namibia, which has a stake in the training of nurses. The workshop was attended by anyone who met the criteria mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.4. In the selection of individuals for interview, I was able to employ Weisbord and Janoff's (2000) idea of inviting people with specific strengths and insights to bring to the Future Search process, as observed from their vigorous participation and interest.

3.5.2 Relationship between the researcher and the participants

Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 37) state: "Establishing rapport with participants is the goal of every field worker. It gives a feeling of excitement and fulfillment. It can help people open up their feelings". They argue further that one of the requirements for developing a good rapport is to establish what the researcher has in common with the participants. I found I had several

things in common with participants that might strengthen the quality of my research: most of the participants were women; there were only three men; some were of similar age to me, although the majority were younger; we belonged to the same profession as nurses and nurse tutors; with regards to social and marital status, the majority were married people; we also shared parenthood and ethnic origin.

Ethnic origin was a basis for the openness and trust which characterized the interviews. Udjombala (2002: 38, citing Best and Kahn 1993: 253) supports this:

Ethnic origin seems to be important. Interviewers of the same ethnic background as their subjects seem to be more successful in establishing rapport. When there is an ethnic difference, a certain amount of suspicion and even resentment maybe encountered. The same relationship seems to prevail when social status of the interviewer and respondent is different.

3.5.3 Individual interviews

As Cohen *et al.* (2000: 128) state, conducting an interview is a more natural way of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire. They define an interview as a way of getting “inside a person’s head, to measure what a person knows (knowledge of information), what a person likes and dislikes (values and preference) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)”.

Bogdan and Biklen (in Mzarek 1993: 96) believe that the purpose or goal of the research dictates the type of interview. This was also supported by Guba and Lincoln (1981 cited by Cantrell in Mrazek 1993: 96) who describe the interview as the backbone of research. They also believe that the non-standardized interview best supports the purpose of naturalistic research. They propose that open-ended questions are most appropriate when “the issue is complex, the relevant dimension is unknown, or the interest of the research lies in the description of a phenomena, the exploration of a process or the individual’s formulation of an issue”. I conducted individual, unstructured interviews where the content, sequence and wording were entirely in the hands of the interviewer to present their experience and perception of the Future Search Conference as it was applied to the NBN.

3.5.4 Participant Observation

Patton (1990: 202) suggests that observational data should enable the researcher to enter and understand the situation that is being described. My role was that of active member-researcher, taking part in the Future Search Conference as a facilitator and assuming a functional not solely research role in the process (Adler and Adler 1987: 50).

I used the opportunity to informally observe the NBN Future Search Conference. I employed what Cohen *et al.* (2001) call 'un-structured' observation. I did not have any preconceived idea to test other than presenting the outcome of participants' experience and perceptions of Future Search. I recorded my observations by writing a narrative account of what happened.

I was interested in indications of enthusiasm for the process and the degree of openness in communication. I used my observations to inform my interviews (Patton 1990: 204). Data captured through observation during the Future Search Conference are reported simultaneously with data from the interviews, where appropriate.

3.6 Data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 154 cited by Cantrell 1993: 97) describe data analysis procedure as unique and specific to qualitative research. "Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others".

I exercised membership checking by allowing respondents to listen to the interview. I also sent individual transcript to the relevant respondent. I received three messages telephonically encouraging me to go ahead.

I listened and transcribed the taped interviews verbatim. I divided them into more occurring natural meaning units, each conveying a particular meaning from the data in their pure form. I

then organized these units into meaningful clusters, using colour codes for each cluster. I ruled out irrelevant repetition by going over the units. I finally reduced the data by grouping together clusters that were related into themes and gave descriptive headings to the themes. These themes will be presented and discussed in Chapter four.

3.7 Validity

Cohen and Manion (1994: 105) explain validity as “a matter of degree rather than an absolute state. It is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative naturalistic research.” They explain that in qualitative data, validity may be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved.

On the above issues I agree with Guba and Lincoln (in Scott and Usher 1996: 81) who suggest that “authenticity” is a more suitable term than “validity” in qualitative research. The suggestion is that a case’s power to convince the reader is a measure of its validity. To ensure authenticity I have followed the naturalistic research principles (as cited in Cohen and Manion 2000:105) as follows; the words in *italics* explain my application of the principles.

The natural setting is the principle source of data. I conducted a workshop, used the organization as a case in which to apply the phenomenon and interviewed individuals, which is also a natural way of communicating with the participants.

Context boundedness and ‘thick description’ (my discussion of data in the next chapter will be in thick narrative). The researcher is part of the researched world (which I was by being a participant observer in the broader organization where I am employed).

Data are socially situated (my intentions carried no preconceived theory or questions other than exposing participants to the Future Search and, with them, coming up with their perceptions and experiences of the Future Search).

3.8 Ethics

This study was conducted with the permission of the relevant authorities, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the President of the NBN and the head of the National Health Training Centers. Copies of relevant correspondence are available in the appendix. Oral and written informed consent was obtained from participants in the workshop, as well as respondents in the case of the interviews. The aim of the study was well explained to each and every person concerned in this exercise, both in a written and oral form, where applicable. Pictures of the workshop, tape recordings of respondents, all was done with the respondent's consent. I used pseudonyms for the respondents, except for the organization itself. I have also assured participants that only my supervisors and I would have access to the data. Nevertheless, the NBN, Ministry of Health and the National Health Training Center is entitled to a copy of the thesis.

3.9 Limitation of this methodology

Bernstein (1974) cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 27) noted that this method has been criticized for what is called "its narrowly micro sociological persuasion". Since knowledge is socially constructed, they believe that the respondent's answer is influenced by her circumstances. Bernstein is cited in Cohen *et al.* as saying "the very process whereby one interprets and defines a situation is itself a product of circumstances in which one is placed". One important factor in those circumstances is the power of others to impose their own definitions.

Giddens (cited in Cohen *et al.* 2001: 27) argues that no specific person can possess knowledge of anything more than the particular sector of society in which they participate. In the same vein, Janse van Rensburg (2001: 18) indicates that one of the criticisms leveled against interpretive research is that it can promote a relativist perspective – a view that "every one makes their own meaning and all are equal" – and thus fail to provide a basis for decision-making.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the research orientation with special attention to the paradigm of my choice, the interpretive paradigm. I have given an account of my research in terms of the site, sampling and commonalities between the researcher and the participants which may affect the quality of my research. Observation and individual interviews were the primary data gathering instruments employed. Data analysis, validity, ethics and limitations were also visited. This takes me to the next chapter for data analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Transition begins with an ending. Human beings cannot move into new roles without a clear sense of purpose and energy unless they let go of the way things were and adopt a self-image that fits the situation.
— William Bridges

4.1 Introduction

Miles and Huberman (1984: 21) and Patton (1990: 372) describe data analysis as reducing the volume of information, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. Likewise Durrheim and Terre Blanche (1999: 46) state that the aim of data analysis is to transform information (data) into an answer to the research question.

In this chapter I present the themes and categories that emerged from my data in order to communicate a holistic picture of the participants' experience and perception of a Future Search Conference (FSC). It is important to note that although I separated these themes, they are inter-related and mostly 'talk to each other'. As mentioned in my methodology chapter the names for respondents are pseudonyms, with the exception of the organization.

The following five main themes have emerged from the data:

- Readiness of current Leadership/management to engage in a new approach
- Power distance
- Comparison of future search and traditional strategic planning
- Desire to implement Future Search
- Time factor

I now discuss each in term, referring to relevant literature where appropriate.

4.2 Readiness of current Leadership/Management to engage in a new approach

4.2.1 “These people have a tendency of clinging to old ways of doing things”

Participants saw the current leadership and management style as a challenge to the implementation/institutionalization of Future Search in a Namibian context. This is revealed in a number of responses:

Mr King perceived that:

we must not forget that it is not easy to change old/senior people – these people have a tendency of clinging to old ways of doing things, if we can get such people in the Future Search then that is actually a very good challenge to us...

In support of the above statement Ms Rudo also said:

there will be difficulty in implementing this approach in Namibia if leadership concerns are not open and accommodative in terms of new ideas – once leadership is open to Future Search and recognize the goodness of this tool then probably it can be easy to institutionalize it.

The respondents' arguments are in line with French and Bell (1999: 26) who stress “led and supported by top management states an imperative.” French and Bell are also of the opinion that top management must lead and actively encourage the change effort. They continue to clarify that organizational change is hard, serious business; it includes pain and set backs as well as success, therefore top management must initiate the improvement “journey” and be committed to seeing it through (*Ibid.*: 26).

Ms Tangi, Ms Aina and Mr Buju are of the opinion that Future Search must be introduced to different levels of the organization separately to raise awareness of the concept, then if it is successful a big organizational workshop on Future Search can be held. According to Mr

Buju:

If we are to implement Future Search , first thing is to get information of Future Search to the leaders and managers (because they are the decision makers, once they decide to implement Future Search it can then be implemented) or to different levels of people in the organization then at the end of the process people will be brought together.

In the same vein French and Bell (1999: 26) further confirm the importance of leadership and point out that most OD programmes that fail do so because top management is ambivalent, loses its commitment or becomes distracted with other duties. They advise that for the OD effort to continue and to avoid the loss of what has been invested, boards of directors and top management teams must understand and support the OD process and be prepared to select replacement executives who can carry the process forward (*Ibid.*: 272).

4.2.2 Power distance

Power distance is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede 1980: 45). Management readiness refers also to the readiness to suspend their position or authority in order to participate with their colleagues who are lower in the hierarchy (Smith 2003: 7). Participants in the Future Search recognized power distance as being a factor in the feasibility of using the Future Search – for example, Ms Rudo said:

When we mention the sorriest in the organization in the presence of the top managers one has to be sure that what ever is said he/she will not be held against it. If we need successful change we must start with managers first and they must be willing to accommodate ideas from subordinates.

The above response is in line with Hofstede (1980: 45) who indicated that among the values that characterize this dimension (power distance) are beliefs that inequality should be minimized, managers should treat workers as equal, subordinates should be consulted and an ideal boss should be a resourceful democrat. Hofstede envisages a culture of participation and is encouraging management to develop willingness and a culture of sharing. Respondents desire leaders who are willing to share not necessarily power, but information and who are

willing to work together with subordinates in terms of planning and managing the organization thus narrowing the power distance.

Ms Rudo's statements are complemented by Ms Tangi:

If you are not empowered you cannot say – reach any where or say something because only top managers and top leaders are deciding – now that we were in one place we subordinate were not free to talk.

The next respondent, Ms Aina, shed light on the atmosphere prevailing between subordinates and managers by saying: "Subordinates see it as a threat to speak in the presence of the managers". The respondents, knowing that the inequality that exists in power sharing leaves the subordinate with no room to share in decision making, appeal for recognition and empowerment to ensure that if change can be recognized and accepted by top managers subordinates will feel free to participate without fearing for the security of their jobs.

The current norm concerning power is that "it resides in a position and is executed coercively. This create insecurity and it encourage a culture of silence" (Mr Bunju). Mr Bunju echoes the same idea concerning managers:

although what we need now is bottom up approach leaders and managers do not want to give up – I mean people who stay long in leading post such people resist because they do not want to mix with subordinates.

This is a typical formal model which lacks collegiality where formality and structure direct the activities of the organization (Bush 2003: 35–87). In terms of current management and leadership thinking, as revealed in Bush's collegial model (*Ibid.*) these attitudes are dated and clearly act to undermine attempts at developing learning organizations.

This is evidence of what French and Bell (1999: 284) refer to as legitimate power based on the fact that every one believes that the power holder has a legitimate right to exert influence and that the power-receiver has a legitimate obligation to accept the influence. This is inconsistent with the principles upon which the Future Search is based: i.e. equality, openness and trust. In

this sense, 'power' has a potentially positive face, since it is characterized by a socialized need to initiate, influence and lead. This positive face of power seeks to empower self and others and this is the expected role of power in OD.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994) observe that hierarchical power structures tend to make OD interventions less successful, because people at certain levels in the hierarchy are controlled or influenced by their bosses to act in a certain way. People in the organization behave according to the orders from above. Implementing change becomes difficult in that if it is implemented from the top, the bottom people may resist it as an imposition, while if it is started at the bottom, the top feel disrespected and feel they are being guided by subordinates.

In this regard, the culture "of silence, fear, uncertainty, of managers not willing to recognize contribution from subordinates", must be altered if a normative approach to change and development, as indicated in Future Search, is to be workable (French and Bell 1995: 5).

Both the literature and the data appeal to management to ensure a secure participatory environment for achievement of organizational goals. The literature and the data reveal that awareness and sensitization need to be encouraged to enable both management and subordinates to embrace the normative approach of OD. OD wants to see the positive face of power in organizations and therefore the need for a cultural shift in the role and exercise of power.

4.3 Comparison of Future Search with traditional strategic planning

Respondents perceived differences between traditional strategic planning and the Future Search approach.

4.3.1 "It was very interesting...it was new"

I have realized that future search is a very useful method of sharing information and ideas as well as gathering new information which one might have not known before...for me it was a *very interesting* event because it *was*

new – well – probably the terminology like Future Search, visioning, proudest and sorriest

said Mr King. Ms Aina explained

Future Search was *quite new* because I learned that people can be taken back with inquiry of the past experience and come out with thoughts that make up points for discussion and come to conclusion of having a vision to look at and work for.

Ms Rudo said, “It was the first time to attend something called Future Search it is a new thing and every new thing is a challenge.” Reflecting on the difference she said

When I saw the introduction and the programme, the activities and so on, I realized it is something different in the sense that the content of the workshop ends up to be the *product of participants*. In other workshops the content is pre-prepared.

According to Weisbord and Janoff, Future Search works on quite different principles from most meetings in that participants should not just work on systems, but they should also work on themselves (Weisbord and Janoff 2000: 12).

Ms Tangi explained

...that day I learned that Future Search was a tool to evaluate yourself, the organization and the events happening in the country. It was *a new* idea to me. New because it differs from the old way of thinking that subordinates cannot contribute – [because] we have no ideas good enough for the development of the organization.

4.3.2 “People who were not necessarily sitting on management have the chance to participate in management issues”

French and Bell (1999: 87) state that one of the most important foundations of organizational development is a participation / empowerment model. The following data from my respondents reveal the degree of their perception of participation during the Future Search

Conference.

Respondent King acknowledging participation, said; "...participants were able to share ideas and opinions – brainstorming and putting their ideas forward". Mr King was struck by the shared ideas and experience of each participant and this made him see the Future Search approach as special compared to traditional strategic planning where only top managers are the brain behind the planning and running of the organization.

Likewise, Mr Buju confidently draws the distinction:

Basically the experience what I learned is that Future Search is not like the strategic meeting – Future Search is used by *both employees and employers* to analyze the past the present and the future of the organization with the intention to improve and bring change.

Each of these respondents emphasizes the shared participatory nature of Future Search as a major difference when comparing it with traditional strategic planning which is usually in the hands of managers only. In the same context, Ms Tangi shared the same sentiments and made similar observations:

the strategic planning does not include people from *somewhere else*. FS gives opportunity to other people beside the managers to identify challenges *within* and *outside* the organization. These people have chance to come up with a common vision.

Ms Aina, commenting on strategic planning and maintaining the difference said, "Managers sit together to prioritize and plan without really having subordinates around."

Respondents' experience concerning strategic planning is contrary to what they observed in the workshop. According to Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 4), when we explore common ground with others, we release creative energy leading to a project none of us can do alone; people simultaneously discover values, innovative ideas, commitment and support. The participative spirit of Future Search is predicted by Weisbord (1987: 287) who further states that any group important to implementation should be there; top management should always participate with

people from as many functions and levels as is feasible...the whole system should be represented to the greatest extent possible.

Ms Rudo observed,

I learned a lot from different participants because this is a forum where people were able to give their ideas. People who *are not necessarily sitting on the management* had chance to reflect on the function of the NBN. In Future Search there are *many sayings from many people of all levels*: subordinates are given freedom to make suggestions – they decide together with their managers.

Participation here carries weight because participants were not merely involved in things they do before, but they felt special and given a sense of achievement to be asked to draw up a vision and strategies to reach the organizational goal. They appreciate the democratic nature of the tool. This is in line with the Hawthorne studies discussed in the literature review chapter (2.2.1) where production increased because subordinates felt special that the manager cares for them. In Future Search too subordinates and stakeholders are considered.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 87) confirm Ms Rudo's experience that participation in OD programmes is not restricted to elites or the top people; it extends broadly through the organization. Increased participation and empowerment have always been central goals and fundamental values of the field. Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 51) add that the more diverse the attendees the greater the innovation and the potential for shared implementation. Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 88) write that research on group dynamics in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated that most people desire increased involvement and participation; that involvement and participation energize greater performance, produce better solutions to problems and greatly enhance acceptance of decisions.

From my observations and what respondents said I can see theory in practice in line with French and Bell (1999: 88): OD interventions are deliberately designed to increase involvement and participation by organization leaders and members following the rule of thumb –

Involve all those who are part of the problem or part of the solution'; 'have decisions made by those who are closest to the problem' and 'direct leaders to push decision-making lower in the organization, treat those closest to the problem as the relevant expert, and give more power to more people'. They conclude that an OD intervention is a method for increasing participation and the entire field of OD is about empowerment.

4.3.3 'Subordinates felt empowered'

Power exists in virtually all social situations. French and Bell (1999: 282-283) define it as "the capability to effect (or affect) organizational outcomes". Drawing from my study of leadership and management, where there is leadership there are always followers and this involves either power to work with the people or power over the people (Taylor and Bogdan 1998).

Almost all respondents indicated that their group had somebody trusted to lead the group discussion, another person writing and another nominated for presentation. Although they were only given instructions to divide themselves into small working groups, they took further responsibility to organize their groups. These roles were rotated among the group members.

Ms Rudo observed: "It was difficult to start. Maybe it is a matter of not being confident, fearing that we were wrong – *but with the explanation of the facilitator we were able to get the idea* on what is to be done and when *groups were smaller it was an opportunity for every one to share ideas*. In our group there was someone who was like a chair person to make sure that everything goes well and another person who wrote what everybody was saying."

Ms Aina reported – "we have a group leader mentioned by all of us so that every one can get opportunity to say something and nobody should dominate".

This is also in line with Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 184): each Future Search becomes a new temporal community with authority. I as a facilitator decided to be a "dependable authority". That means providing information people do not have, starting and ending on time, reiterating overall goals, managing large group dialogues so that all views are heard and backing out

when the group is working. I only instructed participants to number themselves one to three and divide into three groups according to their numbers. Further organization and transactions that went on in the group were entirely their own initiative as a small community.

Braus and Monroe (1994: 3) state in their study of workshop design: "Learners need support of their peers in their learning, capable of making their own decisions and taking charge of their own development". Mr King committed himself to change the climate in the group by trying as he said: "to encourage people to really feel free – for me there was no such thing as a foolish idea or irrelevant idea – well they start asking clarification – and also giving their suggestions." In a similar vein Weisbord and Janoff (2000) suggest that each person has the ability to help and teach others. Hence we encourage participation and drawing on each other's expertise as well as our own. Mr King voluntarily decided to resolve the problem in his group using his expertise as a teacher and getting everyone to participate in the discussion. According to Fullan every person is a change agent and change is too important to leave to the experts (1993: 39). Mr King, like many others, was ready to take up the challenge of bringing a change in the group.

Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 50) also confirm the idea of group work: "we use self-managing small groups, where everybody shares information, interprets it, and decides action steps". They believe that these groups reduce hierarchy, passivity, conflict and dependency on experts or a facilitator. They proceed to clarify that when people succeed they experience discovery learning and co-operation.

Ms Tangi, in appreciation of her group and as an appeal for subordinates to be recognized, had this to say:

Our group was well organized, with one person tasked to facilitate a discussion and another one to write. Subordinates felt important and felt empowered...subordinates must be recognized; individuals must be recognized – this is also a matter of making everybody ready to develop some ideas because you can get something from the people.

One can still say everyone is an agent for change; subordinates are also agents for change that need to be sensitized, to be empowered and to be mobilized.

Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 177) mention the need to validate every person's reality:

Sometimes people have a hard time putting their issues across into words. Usually the person who fables without getting to the point has something particularly important that would help the group. The main wish is to validate every person's reality...we want to get through the embarrassment, shyness or negative thoughts like "my contribution is not that important."

As one of the respondents put it "we are not sure whether the issues really make a point, but on presentation we realized what we have left behind is similar to what other people have said."

Mr Buju's observation was a compliment to a group leader: "the leader of the group, maybe because of his capacity as a teacher, was able to stimulate the *silent ones* and later they *came up* with even questions and suggestions".

To have *silent people* in a group is not unusual. Smith (2003: 18) writes that some organization members perceive themselves as victims of their circumstances – they believe they have no power to change their circumstances. He attributes this to organizational norms, where subordinates in the hierarchy were expected to obey directives from above, which has fostered a culture of dependency, passivity and fear.

In contrast, Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 177), recognizing the *silence in their workshop*, write: "if the group assents and nobody volunteers anything, we move on. We do not ask people why they are silent or what it is they are not saying to each other – our job is to work with what is already there".

Data reveals that a certain degree of "empowerment" was arrived at. During group discussions the group leaders were able to sensitize and empower the silent ones throughout as commented by Mr Buju.

French and Bell (1999: 88) look at the concept “to empower” as meaning to give someone power, which is done by giving individuals the authority to make decisions to contribute their ideas, to exert influence and to be responsible. In the case of group discussions, group leaders were motivating the silent ones to develop awareness about their right to participate in discussion and their right to be heard. French and Bell maintain: “participation is an especially effective form of empowerment. Participation enhances empowerment and empowerment in turn enhances performance and individual well being”. Mr Buju concluded,

...as I was walking around the groups I observe that participants at first were not free to participate, but with good explanation of activities and motivation from the facilitators some of the people start participating.

His comment confirmed and summarized most data from the other four respondents.

This study has shown that empowerment at group level was also attained (not only at individual level as discussed previously) through group cohesiveness. As respondent Mr Bunju indicated; “We were all nurses, although we are not of the same nursing educational level we discussed matters that were of great importance to the NBN and decided that the board must put emphasis on training and supervision instead of emphasizing discipline only.” The data indicates participants taking ownership of the process.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 59) write that group cohesiveness is another important variable in staffs’ readiness for OD. When people identify themselves with other members of the group, they come to have feelings of solidarity and loyalty to one another...these feelings of cohesiveness can be a powerful force that keeps individuals from changing their behavior and can be an influential source of support for change.

4.3.4 Visioning

Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 51) voice the sentiment that we need people with ideas, people with authority to act, people with special skills and creativity, all with a stake in the future

task: “key people who do not really work together”. This theory of drawing people from different sectors, but having the focus on the issue at hand for *a shared vision* is what makes the Future Search special.

Mr Buju, keen to explain his experience with participation said:

during the conference I recognized that in Future Search people in the organization have a chance to come up with a common *vision* and a *common plan of action which is not imposed on them*. This helps the organization to function better and improve on the pitfalls of the past.

He continued to visualize himself implementing Future Search:

I can involve lecturers, students and community, because involving all these people will give much light on the issues we need to improve...If lecturers take decision alone we will not reach much success – there will be no commitment from the students’ side.

Senge (1990: 206) provides an illuminating discussion of the tension between personal and collective ideals. Senge is of the opinion that shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning. He says further that today’s ‘vision’ is a familiar concept in corporate leadership, but when one looks carefully, one finds that most ‘visions’ are one person’s (or one group’s) vision imposed on an organization. Such visions, at best, command compliance and not commitment. A shared vision is important and many people are truly committed to it, because it reflects their own personal vision (*Ibid.*).

Ms Aina also observed the concept “vision” in this way:

...with Future Search everybody is there; people in the group come to conclusions, make up goals on issues that they see of primary concern and have *a vision together* to look at and to work for declared aims.

Mr King like Mr Buju emphasized “...a common vision and a common plan of action which is

not imposed on them.”

Participants saw the possibility of a common vision owned by managers, subordinates and stake holders.

Future Search as a forum is therefore an opportunity for organizational members, in this case the NBN, to build a shared vision. It encourages members to develop their own vision, because if people do not have their own personal vision, all they can do is ‘sign up’ for some one else’s vision and the result is compliance – never commitment (Senge 1990: 211). On the other hand, people with a strong sense of personal direction can join together to create a powerful synergy toward what “I/we” truly want (*Ibid.*).

Ms Tangi, again appreciating participation, said,

In Future Search people come together and they look at the proud and sorriest, draw up the *vision* and decide on what is to be done. They share to make decision with managers.

The sense of being rewarded and appreciated resonates with the literature on organization development and the Future Search.

4.3.5 Communication

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 121) state that if an organization is to remain responsive to demands an open flow of information to and from various groups must be maintained. Further, “an organization without ample and effective communication will carry out only haltingly and feebly the purpose its members hope for” (*Ibid.*). Respondents have experienced that a different kind of communication needs to be employed with OD in general and Future Search in particular. Mr King recalled:

my group was performing better because we had members who were very free to express themselves, willing to expose what they were thinking about the NBN...*Subordinates* (like drivers and cleaners) are not included in strategic

planning, but *they will be informed* about the change. It is different from Future Search where people have *chance to share* ideas.

The above data reveal that the only forms of communication that participants have known are unilateral communication forms, initiated by the speaker and terminated at a listener. The sender influences while the receiver complies (p. 212). Even when it was explained that participants must feel free to bring any idea, it was still hard for them to practice this openness all of a sudden. Fear and insecurity prevailed. Ms Tangi noted that

top managers draw up activities for the year, but if you compare with Future Search *information is shared* to make decisions with managers. With Future Search it was good – the only factor that hindered *proper communication* was time.

Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 160) also realize that not all groups find working together smooth or easy. Those who come to treat the task as bigger than their personal needs will participate constructively despite some tough going. Various reactions from the respondents on group communication during the conference follow:

Mr King observed,

Some members were not able to express themselves, either because they were shy or probably because we are using English as a medium of instruction, I don't really know...yet some other members were not free to express themselves. Such members' contribution will be missed while some behave like they want to force others to agree with what they are saying.

Weisbord (1987), cited in Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 77) noted that each person learns at a different rate, hence some may be confused or 'lost' in the early stage. It is acceptable not to 'get it' the first time one hears it. One must try to be patient with oneself and others. It is ultimately *joint* understanding that is required.

According to Mr Buju: '...middle level managers plan and then send to the higher authority to have the final say. Mostly *employees are not aware* of what is going on.' These statements

reflect what McGregor (in Schmuck and Runkel 1994: 121) calls “coercive kind of communication” because there is no provision for mutual influence and exchange.

All these data reveal that participants were rather pleased with the spirit of transactional communication seen in the Future Search approach. Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 121-122) described transactional communication as a reciprocal process in which each participant initiates messages and attempts to understand the others. Information travels from both directions, rather than in one direction only; each message has some impact on the next message and the role of source or receiver shifts rapidly back and forth as communication takes place.

I witnessed keenness among participants trying to listen to each other, especially during the presentation. As one participant put it,

Considering the suggestion made by Ms A and the one from Mr X, I think we really have to consider it in order to have some standing order on what to do or say with regards to people with disability wanting to be enrolled in the nursing.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 121-122) also made it clear that participants in transactional communication engage in active listening. The listener attempts to grasp both the facts and the feelings of a message, attempts to increase his/her understanding by discerning the speaker’s point of view and testing this understanding by advising the speaker of personal reactions to the message thereby helping the speaker know whether the meaning was or was not communicated.

Ms Aina, feeling dissatisfied with the current state of affairs said: “people must be willing to hear from each other without fear...this may be because some people were forcing others to accept their views.” I could sense tension in interpersonal communication.

The mutual feedback and spirit of helpfulness between participants is of crucial importance. Weisbord and Janoff (2000: 167) also advise of the necessity of keeping the choices open:



- Allow the whole group to say what ever is on their mind and talk about their common ground. If disagreements occur we hear various sides.
- Reassure people that we are here to help people work on issues that they feel ready, willing and able to tackle now.
- A group that persists in working on differences must be advised to put the issue on a 'not agreed' list after failing to reach resolution after ten minutes.

4.4 Desire to implement future search approach

Readiness as discussed in the literature review (chapter 2) refers to willingness to participate in an organizational process, a belief that one can make a difference and having the confidence and ability to affect a process of change. All five respondents exhibited a certain degree of willingness to accept Future Search as an appropriate tool for organizational change and improvement in their organizations. Ms Rudo revealed: "what I have gained has strengthened the already acquired skills of managing / leading that I had before. Nevertheless I would like to be exposed to more." This is not a total management change towards Future Search, but an organizational process may begin through the respondents accepting and internalizing the idea, applying it in their respective areas.

Mr King said,

I have gained something from the Future Search which I may probably include in my plans when it comes to bringing a change in my class and in departmental meetings which are the areas of my jurisdiction. Nevertheless, I would like to be exposed more to the Future Search.

This statement is in line with Fullan and Hargreaves (1991: 17) view, cited in Fullan (1993), that collaboration is essential for personal learning and that there is a ceiling effect to how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 88) further clarify that OD interventions are likely to succeed in organizations in which members are willing to establish commitment to new directions; that

is, to alter current goals or practices to suit their organization's capacity and circumstances. The best a consultant can do is to create opportunities for people to do what they are ready to do. Fullan (2001: 8) explains commitment as a motivation to put one's effort into the task of change. He makes a crucial distinction between external and internal commitment. External commitment is triggered by management policies and practices that enable employees to accomplish their task. Internal commitment is derived from energies internal to human beings that are activated because getting a job done is to benefit the organization, reduce stress levels and generally make people feel better about themselves and their world (Fullan 2001: 88).

Similarly Ms Aina stated:

I got a clue on what Future Search is and on my side I have told you already that I can try with the community I am serving concerning HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme...It was my pleasure learning the new concept. When you come back you will teach us more.

What impressed me was that although each respondent was sincere in revealing that the knowledge he/she got was not sufficient, all of them had the confidence and commitment to try Future Search in their small areas. This is an example of what Fullan (2001: 78) argues – information becomes knowledge only when it takes on a 'social life'. Brown and Duguid (2000 cited in Fullan 2001: 12) say, "Knowledge is something we digest rather than hold. It entails the knower's understanding and some degree of commitment". In this case respondents have committed to exercise their knowledge of FSC in their areas. Fullan warns leaders not to place changed individuals into an unchanged environment, but rather, change leaders should work on changing the context, helping create new settings conducive to the learning and sharing of the learning (*Ibid.*:79). The respondents are bent on creating a new context by sharing their understanding of Future Search with others. Ms Tangi, like all other participants, wants others to learn the new way of doing things – "if we can get the old /senior people to sit with us in Future Search so that they can learn about new things, new ways of doing things...".

This signifies that participants are seeing the learning ability of the organization. As Gultig *et al.* (2002) state,

[The] learning organization is possible because deep down we are all learners. No one has to teach infants anything. They are intrinsically inquisitive, masterful learners who learn to walk, speak and pretty much run their 'house holds' all on their own.

They add that a learning organization is possible because not only is it our nature to learn, but we love to learn and this is not only adaptive or survival learning but is also generative learning, learning that enhances our capacity to create (*Ibid.*: 33). Another respondent, Ms Rudo, had this to say:

I have a picture now of what Future Search is. I need to hear more about it to be able to teach others about this tool. It is very much appropriate to us lecturers, our students and at a certain level communities if we are to enhance teaching and learning.

This is also congruent with Weisbord's (1987: 236) contention that "people benefit most from talking with one another and deciding what to do. We change as we have face-to-face contact with others and get new information".

The above responses are consistent with the first two levels of readiness discussed by Schmuck and Runkel (1994: 57-59), which I prefer to call willingness, *individual level* and *group level*. The individual level is based on 'individual motive satisfaction'; people need affiliation, experiencing feelings of friendliness, warmth and inclusion. Ms Tangi said that "because we all *want to learn* every one was kind – people were kind; we helped one another." People need a culture of openness, collaboration, a sense of belonging and achievement, ownership and communication.

The respondents wanted to transfer this spirit of friendliness they enjoyed in the workshop to their areas of work. No change can occur without learning taking place and learning cannot take place without resulting in a change. From my data, participants in Future Search are ready

to put into practice the concepts they have learned. They have illustrated various ways how each will attempt to apply Future Search. It is human nature to desire to learn. Participants admire and want to try Future Search because they see it as a platform for learning from each other. In this regard, almost all respondents have indicated a sense of personal direction regarding how to take Future Search beyond the workshop of 29 July 2004.

According to Lindeman (in Smith 2003) adult learning requires an orientation to learning that is life-centred and, therefore, the appropriate units for organizing adult learning are life situations, not subjects. Mr King, in remembering the activities of the workshop, said,

We practically map the past, the present, and the future and so on... I was not familiar with this – that's why it is a very interesting event. I've learned that in Future Search people can do things better because of contribution of people of different levels.

Expressing a similar insight, Ms Aina said, "It was my pleasure talking to you and I have learned about this new concept." In addition, Mr Buju said, "It was a learning opportunity. We had the opportunity to explore some controversial issues...Although we could not come up with the solutions all we discussed was important to the development of the Board and the well being of the nursing services."

Most respondents found Future Search enjoyable and confessed to having learned something and a willingness to make a change by giving Future Search a try, without any-one imposing this change on them. In this regard, Eric Trist (quoted in Weisbord and Janoff 2000) says, "No-one can force change on any one else. It has to be experienced." Participants and respondents experienced a change in the workshop. Weisbord and Janoff write, "In particular we have to learn to let go of the need to fix other people" (p.12). Individuals with innovative minds were keen to try Future Search in their areas. As Mr Buju remarked, "If we do not include subordinates in planning, there will be no commitment from their side."

This study has shown that willingness at group level was also attained through group cohesiveness. Data indicates participants taking ownership of the process and wishing they

had the final mandate to implement a change in the NBN. Schmuck and Runkel (1994) say that when people identify themselves with other members of the group, they come to have feelings of solidarity and loyalty to one another. These feelings of cohesiveness can be an influential source of support of change (p. 59). The fact that all participants belonged to the same profession and had similar interests and stakes in the NBN made an impact on the outcome of the understanding of the concept. All respondents demonstrated internal commitment as they were willing to try this improvement strategy without waiting for a policy implementing Future Search. As Mr King said, “what we are doing is not against any law or contrary to any policy”.

In a radical stand towards conflict Weisbord and Janoff (2000) suggest people do not try to change each other's minds or work to reconcile opposites. They should only admit their existence. We encourage people to express their differences so that everybody knows where they stand. We neither avoid nor confront the extremes. Rather we put our energy into staking out the widest common ground that all can stand on (p. 59).

Mr Buju feeling enlightened at last admitted, “I did not understand the importance of looking back in our personal life and identify events which I thought are not related to the organization, but more related to individual themselves – the point was only clear after the presentations.”

Similarly, Weisbord and Janoff (2000) write, “We assume that each person learns best from his or her experience. Hence we urge testing ideas against your own situation and support a healthy skepticism towards the ‘one best way’” (p. 77). Participants were given an opportunity to link events that happen in their personal lives, in the organization and the country. Later they understood how each change and development in one area influences another.

4.5 Time factor and Future Search

A number of participants emphasized the time factor. For example, Ms Tangi said, “There was a lot to be covered in a short period of time. Participants could hardly finish questions put on

them to work and present.”

Weisbord (1987) recommends that the conference take about two and a half to three days. Having the Future Search in two days or less was too tiring and people did not have time to reflect on what they were agreeing to. “Moreover we make more solid commitments when we are fresh and recharged” (Weisbord and Janoff 2000: 101). Due to circumstances beyond my control I only had a day to introduce the Future Search Conference. I discuss this under ‘Limitations’ in Chapter 5. Time was a hindering factor complained about by almost the whole group in relation to the tasks. The voices of the remaining two respondents are as follows:

Ms Rudo said, “In Future Search facilitators need enough time to explain the activities in order to prepare the people through the process who need to understand it and make it their own and not something strange brought on them. Time was too short, but people were committed”. Similarly, Mr King noted that “Future Search as a process needs sufficient time on both the side of the participants and the facilitator.”

Weisbord and Janoff (2000), concerned about boundaries, time and task, write, “A key part of our work is maintaining time and task boundaries. Boundaries make it easier for people to convert frustration into creative energy. Without boundaries complex tasks could not be accomplished” (p. 160).

A few members arrived late for the conference. I had to go to them one by one to brief them on what was being done. It is a rule of thumb that every participant must be there from the beginning. Weisbord and Janoff (2000) emphasize the necessity of continuous attendance of all activities. People need to attend each activity to grasp the perceptual shift that changes their capacity for action. They cannot act if they are not there. Innovative planning on common ground requires a fully shared experience. People find it harder to join in a common future if they happen to come in late and missed important steps (p. 54). At this workshop only two out of eighteen participants were present for the full time.

4.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present and discuss the findings in relation to participants' experience of the Future Search Conference. The responses received from respondents overwhelmingly supported the notion that the Future Search Conference is an appropriate tool for planned change, development and sustainability of any organization. This was presented and discussed in various themes and sub themes which will be summarized in the next chapter, together with suggested recommendations for practice as well as future research and the limitations of this study.

Weisbord and Janoff's state that "Unless we invent ways where paradigm shifts can be experienced by a large number of people, then change will remain a myth" (p. 272). Through conducting a Future Search with the NBN and the anticipated interventions of various respondents and participants as they carry the Future Search beyond the conference room, we are creating an ideal situation for a paradigm shift from *power over* the people to *power with* the people, or participatory and democratic management for change and development.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Due to on going efforts of wise leaders and dedicated nurse and midwife practitioners, nursing regulation and the principles of professional practice are well established in Namibia. Nursing has the support systems to develop in accordance with the needs of the country and has developed a body of knowledge of professional practice and regulation systems that will serve it well as it moves towards the twenty first century – Agnes van Dyk 1996: 133

5.1 Introduction

I have focused my research on participants' perceptions and experiences of Future Search. The workshop was conducted with eighteen participants, but to gain in-depth information and subjective data, I selected five people from the participants for in-depth individual open-ended interviews. These findings are presented and discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the main findings discussed in the previous chapter. Next are my recommendations for Future Search in schools, government institutions, local government and communities. Last, but not least, I discuss the limitations of the research.

5.2 Summary of main findings

The evidence from the data indicated that FSC is something new in Namibia and to the NBN in particular. One of the main challenges is current leadership and management. The respondents perceived leadership and management as a key to the success or failure of Future Search conference. This was revealed in various but similar comments that "if leadership and management are open to innovation and not clinging to old ways of doing things then future search will be accepted."

Respondents acknowledged the differences between FSC and the traditional strategic planning meeting which was identified in four aspects: one of the distinguishing features was *power distance* seen between leader and managers in the organization contrary to the democratic, participative management approach of Future Search strategy. Respondents appealed for this inequality to be minimized. Data was further dominated by the differences between the Future Search and traditional strategic planning. Participants cherished the leadership role various individual were able to carry out during the workshop. They admired the feeling of commitment and the dedication to completing the tasks, and developed a sense of oneness, self worth and achievement that they could contribute to mapping the future of the NBN. This culminated in the suggestion that “the content of the workshop must be given in full report to the President of the NBN by the workshop facilitator”.

Secondly, respondents were amazed by the *humanistic* approach of Future Search in recognizing contributions from stakeholders. The spirit of Future Search and OD theory is that organizations should be open systems which are open to their respective environments. The stakeholders within those environments should be invited to participate in the strategic process.

Thirdly, respondents were interested by the notion of a shared vision. According to the literature most organizations’ visions are individual or determined by a group of experts, unlike the shared vision of Future Search. People are more likely to commit to plans and visions that they have helped to create. Fourthly, the transactional communication demonstrated in the Future Search workshop encouraged participants to state their thoughts and feelings and to take the lead. This was markedly different from traditional strategic planning meetings, where only managers decided the future of the organization with the outcomes fed to the subordinates for implementation.

Numerous responses reflected the respondents’ willingness to try Future Search as a tool for organizational self assessment in order to bring about change, development and sustainability. Respondents found it to be an ideal tool for promoting learning in the organization. W. Hitt

(2003) says, "No change can take place without learning and learning is really not visible if it does not produce a change in someone's life".

While the literature recommended that the duration of Future Search be three to four days, participants regretted that the workshop lasted only one day. Participants felt they could contribute more if sufficient time was allocated to each task.

5.3 Recommendations for practice

My findings indicated high willingness among participants to embrace FSC as a tool for organizational self-renewal and adaptation. Therefore, they called for more guidance on how to plan and conduct a FSC. Therefore I recommend that:

Funds be made available for organizations and intuitions to be exposed to FSC.

FSC be introduced to higher management first, in order to win their support in a no-threatening environment.

Part of this study be modified and published in the NBN journal and other government gazettes to raise awareness of the FSC in order to gain support for Future Search workshops.

5.4 Limitations of this study

This study was a very small sample compared to the vastness of the NBN across the four regions of Namibia. I do regret not having been able to include members from all the regions. I had no control over this, due to lack of funds. Furthermore the workshop should take three to four days. This was a small study but it must pave the way for larger studies in organizational development strategies in Namibia.

Finally, there is limited literature on Future Search. Extant sources carry no new information but repeat the already known steps and process of the Future Search.

5.5 Conclusion

The research explored the perceptions and experiences of participants in a Future Search Conference as an organizational change and development strategy. The participants have demonstrated a high level of willingness to implement the concept in their various settings. However, they appealed for more exposure to the concept to gain skills to facilitate this kind of workshop. They believe present management and leadership are the key to the success or failure of Future Search being adopted in Namibia.

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APPENDIX 1

Lillian Britten House
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
6140
South Africa

22 February 2004

Professor van Dyk
University of Namibia
Windhoek

Re: Request for permission to do a research study on the Nursing Board of Namibia

Dear Madam

My name is Nelao Layne from Oshakati Regional Health Training Centre, Oshakati Hospital. I am presently doing a Masters Degree in Education Leadership and Management at Rhodes University in South Africa. My student number is 064L1888.

I am planning my research proposal, which that focuses on the application of the Future Search Conference on the Nursing Board of Namibia as a strategy for organizational development. This requires me to conduct an introductory workshop to introduce my participants to the Future Search process prior to conducting individual interviews to investigate participants' experience and perception of Future Search.

Future Search is an exercise/strategy for organizational self assessment and development, involving learning awareness, understanding and mutual support. People learn to think of the future as a condition that can be created intentionally out of values, vision and what is technically and socially feasible. The information will only be used for the study purpose and any further use of it will depend on the decision of the participants.

Participants will be drawn from the following:

- NBN officers – three people
- The head of NHTC and a representative from HRD division and Continuous Education – three people
- Representative of the nursing board from each region – 4 people in total
- Two teaching staff members from each of the five training centres – ten people

The duration of the workshop will be two days. I will submit the proposal by the end of April and the conference is likely to be around the third week of July 2004.

I would be pleased if my request is successful because I am confident that the exercise will be helpful to the training aspect of the programme of EN/M in particular, and the Ministry as a whole. The study will assist both NBN officers and the training staff in terms of policy implementation, teaching and training.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Nelao Layne

Email: g04l1888@campus.ru.ac.za

Cell: 072 494 0472

APPENDIX 2A

Lillian Britten House
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
6140
South Africa

8 June 2004

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
Windhoek
Namibia

Re: Permission to conduct interviews with four staff members of the National Health Training Network

Dear Sir

My name is Ms Nelao Layen and I worked as a nurse tutor at the Oshakati Regional Health Training Centre until January 2004. I am currently doing a full-time Masters degree in Education Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, which is being funded by the Ministry of Health.

In partial fulfillment of the degree, I need to submit a research thesis focusing on Organization Development. I was granted permission by the president of the Nursing Board of Namibia to conduct my research with the Nursing Board, which I believe will be beneficial to the organization and the training of enrolled nurses/midwives. Apart from the Nursing Board officers, my research will also require the input of the Training Staff of the National Health Network, which is the reason that I am forwarding this request to your office.

Enclosed please see a letter from my supervisor, Dr Clive Smith, as well as my research proposal.

My contact details are as follows:

Email: g0411888@campus.ru.ac.za

Fax no: 0027 46 622 8028

Tel: 0027 724 940 472

Yours faithfully,

Nelao Layne

cc: Ms E Sam Head of the NHTC

APPENDIX 2B

Oshakati Regional Health Training Centre
Intermediate Hospital
Oshakati

12 July 2004

Enquiries: Ms N. Layne
Telephone: 065-223 3126
Cell: 0812 949 9336

Re: Invitation to attend a one-day Future Search Conference workshop

Dear Sir/Madam

As a stakeholder in the NBN, you are cordially invited to participate as a member of the Future Search Conference, discovering common ground on 29 July 2004 at Oshakati RHTC. You have been selected because of specific strengths you can bring to the Future Search process.

Future Search Conference is an organizational development strategy for organizational self assessment. Ms Layne is introducing this strategy in fulfillment of her Masters degree in Education Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, South Africa.

Attached see the programme.

Your contribution will be appreciated.

.....
N. Layne (MEd student)

APPENDIX 3

APPLICATION OF FUTURE SEARCH CONFERENCE WITH THE NBN 29 JULY 2004

STEP ONE

Welcome – Participants' expectations

Introduction – Objectives of the workshop

STEP TWO

TITLE: MAPPING THE PAST

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

TIME: About two hours or more depending on the organization community and participants, and time periods used for the activity.

METHODS USED: Individual work (written or oral) followed by group discussions and plenary.

PREPARATION REQUIRED: Nine flipcharts in total for the following three areas:

Myself:	1992	1997	2003
The organization:	1992	1997	2003
The country:	1992	1997	2003

The time frames can be adjusted to fit whatever three time periods are most suitable for the organization.

For a written activity: flipcharts, paper, pens and prestik

For an oral activity: a scribe to record inputs

STEPS:

The facilitator introduces the activity by explaining that in order to be able to plan properly and to work together well in the future, we need to come to a clear understanding of the past – our own histories as well as the history of the organization within the context of the history of our country.

The facilitator asks each person to **think alone** for about five minutes, about:

What were they doing in each of the three times?

What was happening in the organization during these times?

What was happening in the country during these times?

Each person then takes a pen and writes down their contributions on the appropriate piece of paper on the walls – people may start anywhere they wish and write whatever they wish as long as they keep within the time frames and the subject lines.

If this is done as an oral activity, then the facilitator asks each person to think silently for two minutes about what they (Myself) were doing and thinking in the first time frame and this is written down by the scribe. The same process is followed for each time frame until 'Myself' is completed. The process is then followed for 'The organization' and then for 'The country'.

When this is finished and everyone has had a turn to participate, the facilitator asks for comments on the process of writing this history, making sure that everyone who wishes to, gets a turn to speak. The facilitator then asks the participants to get into groups to look at themes and patterns emerging from the activities:

Myself

The organization

The country

These groups then report back to the plenary on their findings: each pair of groups takes turns to report back one point at a time, so that all groups have an equal turn to report. A scribe writes down the comments from the group.

The whole group then notes the directions or trends that have emerged, especially with regards to change and values. All findings are noted for the next activities.

WATCH POINTS:

1. Ensure that participants are quite sure of the purpose of the workshop and that all questions about participation, mandate, purpose and roles etc. are answered.
2. Make sure that the following norms are adopted by the group (Weisbord 1989:288)
 - This is not a problem solving conference. It is an exercise in learning, awareness, understanding and mutual support.
 - Every idea and comment is **valid**. Every contribution is written down as close to the speaker's word as possible.
 - It is a **task focused meeting**. Every task has an outcome and all outcomes are recorded and discussed.
 - We **stick to time**. Groups are responsible for finishing the tasks on time.
 - The **facilitators** manage the time and structure the tasks.
3. This activity gets everyone participating and quickly experiencing success (Weisbord 1989:289). No one can fail, and a common sense of history can be built up as well as sensitivity to the viewpoints of others.

The facilitating team needs to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of individual participants, e.g. ability to write, to write quickly, to write in a second language etc. It may be useful to ensure that everyone feels free enough to write or speak in the language of their own choice (a group norm that needs to be discussed).
4. The activity can also be done in pairs, e.g. one scribe for every two people which, can be helpful when there are people who are illiterate within the organization community.
5. There may be a need to counsel people as this can be quite an emotional activity.
6. The group may propose that the outcomes of the activities be written up as a history of the organization and community. If this is proposed, a task team could be set up to do this for the group, and further research could be done on interesting points as necessary.

STEP THREE

TITLE: MAPPING THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION FROM OUTSIDE

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

TIME: About one hour depending on the participants.

METHOD USED: Work in small groups.

PREPARATION REQUIRED: Paper for groups to write on (one page per idea therefore each group needs several pages of paper) and a scribe to record all outcomes.

STEPS:

The facilitator links the activity to the previous one – developing further the ‘map’ of the organization by looking at what is happening in the present **outside the organization** which affects the organization:

Within the country

Within the community

Within the Ministry of Health and Social Services

Economically, socially, politically etc.

Each group makes a list of all the factors outside the organization which are affecting the organization. The groups then prioritize these factors and writes the five main ones onto pieces of paper (one factor per page) and sticks them up onto the wall, sorting them into categories as they do so.

A volunteer then reads all the points out loud to the whole group and the groups are asked to add or provide clarity on any points. The whole group then analyses these points, looks for important trends and themes which affect the organization and cannot be ignored.

These points are taken forward for the next steps.

STEP FOUR

TITLE: MAPPING THE PRESENT FROM THE INSIDE

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

TIME: About two hours depending on the group.

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

STEPS:

In the group, people are asked to first think alone for about five minutes about things they feel proud about in the organization, and things they feel sorry about – events, things going on right now in the organization.

Each person in their small group then takes a turn to give their 'Prouds' to the group (one at a time) until all the 'prouds' in the group are written down. The participants in the small groups make sure that all 'Prouds' are written down, are clear and understood by all in the group.

Each person then takes a turn to give one 'sorry' at a time to the group until all are written down by the group's scribe. The participants in the small group then ensure that all 'Sorries' are clear and understood by all in the group. All of these are then written up clearly on small pieces of paper and stuck onto the wall for everyone in the plenary to read. Questions are asked for clarity and information.

The participants in the plenary group then prioritize the "Proudest prouds" and "Sorriest sorries" by voting for the "Proudest prouds" and "Sorriest sorries". The votes are then added up and the priority lists are made for display. The group then discusses the "Prouds" and "Sorries". The facilitator asks everyone to keep this information for the next activities.

WATCH POINTS:

These activities bring people's values to the surface, and thus can be quite lively.

The list of 'Prouds' leads to a shared appreciation of present strengths, needs and hopes (Weisbord 1987:291).

The list of 'Sorries' results in a mutual owning up to mistakes and shortcomings, and can help to build commitment to do something about them. The facilitators need to be careful that no individual is blamed and that the session does not result in conflict or blame.

The activity can lead to a productive dialogue across all levels of people, and the sharing of a great deal of information across the group. The facilitators need to ensure that group norms are adhered to all the time and that everyone listens respectfully and talks respectfully to each other.

The activity, together with the Norms and Values activity (of Step One) can lead to the development of a co-owned Code of Conduct for all role players in the organization community and the facilitators need to elect a task team to carry this further during plans of for Step Six if necessary. It is also very important in defining the future for the participants and for the organization.

STEP FIVE

TITLE: ENVISIONING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

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

TIME: About two hours depending on the group.

METHODS USED: Small groups and plenary presentations.

PREPARATION REQUIRED: Flipcharts, pens, crayons etc.

STEPS:

The facilitator states the aim of this activity and tasks everyone to work together to develop a practical attainable (do-able) vision for the way the organization should be and what it should do in the near future.

New small groups are formed by using a 'warm up' activity, e.g. a singing game, or by asking people to form their own small groups as they wish, or their steering committee can make small groups.

The participants in the groups are asked first to imagine the most desirable, attainable future for the organization five years from now (do this alone in silence for five minutes).

The groups are then asked to work together to produce vision of what they would like in the organization, using whatever creative method they wish to portray this (dance and song, poetry, drawing etc.). All of these visions are presented to the plenary group.

The plenary then synthesizes the main points of the visions and agrees upon a vision for the organization which can be achieved. This is then written down / discussed so that the whole group is clear about the vision.

WATCH POINT:

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

STEP SIX

TITLE: MAKING PLANS OF ACTION

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

For themselves

For their own role in the organization (as a sector, e.g. students, parents, teachers, Management Team, Governing Body, etc.)

For the organization itself as a whole

TIME: About two hours depending on the group.

METHODS USED: Small groups leading to plenary discussions.

PREPARATION REQUIRED: Paper and pens.

STEPS:

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

The participants get into groups according to their role e.g. students, teachers, governing body, organization management team, etc. – not more than six in a group.

Each participant first makes a plan of action for him or herself (this is done silently) in order to achieve the vision of the organization. This is like a personal mission statement – participants are invited to read their personal mission statements to the plenary only if they volunteer.

The groups then make a plan of action for their own sector, in small steps which can be easily achieved, with the steps described, the person(s) responsible, the date and the proposed

outcomes. The groups then state these plans in the plenary and discussion is held on each one as required. All must agree that the plans lead towards the enabling of the vision.

The groups then discuss and propose any other plans of action for the organization (about issues which need to be tackled by the Organization Governing Body, the Organization Management Team or other bodies). These are then stated in the plenary, and discussed as necessary in the light of the vision.

The facilitators then call for task teams to be set up to carry these proposals forward (one task team per set of proposals is required) and the following are agreed upon:

- Task
- Task team convener
- Secretary
- Members of the team
- Days for progress report back
- Date for completion of task

A date is set for the next plenary report back session of the group as a whole.

The facilitator then calls for reflections on the conference from everyone, after discussion in small groups. Every group is given time to report back via their speaker.

Thanks are given to all participants and providers of all services for the conference.

The facilitator team then convenes to discuss progress and to ensure that the process is carried forward through a good system of communication, planning and preparation.

WATCH POINTS:

Make sure that people plan the task by first breaking it down into smaller steps, which are more easily achieved than a whole task.

Ensure that all steps have a convener, a completion date, a reporter and someone to report to.

Ensure that dates are clear and understood by all and that a back-up support system is in place for accountability purposes, so that teams do not lose heart and give up.

Ensure that regular reporting is done to the main bodies of the organization.

Many plans of action fall down in the implementation stage. It is very important to develop a follow-up process to make sure that all the hours put into planning are not wasted and the credibility of the process, and therefore the participants and governing / management team, is not damaged.

(Extracted from Irvine (1999:104-116 citing Weisbord 1987) and adapted to use for the Application of the Future Search Conference with the NBN on 29 July 2004)

APPENDIX 4

GETTING STARTED – THE FUTURE SEARCH PROCESS

*To bring health to a system, connect it to
more of itself. The primary change strategy
becomes quite straight forward...The system
need to learn more about itself from itself".(sic)*

-Margaret Wheateley

Activity 1, which is called the **entry step** according to Weisbord and Janoff (2000), took about half an hour. The co-facilitator made opening remarks, during which she stated, "I would like to welcome everybody to this workshop where our colleague Ms Layne is going to be the main facilitator. Without wasting time, let me give a chance to each and every one to introduce themselves and then Ms Layne will give us the background information of why we are here today".

Participants introduced themselves and then I introduced myself to the group as follows: "Although many of you know me already, for the sake of formality and especially for the few people whom I have never met, let me introduce myself. I would like to thank each and every body who has made an effort to respond to my invitation. I have received some apologies in written form and telephonically from some of our colleagues who could not make it due to other commitments".

I explained the purpose of the workshop as a task-oriented process, which is why each and every body must try to attend all the sessions and participate fully in order to grasp the essence of what Future Search is. I obtained consent for the workshop to be photographed. I also made it clear that after the workshop, I would request a few people (whom I will approach individually) to be interviewed about their experience and perception of the workshop.

We set group norms, which included: full attendance and participation, no cell phones during the conference, respect of each other's view, punctuality, and whatever is said will be written on the flipcharts.

I asked participants to state their expectations since the programme was already distributed to them. Many of them wanted the **definition of Future Search Conference**, to share ideas with others, to take something useful to share, to learn from what is going to happen, to understand Future Search.

I explained the objectives of the workshop. The co-facilitator wrote on the flipchart as follows:

By the end of the Future Search Conference workshop participants should be able to:

- Explain the concept Future Search
- List the steps in the Future Search process
- Participate actively throughout the workshop
- Reflect their perception and experience of the Future Search process (in preparation for individual interviews).

A few ground rules were explained to the participants according to those stated in Weisbord and Janoff, Weisbord, French and Bell:

- Future Search is not a problem solving conference; rather it is an exercise in learning, awareness, understanding and mutual support.
- All ideas and comments are valid
- Every contribution is written on the flipcharts in words as close to the speaker's as possible
- Listen to each other – it is a task-focused meeting.
- Every task has output and all output is recorded and discussed
- We stick to time – groups are responsible for finishing the tasks on schedule
- Seek common ground and actions, not problems and conflicts.
- There are no lecturers, everybody is equal

I gave participants a chance to ask questions. The only question was **what is Future Search?** I briefly answered it as follows because I had prepared handouts to give them at the end of the workshop:

Future Search is a strategy within the umbrella of what is called organization development (OD). Organization development is an approach to planned change theory, practice and process for organizational self-assessment and empowerment. It seeks improvement and measures progress in addressing challenges in the organizations. Future Search meetings enable all stakeholders to discover shared intentions and take responsibility for their plans.

For the sake of progress and in the absence of questions, I suggested that we start our workshop, which would reveal the nature of the Future Search conference. Participants would understand more of this concept when we start to engage in activities designed for each step of the process.

Activity 2: Mapping the past

We went on to the next activity, which, according to Weisbord (1987), French and Bell (1999) and Weisbord and Janoff (2000), was to **map the past**.

I borrowed from Weisbord and Janoff (2000); as people presented their scenario, I asked them to make notes of themes that they hear in the presentations which also occur on their own, as well as project innovations they like very much (p.99). The outcome of this activity was that at the end of this session participants must be able to describe the collective history in terms of themselves, the country (Namibia) and the organization (the NBN in this regard).

Participants were asked to silently map their past in these three areas, over three decades and to transfer their ideas onto the flipcharts on the wall, under the following headings:

Myself	1992	1997	2003
The organization	1992	1997	2003
The country	1992	1997	2003

This task was rather difficult and time consuming since some participants preferred to hand over their paper to the facilitators to write on flipcharts. While remembering and discussing the events, they came up with the following:

On ourselves: The main themes were development, changes and self-development, surprises and joy, reunion and separations. Almost three-quarters of the twenty participants were postgraduates and some were distance learning students. This is reflected in one of their statements: *"The independence of our country has opened an era of continuous education and job mobility. We get promoted to posts that were previously open for 'whites only'. We have gained a lot of skills and understanding through our previous experience in nursing. We can manage our Health Services and Health Training Institutions with all the dedication"*.

On the country (Namibia): The main theme characterizing this area was also change and development, which one of the participants describes as structural development and human development.

First was our independence and new policies in place, followed by Regional and local government elections; Surveys of HIV done in pregnant mothers; Re-integration of nurses from abroad into the health system; SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) won 2/3 majority; Immunization programme; Implementation of Primary Health Care as a strategy for health care delivery to make health services accessible, equitable, affordable and community based; Training and workshops; After ten years of independence, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) conflict; Namibian soldiers sent to DRC; Emerging new political parties; Building of schools, clinics and roads; Railway project; Namibia being recognized internationally and enjoying international assistance.

On the organization (NBN): Formation of the nursing board (NBN); Election of office bearers; Nursing Act being enacted; Nursing board enrolling all practicing people; Conference held to announce the changes; Nursing Act amended; Disciplinary hearings; Election of NBN regional committee members; Nursing board fee change from fifty Namibia dollars to a hundred Namibia dollars for all nursing categories; Inspection of Health Training Institutions by the nursing board; NBN sponsored the first national HIV training for nurses.

The values which emerged from this task were agreed upon by participants to be mainly change and development; hard work and dedication; peace, both national and international; collaboration; self governing of Namibia as a country; and Namibian nurses no longer under the South African Nursing council.

These issues were carried forward for the envisioning process and final planning.

Activity 3: Mapping the present external environment of the NBN

Weisbord and Janoff (2000:93) state that by focusing on the present, we neither add nor subtract issues, nor change the language we have used. We always discuss what we see collectively before moving on to small group tasks.

After discussing and appreciating the past, we moved on to the next task in Weisbord, Weisbord and Janoff, French and Bell's Future Search, which is to develop an understanding of the external environment. This was done in three groups and each group presented their discussion on factors affecting the organization from the outside. Weisbord and Janoff (2000) called this step 'Appreciating the presence'.

After the whole group had commented, added, verified and summarized the main issues arising out of the present external, they decided to categorize the factors in two categories; **positive** and **negative** factors.

Positive factors

Politics as one broad factor, which the presenter explained as follows: "Politicians are here to make laws as parliamentarians, and through their laws, the NBN is now a legal body established according to the act of parliament. For this reason the NBN has the power to take or be taken to court."

Global networking is putting pressure on the board to look at its requirement of training of nurses so that our nurses could effectively function in SADAC countries and elsewhere. The presenter further explained that the whole SADAC region needs to have standard requirements to avoid evaluation of nurses.

New demands of health needs and pressure from the public demanding improvement in health care services make the board aware of the problems influencing its requirement in the training of various categories of nurses.

Negative factors

Trade unions are interfering with the board when the board is trying to carry out its legal obligation. Trade unions do confuse the nurses, especially because our nurses are ignorant of the understanding between the Nursing Board's role and the Nursing Association's. There are nurses who presume that the board is made up of nurses, so it must protect nurses, thus 'paying the fee to the nursing board is just a loss'.

One of the burning negative factors was the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, this was elaborated upon and the group reached consensus to mention **disease** instead of singling out one. The reason was given that all diseases cause death and morbidity, affecting the revenue (membership fee) that the organization is supposed to get from nurses.

Resignation and job mobility for nurses was also added as a contributing factor affecting the organization financially.

People with disabilities – it was explained that a person with disability cannot do most of the nursing procedures and therefore cannot comply with the NBN requirements, yet there is no policy guiding the recruitment or the training and upgrading of already existing nurses with disabilities. This led us to the second part of mapping the internal environment of the organization.

Activity 4: Mapping the organization from inside

The mapping of the internal environment of the NBN was carried out in the same manner as above, but group members were rotated. Once again, each group presented the 'proudest' and the 'sorriest', the whole purpose being to get people beyond blaming and complaining, and to take responsibility (Weisbord and Janoff 2000:96). Robert Fritz (1989), cited in Weisbord and Janoff (2000:96), put it this way: People are exploring different aspects of their perceptions, intellectual and emotional which represent "current reality".

The issues were discussed and the whole group came up with the following:

"Sorriest":

- The membership fee is too high for the low category of nurses
- Lack of full-time office bearers to deal with the management work adequately
- Too much emphasis on disciplinary action instead of training and supervision
- Lack of meetings with members and lack of self-exposure
- Lack of regional offices
- Lack of supervision leading to low standard of nursing care
- The removal of distinctive devices that differentiate a registered nurse from midwifery or from any other additional qualification
- No date of completion on registration certificates
- Disparity in evaluation of qualifications
- Resignation of enrolled category of nurses if they are to study further
- NBN is not nurse friendly

"Proudest":

- Protection of the public
- Registration and licensing of nurses
- Approved more Health Training Centers and practical institutions

It was explained to the participants that the sorriest is not to blame people or change them, but the sorriest is to be aware of our weakness. We do not want the future to surprise us, rather we want to own the change. Therefore the next step entails the activity of planning the future for NBN. All these are borne in mind to shape the vision of the NBN.

The issues from the previous task (external and internal environment of the organization) were again carried forward for envisioning process and planning.

Activity 5: Creating a vision for NBN

Vision was discussed in section two of the literature review. Porras and Silvers (1994) cited in Irvine's thesis (1999) define vision as follows:

Guiding beliefs and principles of the organization, the enduring organizational purpose, and at the same time, move the organization towards the achievement of the purpose (85).

Mapping the future (Weisbord and Janoff 2000:98) indicates that people have grounded themselves in two relevant insights:

Ron Lippit's (1983) insight that people motivate themselves strongly when they act out the future they really want as if it has *already* happened; and

Robert Fritz (1989) contends that clear internalized images of the present and future tug the unconscious into seeking ways to close the gap even without formal action plans.

I posed a general question to the three groups to come up with a vision for NBN by the year 2009 as follows: "How would you like the NBN to be by the year 2009?"

Individual group visions were presented and discussed in order to come up with a common vision. The main points that emerged from the task were as follows:

NBN to extend its office to the regions

NBN to have full-time office bearers to deal with the issues uninterrupted

Fund raising to enable the organization to have sufficient money to run its affairs

Strong supervisory role to minimize misconduct done by nurses

Returning the distinguishing devices

More meetings with the members

NBN to have a clearly stated policy on affirmative action with regard to disabled people in training

NBN to have autonomy and to function independently from politics

NBN to create a nurse-friendly environment without compromising the safety of the public.

In order to enable participants to think beyond the organization's shortcomings, I decided that we should address the issue of a mission statement of the NBN.

It took us an hour to develop ideas of the future of the NBN, with the discussion on the feasibility of the change using force field analysis to find the constraining forces and forces that can enhance the achievement of the goals. Although we were not sure of the implementation, we made it as close to reality as possible.

The future of the NBN came out like this:

Establishing local NBN offices in the regions

New policies on training accommodating changing health needs

Employment of full-time office bearers

Periodic institutional visit

Sufficient funds to run the organization

Confirming a common future generally means that the majority "consensus" prevails after the minority has had its say and agrees to go along. The purpose of Future Search is to discover what the actuality is, not to make decisions for anybody. People are enabled make informed choices. They learn what can be done right away, because everybody wants action, so we name the concept "common ground agenda" or "common Future Search" (Weisbord and Janoff 2000:100-1001).

We then divided ourselves into two groups to draw up the plan of action to implement the vision. The issues were discussed and at the end we came up with the common action plan, which is presented according to the format commonly used in presenting strategic year plans.

By the end of the workshop we had a clear understanding of what steps were to be taken by whom, when, what is needed, what is available and not available. Factors that can enhance and inhibit the achievement of the vision will be reported on in the data presentation as they were clearly indicated during the individual interviews.

We evaluated the workshop and everyone was really excited about the new approach. Emphasis was put on participation of stakeholders and consideration of subordinates, an issue that was exhausted in the individual interviews. Everyone felt that this should not be an academic purpose only but the President and the Secretary of the board must get the full report of the workshop. They expressed it this way: "In one statement we need change and development in the NBN by the year 2009. Briefing of the NBN secretary about this workshop must be one of the activities in the action plan". The action plan is displayed on the next page.

Since the next day was a holiday in Namibia, I passed out notes before the end of the workshop, summoning those I had selected to be my respondents in the individual interviews to remain. I met with them individually to obtain their consent, and then set up times and places convenient for each of them for the interviews the next week.

The agreed up on action plan of the NBN follows.

Activity 6: Action plan of the NBN

Main goal – change and development in the NBN by the year 2009

Objectives	Activities	Responsible people	Date	Resources	Outcome
Decentralization	Establishing NBN offices in the regions	NBN President and other office bearers	From the Year 2005	Human and materials, money, stationery and staff	Local NBN offices established
Employment of full-time office bearers	Advertisement and recruitment of the relevant posts	NBN office bearers and a body of panelists	From the Year 2006	Money/stationery Budget for staff salaries by 2005	Full-time staff on board
To generate sufficient funds for the running of the organization	Strengthen the collection of annual fees, fund raising	NBN members, MOHSS, donor organizations	Fund raising by members three times a year from 2006	Human and material resources and staff time	Sufficient funds to run the organization
Improvement of the standard of nursing care	Carrying out a survey on other sister organizations	NBN staff and selected nurses with knowledge of research	From June 2006	Money, stationery Computer usage, transport	Helpful information in place to assist in development of NBN
Improvement of the standard of nursing care	Workshop on establishment of new policies on training, recruitment, upgrading, and accommodating new health needs	The NBN staff and the Ministry of Health & other stakeholders (the training centres)	From Jan. 2007	Human and material resources	New policies in place

Objectives	Activities	Responsible people	Date	Resources	Outcome
Improvement of the standard of nursing care	Periodic institutional visits	NBN (national and regional) office bearers	Biannually as from April 2006 onwards	Money for Transport, staff time, stationery	Improved standard of training and nursing care, reduced disciplinary incidences
Awareness - raising on FSC for the NBN top officers	Brief of the outcome of the FSC workshop	Ms N. Layne (workshop facilitator)	December 2004	Time, money, stationery	Full report of the FSC given to the NBN officers

