

A REFLECTION ON THE GROUP INTERACTION AND COHESION
IN A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS - A CASE STUDY

by

CYNTHIA TUDUETSO KHUMALO

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (MENTAL HEALTH)

in the

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR : DR K.J. COLLINS

June 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

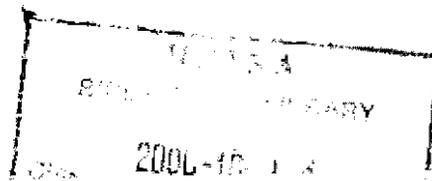
- * I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my late grandmother LETTIE SHASHENI MALEBYE and my mother, MARY CIBI for supporting me through out my undergraduate years.
- * My deepest appreciation also goes to my daughter NONHLANHLA and son KGOSI for allowing me to use their parenting time for my studies.
- * I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr Collins who has been involved with me in this study from its initial phase.
- * Last but not least I would like to thank Mrs Huma Louw for the trouble she took to stimulate my thoughts and be more focussed. Thanks to all my friends, colleagues and family.

SUMMARY

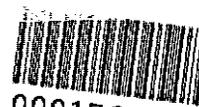
In 1995 a participatory research project was undertaken in the Gauteng Welfare Department by two outside researchers. The subject for the research was the management of change in the Gauteng Welfare Department. During the research, the researcher observed how the discouraged, apathetic and negative group became animated and empowered. On the basis of this observation, the researcher undertook to do a case study which reflects on the interactional process and cohesion which transpired within the participatory research process.

Key terms:

Participatory research, reflection, interaction and cohesion.



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CHAPTER 1

1. ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH

For more than forty years, social policy in South Africa was underpinned by the policy of separate development or apartheid. The slogan of the government was "separate but equal", but separation did not lead to equality. Rather great injustices were perpetrated in the application of the policy (White paper on Reconstruction and Development, 1994).

The new government was faced with a huge task of restructuring society, to correct the imbalances of the past which favoured one group above others. The policy underpinning this, is known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

The dismantling of apartheid in 1994 resulted in a new political dispensation which called for major restructuring which affected all major social institutions of society namely education, health, land, economy and welfare.

Like other spheres of society, the welfare sector was also affected by the changes introduced by the new political dispensation. A new bill on Welfare was drafted and called for the establishment of the National Welfare Forum. This was the government, the formal sector of Welfare, the liaison committee and the National Councils. They saw a need for a more inclusive and transparent process which would afford the opportunity for social workers in the formal sector, as well as persons working in the informal sector as represented by NGO's to exercise their democratic right to have a say in policy and other matters which affect them and their clients.

In the Department of Welfare, to address service imbalances structural changes meant that the three socially divided Welfare departments were replaced with one National department, 13 Provincial departments serving independent states, homelands and provinces became nine provincial departments, boundaries of regions changed etc. These structural changes were accompanied by operational changes. Simultaneously the introduction of the RDP changed the service policy and approach in Welfare. The above changes and changes in political power also meant that the composition of employees at provincial level of the Department of Welfare changed.

Previous employees experienced drastic changes of people, places, policies and practices. A new management was put in place and introduced changes.

Nothing was as it had been in the Gauteng provincial office. Everything had changed and people tried to manage this change. Some tried to introduce it, some tried to deal with it while others resisted it.

In 1995 a participatory research project was undertaken by outside researchers to study how change was being managed in the Gauteng Welfare Department. Participants in the research were a self-selected sample of 20 social workers employed at different hierarchies and from all population groups in the Gauteng Welfare Department. Following the research project, Collins (1997b) published literature on "Participatory process in the construction of a model for organisational change in South African Welfare".

During the participatory research, the group interaction changed. The discouraged, lost, apathetic and negative group gradually became animated and empowered. After two group meetings, the group members embarked on participatory research at their respective sections which resulted in unity and a pledge to participate in the change process. The research under study reflects on the interactional process in the group which transpired within this participatory research project.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH FROM A SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

The researcher became involved in the above project as co-facilitator. In preparation for a participatory research assignment in the MA course, the researcher became aware that literature on participatory research often emphasised the value of participation in the research process, but how it manifested as group interaction was assumed and alluded to and not explained.

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.3.1. The aim of the study is to reflect on the group interaction and cohesion within a process of participatory research.
- 1.3.2. The objectives of the study are :
 1. To contribute to the body of knowledge regarding group interaction in a participatory research process.
 2. To observe and reflect on the process of interaction in the group.
 3. To observe and reflect the growth of cohesion in the group.

1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods are logical strategies for planning research procedures and improving evidence for the development of knowledge (Leedy 1993 : 139) Qualitative research methods utilising description and participatory research were used in the research study.

1.4.1. Data collection

The method of data collection was participatory research by the two researchers, and their description and reflection on the group interaction and cohesion during the participatory research process.

* Participatory research - as - observer : Participatory research "is the collective generation of knowledge which leads to the planning and achievement of jointly set objectives". (Collins 1999:2)

* Description : Rubin and Babbie (1993:110) describe description as more likely to refer to a thicker examination of phenomena and their deeper meanings. Qualitative descriptions tend to be more concerned with conveying a sense of what it is like to walk in the shoes of the people being described - providing rich details about their environments, interactions, meanings and everyday lives than with generalising with precision to a larger population.

* Reflection : Hope and Timmel (1994 : 126) defines reflection as “referring back in careful thought to an experience. It is an internal process of conceptualisation and reasoning and is a means through which people overcome a paralysis of consciousness and articulate what goes on around them.”

1.4.2. The case study

Different views exist in the literature on the meaning of the term case study as indicated in Rubin and Babbie (1993 : 1402) and Grinnell (1981:302). Feuerstein (1986:48) definition of the term is however more applicable to the research. He defines a case study as a “detailed description and analysis of a single event, situation, person, group, institution or programme within in own context. A case study can provide a deep look at something”.

Huysamen (1993:73) points out that a case study does not necessarily restrict the use of a single event. The use of a single event however provide the opportunity to study in-depth the subject of the research. Yin in Rubin and Babbie (1993 : 402) maintains that in case studies the focus is not necessarily on statistical data. The focus is “instead on what Yin calls analytical generalisation, which involves connecting case study findings to a particular theory”

(Rubin and Babbie, 1993:402). This is done by showing how the evidence gathered in the case study is consistent with a theory.

This research is a case study on the reflection on the group interaction and development of cohesion within a participatory research process. This research is subjective on at least two levels. The researcher co-facilitated the participatory research process. She was a participant observer, therefore one cannot maintain that the observations were purely objective. Secondly the researcher used both her reflection as co-facilitator and that of the facilitator as a basis to write this report. The report is therefore based on her subjective experience of the group interaction within a participatory research process. Case studies draw criticisms on their trust worthiness, objectivity and validity. In spite of these criticism, case studies are useful in providing in-depth understanding of single events.

1.4.3. Recording and Processing data

The case study was described using notes by the researcher and audio-tapes of the group interaction with the permission and knowledge of the group to record data. The two researchers held meetings before and after group meetings to reflect on the content, the process of the dialogue and on the growth of the group cohesion. Data was processed using content analysis. Rubin and Babbie (1993:84) say the following about content analysis:

“Content analysis quantifies units of analysis observed in all forms of communication. It does not generate original data but it describes what already exists usually in the form of a record, although sometimes in the form of live communication such as a conversation.” In order to carry out content analysis we need to make a record of the live communication. This record can be written, graphic, auditory and kinesthetic. Data obtained from content analysis is coded in terms of two types of content namely manifest and latent.

* Manifest content is visible and can be described specifically.

* Latent content is the content that reflect the underlying meaning of the communication. The context of the communication, as well as the meaning attached to it, is included in the description.

1.5. RESPONDENTS

Respondents are units of analysis or people who provide the information on where we base our data for the study (Collins 1999:96) Respondents in the case study were the two facilitators who met before group meetings to discuss who does what, how and the participants in the group. The participants were self selected and formed an accidental sample of social workers from the Department of Welfare. Five meetings were held with the group between July and November 1995.

1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is common knowledge that all research processes have both strengths and limitations. In this study the researcher points out the following limitations :

During the literature study the researcher became aware of the fact that the available literature on participatory research often emphasises the value of participation in the research process, but how it manifested as group interaction was assumed and alluded to, and not explained. The researcher therefore had to rely on other literature sources in order to enhance her understanding of the interactional process within a participatory research process.

1.7. CONCLUSION

Despite the above limitation the researcher believes that this study is still important as a potential contribution to the field of participatory research in South Africa. To the social work profession, this study reflects one of the focus areas namely process, which is important in understanding communication between social workers and the receivers of their services. Social work professionals might therefore be comfortable to utilize participatory research methods as an alternative to research if they understand the interactional process within participatory research. To the South African community, this study supports the pluralist and holistic view that people are the creators of their own reality and through participation, experience, intuition, thinking and action can their dignity be restored. Through this alternative system of knowledge production the South African community can be assured genuine participation in matters of concern.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an orientation to the study. It covers aspects such as the problem under study, defines the research problem and the respondents who participated in the study. The chapter also depicts the methods used to gather and analyse data to the study. Finally the limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation reviews existing literature on the process of interaction within participatory research. To indicate the place of participation, the following are discussed : participation, participatory research, dialogue, communication, cohesion as a factor affecting communication and the role of the facilitator affecting communication context.

Chapter 3 offers a case study of the description of the interactional process in the group within a process of participatory research, and links findings from the case study in relation to the original aim.

CHAPTER 2 Literature review

2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Leedy (1993:16) the review of the literature serves three broad functions. First, it demonstrates the underlying assumption that the researcher is knowledgeable about the related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study.

Secondly, it shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need. Finally, the review defines and redefines the research questions and related tentative hypothesis by embedding those questions in longer empirical traditions.

As stated in Chapter 1 the purpose of this study is to reflect on the group interaction and cohesion within a process of participatory research, the following concepts which are relevant to the subject will be studied:

- * Participation
- * Participatory research
- * Dialogue
- * Communication
- * Small group communication
- * Cohesion a factor affecting communication
- * Skills to facilitate the process of communication in participatory research.

2.2. PARTICIPATION IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The Oxford English dictionary (1984:825) defines participation as “to take part or share in” or as Collins (1999:6) says participatory means co-operating with other people, which implies that there must be dialogue and communication. From the field of development, the understanding of participation is enhanced by the following : Burkey (1993:58) defines participation as a continuous educative process “a process of progressive conscientisation”,

through collective self-reflection of their own reality and of what can be done by themselves to transform it.

Referring to development in the first step in achieving genuine participation is a process in which people themselves become more aware of their situation and what measures they themselves can take to begin changing their situation. This process of awakening raising levels of consciousness constitute a process of self-transformation through which people grow and mature as human beings. This also applies to participatory research (Rahman 1993 :142). Chambers (1992:106) motivates participation in development by stating that people should be seen as the main source of contribution towards the solving of their problems. People are not passive bystanders but,

- * they have expertise and knowledge of themselves and their indigenous technical skills;
- * they understand their situation better than anyone else;
- * to exclude them is to deny them human dignity and their right to make their own decisions;
- * the denial of people's participation implies an admission that they would not be enthusiastic about what is presented to them.

Although referring to development, Chambers (1992:144) states that the means for acquiring participation implies an unconstrained dialogue with those affected. Dialogue further implies that those affected must take all decisions and personally control their resources and organisation.

2.3. PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

2.3.1. INTRODUCTION

Although there is no greater clarity in the literature regarding what is meant by participatory research, it has been described as a "methodology for an alternate system of knowledge production," Reason (1988:329), rather than a specific research method or prescriptive process.

Although a qualitative approach, participatory research makes use of both quantitative (self-surveys nominal group techniques and interview schedules) and qualitative (participant observation, direct observation, content analysis, or case studies and interviews) methods of data collection,(Collins 1999:62).

According to Van Rooyen and Gray (1995:87) participative research methodology suggests a compatibility with social work since it appears to reflect some of the fundamental values and process of the social work profession, namely respect, self-determination and unconditional acceptance. Participatory research is also the accepted method of research in people centred, participatory development and community work.

2.3.2. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Many qualitative researchers use the terms participatory research and participatory action research synonymously. Both participatory research and participatory action research share same values and employ similar methodologies, so the potential exists for mutually productive exchanges between them, (Rahman 1993:84). For instance they both regard the management and control of the research as collective action between the research and the researched, the research is contextual and local therefore the results cannot be generalised to other communities. Finally both participatory research and participatory action research involve dialogue and interaction between the researcher and the researched. Hall (1981:8), Reason (1988:21), Collins (1999:2) and Rahman(1993:80) define participatory research as a process of knowing and acting in which people enhance their understanding and knowledge of a particular situation and simultaneously take action to change it to their benefit. Participatory research is initiated in the context of actual reality. An existing problem often provides the initial motivation for engaging in participatory research.

Rahman (1993:147) regards the key elements of participatory research to be as follows : data gathering and validation, critical recovery of history, valuing and using popular culture and production and diffusion of new knowledge.

Rahman (1993:91) defines participatory action research as “action research that is participatory and participatory research that unites with action”. Participatory action research requires collective action by the researcher and the subjects of the research. It is an enriching process

through which the subjects of the research generate ideas with the researcher.

2.3.3. AIMS OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Various writers list the following as aims of participatory research:

* Fals Borda (1991:4) “ The final aim of this combination of liberating knowledge and political power within a continuous process of life and work are:

- to enable the oppressed groups and classes to acquire sufficient, creative and transforming leverage as expressed in specific projects, acts and struggles.

- to produce and develop socio-political processes with which popular masses can identify”. * Gaventa (1988 :19) “Participatory research aims to breakdown the distinction between the researcher and the researched, the subjects and objects of knowledge production. The participation of people gaining and creating is not only seen as a process of creating knowledge, but simultaneously as education and development of consciousness and the mobilisation of action”.

* Maguire (1994:29) “participatory research aims for people to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long-term for radical social change. Locally determined and controlled action is a planned consequence of inquiry”.

From the above it can be concluded with Van Rooyen and Gray (1995:89) that the identified three principal aims of participatory research are :

- to develop knowledge and critical consciousness;
- to improve the lives of those involved in the process and
- to transform societal structures and social relations.

They saw these aims being achieved through “intrinsically linked, inter-related processes which gave participatory research its fundamental strength and power”.

These processes are identified as follows :

* the collective investigation of the problem involving the participation of those affected by them

- * the collective analysis of data so that participants gain an enhanced understanding of both the problems identified and their underlying structural causes.
- * the collective action of participants to yield both short term and long term solutions to their identified problems. The emphasis is on the collective nature of participatory research.

According to the Oxford English dictionary (1984:251) collective means “of or from several” which implies taking place in a group which there is a process of interaction. One can therefore conclude that participatory research implies that a process of interaction in participatory research and process of interaction in small groups.

2.4. THE INTERACTIONAL PROCESS IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

2.4.1. PROCESS

The interactional process in participatory research is referred to as interaction, dialogue and process, implying that the terms are synonymous. Exploration of each of the terms accurately enhances understanding of interaction in participatory research.

Various authoritative sources on participatory research like Collins (1999) and Greenwood and Whyte (1993) describe participatory research as a process that requires constant interaction and dialogue between the researcher and the researched. Participatory research calls for meaningful relationships between the researcher and the researched built over a period. The relationship between the researcher and the group being investigated is regarded as a fundamental aspect in participatory research. The researcher must be aware of one's own limitations and one's relative ignorance of local problems compared with that to the people involved. The researcher must try to learn from the people through empathy and friendship what their problems, needs and feelings are. The researcher must be conscious of the fact that he or she is working with certain values which may also considerably differ from those of the respondents and must refrain from imposing his or her values.

Although participatory research acknowledges the presence of interaction and unconstrained dialogue between the researcher and the respondents, the process of interaction is often alluded to and not described. In this study the researcher will therefore look to other literature sources on the process of interaction.

Hope and Timmel (1994:53) define process as a 'means to discuss content in the most fruitful way possible'. One of the easiest aspects of group process is to observe the pattern of communication :

1. Who talks?
 - For how long?
 - How often?
2. Who do people look at when they talk?
 - * other individuals, possibly potential supporters?
 - * Scanning the group?
 - * No one?
 - * The ceiling
3. Who talks after whom or who interrupts whom?
4. What style of communication is used?
 - * Strong statements,
 - * Questions,
 - * Gestures,
 - * laughter,
 - * tears, etc?

Hope and Timmel (1994:53) maintain that it is important for the group facilitator to understand clearly how the process affects the level of discussion on the content, and to provide a process which will help the group to discuss their content satisfactorily and productively.

2.4.2. DIALOGUE

Freire (1970:11) refers to dialogue as a “process of communication based on quality in relationships”, mutual respect and understanding. Dialogue enables people to discuss and act on issues on which they have strong feelings. Dialogue also refers to being able to express different and conflicting opinion. Cissna and Andersen (1998:102) refers to dialogue as “meeting the other as a person” and in such a meeting all participants share a responsibility for “keeping the conversation going”. It is a process of communication in which a “stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us”. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding.

This shared meaning is the bond that holds people and societies together.

According to Reason (1988:250) dialogue is sometimes used to mean discussion but also by others to include action. Dialogue is essential in participatory research because it serves as a tool or means for both the researcher and the researched to learn from one another and to learn from the very situation that they are part of and are engaged in analysis of. The interest of both parties is therefore mutually inclusive and supportive.

2.4.3. COMMUNICATION

From the literature study on participatory research, the researcher found out that the literature seem to assume certain things about communication but never explain what is understood. Communication in its general sense refers to a process in which information is shared by two or more persons and which has consequences for one or more persons involved. (Kincaid 1987:24). The process of communication implies that a particular instance of communication should not be thought of as a discrete event with identifiable beginnings and ends, but rather as part of a

dynamic, ongoing whole which has no clearly defined temporal boundaries. In particular the process stresses the transactional nature of communication rather than conceptualising it as an unidirectional, linear act.

Andrews and Baird (1992:8) identified the following as components of the communication process.

- * Dynamism "Communication is a dynamic phenomenon without end, continually responsive and continually changing".
- * Uniqueness "No communication events are alike. They can never be relived or even fully reconstructed, for they are as unique as individuals who give birth to them".
- * Transactional "Communication is also transactional. All persons are engaged in sending and receiving messages simultaneously.

Each person is sharing in the encoding and decoding process and each person is affecting the other. The transactional concept alters the role of the listener from that simply "giving feedback" to that of equal partnership in the communication process".

2.4.3.1. THE CONVERGENCE MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The following model can enhance and elaborate the extend understanding of communication and dialogue which is mostly referred to and not explained. Kincaid (1987:209) maintains that the convergence model of communication regards the subject itself as pervasive, often referred to as a fundamental social process or as synonymous with culture itself. Individuals give different meanings to the information which they share with each other. Initial differences are reduced through a dynamic process of feedback. However, although feedback processes reduce differences in meaning among people, the inherent in uncertainty involved in information exchange, including the feedback process itself, implies that some differences will remain. Thus communication can be described as a series of converging cycles of information exchange among participants who approach, but never exactly reach the same point of mutual understanding.

Mutual understanding provides the basis for mutual agreement and collective action. This orientation envisions a flow of information through networks of communication.

The most important effects of this information flow are indicated by changes over time in the relative position between two or more members (in terms of their beliefs values and behaviour) and in the structure of the networks which they comprise (their pattern of organisation). The researcher looks for regions or cluster of individuals within such networks which are characterised by a greater density of information exchange and by less variance or differences within their boundaries than between such local regions.

Such local networks or regions are sometimes referred to as subgroups or subcultures within a given culture (Kincaid 1987:209). The theory does not rule out divergence within a subculture or local network. In fact, considerable divergence may exist on certain topics. The theory does propose however that members of a subculture of a local network will tend, overtime, to define and conceptualise more, that non-members who have not shared the same information.

When individuals share information among themselves, they simultaneously create and maintain a portion of a communication network in which each one is embedded. Differences in understanding between two or more individuals are reduced by feedback, a process of approximation which, if successful, results in a series of diminishing mistakes, "a winding series of under and over corrections converging on a goal" (Kincaid 1987:215). This process reduces the independence of each individual and reduce the differences among them.

As individuals forfeit part of their uniqueness, they gain a shared culture. The fundamental principle of communication may be stated in the following manner (Kincaid 1987:215)

* In a closed social system in which communication is unrestricted among members, the system as a whole will tend to converge over time towards a collective pattern of thought.

* In a closed system with no communication among its members, the system as a whole will tend to diverge overtime towards a diverge pattern of thought.

These principles states that if communication is unrestricted, then a common culture will result, that a convergence will take place among the members in terms of their beliefs, values and behaviours. On the other hand if all forms of information sharing are cut off, then over time, we would expect the differences among its members to increase gradually, resulting in an overall

breakdown, in the systems culture into the increasing number of subcultures of individuals. This theory provides a possible explanation of the interaction that takes place during the participatory research process.

2.4.3.2. SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION.

Another field that could enhance the understanding of interaction in participatory research is existing knowledge on small group communication. For a small group to exist, it is essential that group members perceive themselves as something other than a collection of independent individuals (Andrews and Baird 1992:246). Members must develop a sense of mutual awareness. The creation of this psychological awareness rarely occurs all at once. Rather, it usually develops over some period of face to face interaction. Members' relationships are furthered by repeated encounters normally accomplished through communication exchanges (Andrews and Baird 1992:246).

The number of people that constitute a small group affect the communication process. In general the larger the group, the more complex the patterns of interaction and the more formalised the procedures necessary to handle the group's functioning efficiently. For the most part however, face to face interaction, the existence of a psychological relationship which include cohesiveness and some degree of common interest are the salient characteristics of the small group, rather than the specific number of group members (Andrews and Baird 1992:247).

2.4.3.3. COHESIVENESS

A significant variable affecting group interaction is cohesiveness. Cohesiveness is related to solidarity, the group's "stick togetherness" and its ability to maintain itself over time and through crisis. Cohesiveness and conformity are related because a cohesive group usually clings to its norms, attitudes and values. Members of such a group have a strong sense of belonging (Andrews and Baird 1992:253).

Cohesiveness often facilitates group functioning. The sense of “we-ness” in cohesive groups often transcends individual differences and motives. In addition cohesive group members like each other. They rate each other highly with respect to attractiveness, motivation and performance.

Bormann (1990:76) says the following about cohesiveness:

- * The highly cohesive group is likely to be more productive,
- * The highly cohesive group has a climate that maximises feedback and therefore encourages more effective communication,
- * Cohesiveness is constant even though group loyalty will fluctuate from day to day,
- * Cohesiveness is the function of the group composition plus group interaction.

2.4.3.3.1. FACTORS AFFECTING COHESIVENESS

*** MEMBER’S NEEDS AND COHESIVENESS**

According to Bormann (1990:83), each member brings to a new group his/her dreams, desires and needs. Although the group may modify or drastically convert the “dreams and the expression of these needs, the latter provide the energy that compels an individual to act in support of or counter to the achievement of group goals” (Borman 1990:83). The following needs affect cohesion in a group : the need for achievement, social needs as well as esteem and prestige needs.

This was obvious in the participatory research process described in Chapter 3. Members joined the group because of the need to find their places in the new situation. They were anxious and insecure about their jobs.

*** PRESSURE FOR UNIFORMITY**

Norms are sets of assumptions or expectations held by members of a group concerning what kind of behaviour is appropriate. Within small groups norms are often implicit i.e. they are never actually articulated, but are understood and accepted (Andrews and Baird 1992:253).

Adherence to group norms depends upon a variety of factors including situational or stimulus ambiguity. This refers to when individuals are placed in unfamiliar situations or asked to perform tasks in which they know little or are generally uncertain, they are quite likely to look to the opinions of the group for the most appropriate action or attitude. This applied to the participatory research process whereby a diverse group of people joined hands because they were confused and felt lost, see chapter 3.

*** TRUST**

Trust is implied in the communication process from the time people begin to talk (Bormann 1990:186). Trust not only helps to develop communication skills and relationships with others, but also assures good group interaction. If certain group members feel that when they present an idea, they will be humiliated or chastised, they will not participate in the discussion. The result may be a loss of valuable input. At the same time, the morale of the entire group may be affected. According to Bormann (1990:186), trust-destroying communication between two people can hinder the interaction among all members of the group. Even though the trust destroying exchange may only be between participant A and B, participants C, D, E and F and however many others in the group can become defensive, protecting their own ideas against attack.

In the first meeting of the participatory research it was discussed that members from different service offices did not trust one another or members from the national office. There was a minimum of interaction in the group. Communication was between the two facilitators and group members and between members of the same offices.

*** CONFLICT**

Conflicts are those disagreements that cause such high secondary tension as to render the group inoperative. Some communication contents put people into competitive conflict while some are a mixture of co-operation and competition in that, by staying together and co-operating, the members achieve greater value than they could, by working separately, but the group

distributes the rewards unequally. Such mixed-motive situations result in conflict as well as cohesiveness. According to Bormann (1990:146), conflict is inevitable and arises from three major areas of social rewards namely, contention for leadership, task influence and popularity. The best way to deal with conflict in the social dimension is to avoid taking flight from them or smoothing them and instead, confront and work through them. Conflict arises from task deliberations involving factual matters, decisions about policy and value questions. Confronting and working through to group consensus is a good way of dealing with task conflict.

The theory on communication process and small group communication and cohesion provides a hypothetical framework for understanding interaction in the participatory research process.

2.5. SKILLS TO FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

In literature on participatory research, the importance of the relationship between the research and the group is emphasised. The relationship is based on collaboration and requires shared control of the research process (Reason 1988:24).

Although authoritative figures like Reason (1998:27) emphasised the need for facilitation in the participatory research process, little explanation is given on how this should be done. The researcher will therefore look at other literature sources on the necessary skills to facilitate the process of communication in participatory research. Facilitation is about process (how you do something) - rather than content (what you do). A facilitator is a process guide, someone who makes a process more convenient (Hunter 1995:1). According to du Toit et al (1998:55) it is essential for the facilitator to create a climate for group members to grow towards being more of themselves. Group members should not feel threatened, but should feel that they are being accepted totally. To accept a group member, the facilitator needs to enter and deal with the member's life world. The facilitator has to talk to the members of the group in order to determine their frame of reference.

Rogers (1951) in du Toit et al (1998:109) maintains that although facilitation skills are necessary, it is ultimately the facilitator's entire attitude and action that should facilitate the growth of a group as an entity. In time, the facilitator assimilates the theory and values and is able to implement these aspects in his/her own unique way. The group is regarded as the expert and determines the direction and rate of the facilitation process. The facilitator's role is therefore non-directive and only enables the group to help itself. The following are skills the facilitator uses.

2.5.1. BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Hope and Timmel (1984:14) equate the role of the facilitator to that of an animator. As an animator, the facilitator's main work is to help participants in the group unveil their situation. The facilitator should not talk much, but encourage discussion, through asking the right questions. Communication skills provide the basis for the total facilitation process. The skills are applied not only during the initial contact, but continually until the termination of the process. They are attentiveness, listening, empathy, information sharing, summarising and probing.

*** ATTENTIVENESS**

Du Toit et al (1998:117) describe attentiveness as the way in which the facilitator orientates himself/herself physically and psychologically towards the group so that the group members will feel sufficiently at ease to share their experiences, ideas and emotions with the facilitator. The message is thus conveyed to the group that the facilitator is open, that the group can trust the facilitator and can drop its defences in discussions with the facilitator. This enables the facilitator to be with the group and to maintain continual contact through attentive listening.

Attentiveness is a two-directional process during which the facilitator attend to what the group say and feel while at the same time attending verbally and non-verbally to the group.

In addition the facilitator must pay attention to what and how group members say something and the behaviour of individual members and the group as a whole.

*** LISTENING**

According to du Toit et al (1998:129) listening

- * involves giving one's whole attention to what the other person is saying, (paying attention)
- * recognising the underlying emotions, feelings and convictions (showing understanding)
- * paying attention to non-verbal behaviour.

The objective of listening in groups is to help the members as well as the facilitator to explore and understand the ideas, feelings and intentions of the speaker. The group facilitator does not only listen to the individuals in their totality, but also on the group process. (2.4.1)

Du Toit et al (1998:135) lists the following advantages of listening :

- * It helps the facilitator to understand the group members' frame of reference
- * It helps group members to understand one another's frame of reference.
- * It brings members close together and into a more personal interrelationship.
- * It helps members to stay in the communication process.

*** EMPATHY**

Egan (1994:123) views empathy as a form of communication which involves both listening to and understanding the group. The implied is that the facilitator must temporarily set aside his/her own frame of reference and attempt without prejudice or preconceived ideas, to hear and understand the group and to convey such understanding both verbally and non-verbally. Many people feel empathy for others but few put it into words successfully to convey it.

Egan (1994:123) lists the following as purpose of empathy :

- * to demonstrate the willingness of the facilitator to share the other people's frame of reference.
- * to facilitate self disclosure and self exploration.

- * to build relationships.

* **SUMMARISING**

Egan (1994:140) maintains that summarising involves listing the various things that have been done or said and restating in a clear and brief form the ideas that have been expressed.

Summarising serves the following purposes :

- * it helps to clarify the status in the group.
- * it provides direction.

* **INFORMATION SHARING**

According to Egan (1994:178) information sharing involves giving information and correcting misinformation. Information sharing also involves going out of the group for resource material or inviting experts into the group to provide information. Information sharing serves the following purposes :

- * it helps the group to know that they are not the first to try to cope with a particular situation.
- * It also helps the group to accept itself and its situation in a more upbeat way.

* **PROBING**

Prompts and probes are “verbal tactics for helping clients talk about themselves and define their concerns more concretely in terms of specific experiences, behaviours and feelings and the themes that emerge from an exploration of these “(Egan 1994:122).

Prompts and probes serves the following purposes :

- * they help to fill in the missing pieces of the story
- * they help clients explore issues more fully

As will be illustrated the communication skills of attentiveness, listening, empathy, information sharing, summarising and probing can be applied by the researcher during the participatory research process to relate to or interact with the group. In the researcher’s view these skills

can serve the following purpose :

- * they helped build relationships between the researchers and the group and between group members themselves.
- * they enhanced cohesion in the group
- * they enhanced exploration by individual members and the group itself
- * they enabled the group to understand its situation better.

2.6. CONCLUSION

In the study of literature on the group interaction within a participatory research process, the researcher found that it was often referred and alluded to and not explained. The researcher had to look for other literature sources to enhance understanding of the group interaction in participatory research process. Dialogue and communication which are often used synonymously play crucial roles in participatory research process. They can form the basis of and enhance the quality of interaction between the researcher and the participants and between the participants themselves.

The theory on communication in small groups is also essential because it enables the researcher to be alert to and sensitive to the dynamics of the group e.g. cohesion which may either enhance or hinder the research process. Although the researcher's role in participatory research, is reduced to that of an equal partner in the process, he/she nevertheless plays a crucial role in facilitating the research process. To facilitate such a process, the researcher must apply basic communication skills needed in interpersonal relationships. They are attentiveness, listening, empathy, information sharing, summarising and probing. In the following chapter, it will be described how the researcher used these skills to facilitate the participatory research process.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY ON THE REFLECTION OF GROUP INTERACTION AND COHESION IN A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the researcher's narration of the group interaction and cohesion within a participatory research process. It reflects the researcher's perception of what transpired and is her frame of reference.

The researcher will provide background information on the origin of the research and give an account of the participatory research process in terms of the five encounters with the group. These encounters will then be reflected in terms of group interaction and cohesion.

3.2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH : THE GROUP WITHIN THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

In 1995 a participatory research project was undertaken by outside researchers in the Gauteng Welfare Department. The purpose of the research was to study how employees of the Gauteng Welfare Department were experiencing and coping with the change process introduced in the department. Participants in the research were a voluntary group of 20 self-selected social workers employed at different levels and from all population groups of four services offices (ABCD), five from each office. As part of preparation the group was informed about participatory research by the researchers and given literature on two formal case studies on participatory research.

3.3 THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS

Five monthly meetings were held with the group between July and December at the Pretoria office's of the Gauteng Welfare Department. The researcher in this study co-facilitated the participatory research process.

3.3.1.FIRST ENCOUNTER - JULY 1995

*** DESCRIPTION**

During the first session all 20 social workers were present. The researcher introduced herself and the co-researcher to the group. Individual group members were asked to introduce themselves and to indicate which office they represented.

The following was explained by the researchers :

- * The purpose of the participatory research process.
- * The roles of the researcher and co-researcher as that co-learners in the research process, and not experts.

The group further contracted on the following :

- * to participate in the activities of the group
- * to respect each other's opinion
- * to treat discussions with the strictest confidentiality
- * to be honest and specific
- * to use a tape recorder to record what was discussed
- * to use the flipchart to record themes

During the 15 minute tea break that followed the co-researcher observed that members of the same offices clung together and interaction between members of different offices was minimal. After the tea break, the researcher introduced the subject of change in the Gauteng Welfare Department and wanted to know how the group members were experiencing and coping with

it. This was followed by a long period of silence. One group member tried to break the silence with jokes but without any response from the others. Some seemed to be withdrawn while others simply stared at the roof or gazed through the windows.

To facilitate participation, the co-researcher suggested that the group divide into 4 small groups according to offices, to discuss what seemed difficult to discuss in the big group. The facilitators then moved between the groups to facilitate the discussions. They listened attentively to the discussions, and probed for clarity and summarised themes which came out of the discussions. Lively discussions took place.

After 20 minutes, the small groups gave feedback to the big group on their discussion on how they were experiencing and coping with the change process.

Every group had a spokesperson and the feedback was noted on the flipchart by the co-researcher. Group A presented itself positively and regarded itself as a pressure group and a change agent. They wanted to participate fully in the process of change. Group B was pessimistic. Members presented themselves as being helpless and not sure of their future within the Welfare Department. Group C was also pessimistic. The prolonged change process was blamed for their anxieties, insecurities and confusion. Group D although negative, stated that being focussed on their work kept them busy and not to dwell much on what was happening around them.

*** AFTER SESSION DISCUSSION**

After the group session, the researchers met to listen to the audio tape and to reflect on what was discussed and the process of the session. The following themes were identified :

- * feelings of powerlessness and insecurity
- * lack of trust amongst group members
- * feelings of isolation and not being part of the change process
- * They seemed disillusioned with the strategic management teams (SMTS)

which were established by the new management of the Department to ensure that all employees participated in the process of change. Although the group identified themselves with the

mission and goals of the SMTS, they perceived them as being undemocratic. An outside consultant was appointed to manage the SMTS. This just contributed in further disillusion. The group felt that they themselves should have been in charge of the change and restructuring process rather than outsiders. The SMTS were perceived as stumbling blocks to change.

* Another concern of the group seemed to be the uncertainty surrounding their jobs. As part of the restructuring process of the public service, all employees of the Welfare Department had to re-apply for their job. For over a period of a year, all employees (including this group) had re-applied for their jobs but the management of the department had not informed them of the outcomes. As a result, the group was anxious and uncertain about their future with the Welfare Department.

Based on the information from the audiotape and the flipchart, the researcher and co-researcher planned on how the next session will be facilitated.

* REFLECTION

The meeting is evaluated using the description of group interaction and cohesion as indicated in chapter 2.

- GROUP INTERACTION

During the meeting, the group looked upon the researchers to provide direction and take leadership of the interaction process. Observation was minimal. By demonstrating a willingness and interest (see chapter 2) in their situation, the researchers seemed to establish a basis for a relationship with the group.

There was also interaction between the group members themselves at first. The interaction was more between members of the same office and minimal between offices.

This could be attributed to the fact that no icebreaking exercises were introduced to enable members at ease with one another. The researchers had taken it for granted that since individuals knew each other before the group was established, interaction would be spontaneous.

Interaction was also between the two researchers. During the group process, the researchers interacted with one another both verbally and non-verbally. The tea break enabled them to share their observations on the interaction being more between members of the same offices and the fact that participation was minimal.

- COHESION

The lack of response and prolonged silence experienced when members were asked to discuss how they experience and cope with the process of change, may have been an indication that the level of cohesion was low since the level of trust was low, it was difficult for members to relate in the bigger group.

The low level of trust might have been because of the following reasons :

- * the need to be accepted
- * the concern on whether one's contributions will be valued and recognised
- * fear of being victimized, if negative information shared leaked out.

When they were divided into small groups there was high and lively participation. Members became more relaxed and seemed to be at ease to relate to one another those whom they knew and felt comfortable with.

3.3.2. SECOND ENCOUNTER - AUGUST 1995

*** DESCRIPTION**

During the session the researchers summarised and shared with the group information gathered through the audio-recorder and the themes identified on the flipchart. The following information was shared :

- * There was open expression of feelings of insecurity and helplessness by the group which were as a result of not knowing their fate with the Department.
- * There was a general lack of trust in top management by the group.
- * There was lack of transparency by top management and attempts were made to obscure information.
- * The group's perception of the change process differ. There were those who were positive about the direction of the change process because the restructuring process at their offices had been finalised. Their positions were secured, felt better and more focussed on their work.
- * There was a general perception that the SMTS were stumbling blocks and contributed to the confusion and anxieties.
- * After this, one of the group members expressed her concern about the pessimism amongst her colleagues. She suggested that the group should focus on what they would like to see happening differently and what contributions they could make to the change process. The co-researcher invited a discussion on the suggestion made. The co-researcher suggested that the group break into small group to discuss their preferred scenario. The group did not welcome the co-researcher suggestion to break into small groups. They expressed their need to unite and stand together on issues which affect them. There was agreement that they want to do away with small group discussions. For 30 minutes the group as a whole, held a discussion on their preferred scenario. The following suggestions were made :

- * Every individual must stop complaining and participate in the change process
- * There is a need to lobby for support with fellow colleagues to make top management aware of the impact the change process has had on them
- * Even though the group agreed on what should be done, they expressed their concern about how to implement their decisions into actions.

At this stage, the researcher introduced the idea of dealing with the change by doing participatory research in the office settings. The subject was extensively discussed as well as how it can be used in the group's situation. The group welcomed the idea to undertake participatory research on the management of change at their respective offices.

Although the majority of the group welcomed the idea, there were some who were sceptical. Their concerns were based on the following :

- * some of their colleagues are totally against the change process. It will be unlikely for such people to co-operate or even participate in the research

- * due to the lack of trust amongst employees of the department, people may not be genuine and honest in the research process.

An interesting dynamic of the group which emerged during the last part of the session, was open expression of feelings between two members from office B. There was a heated exchange of words between Ba and Bb. The researchers allowed the expression of these feelings and allowed the group to resolve the matter.

*** AFTER SESSION DISCUSSION**

After the session the researchers met to listen to the audio tape and to reflect on the content and process of the session. The following decision were taken:

- to allow the group to take a more active role
- to allow the researchers take a less directive role
- to allow the group to function as a unit, rather than small groups

*** REFLECTION**

- GROUP INTERACTION

The process of interaction during this meeting occurred on three levels. Firstly there was dialogue between the researchers and the group -

1) sharing of information, summarising and confirming the themes of the previous meeting. The information gathered during the first session was clarified and confirmed with the group

2) the second level of interaction was between the group members. According to Reason (1988 : 55-57) authentic collaboration in co-operative inquiry (later known as participatory research)

depends on the relationships between group members. If members share a positive relationship with one another, they are more likely to relate to one another and contribute effectively to the interaction of the group. The fact that the group refused to break into small groups for a discussion on their preferred scenario is an indication that a positive relationship was developing between members.

3) The third level of interaction was between the researchers themselves. During the session, the researchers took turns to facilitate discussions, during which they supported and supplemented each other. After the session, the researchers also met to listen to the audio tape and to reflect on the content and process of the session.

- COHESION

The refusal by the group to work within small groups during the session was an indication of the increase in the level of trust and group sense of togetherness. Members seemed comfortable to relate to one another not in terms of offices, but as a single group. During the tea break, interaction was now between people from different offices and the participation of all members increased dramatically. The following are examples :

* During the session, Ca from office C openly expressed hostility towards members from office A because of the thought that they were given preferential treatment.

* There was open-expression of conflict between members of the same office (B).

The above examples indicated an increase in cohesion within the group. As indicated in Chapter 2, cohesion and authentic positive feelings within a group typically increase after negative feelings are recognised and expressed, for venting such feelings is one way of testing the freedom and trustworthiness of the group.

As indicated in the session the sudden awareness by members that they were all "in the same boat" minimised their differences and encouraged them to focus on their commonalities.

3.3.3. THIRD ENCOUNTER - SEPTEMBER 1995

*** DESCRIPTION**

The third meeting was held in September 1995 at the Pretoria office of the Gauteng Welfare Department. All group members attended the meeting. During this meeting, the group gave feedback on the progress made on the participatory research which was undertaken at the various offices. All group members had completed some research and reported back enthusiastically.

*** FEEDBACK ON PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH**

- At office A, statistical analysis was used and adapted to measure how employees were coping with the change. Five members of the group, plus five(5) additional members chosen randomly from the office, participated in the research. The results were significantly negative. It was decided that the group will continue to monitor its feelings in the form of discussions and to re-measure later.

- At service office B, a questionnaire was administered to measure coping. The research findings indicated that the respondents were anxious, didn't know what was going to happen and as one respondent

- indicated "how are we going to cope with what we do not know".

- At offices C and D, a single questionnaire was administered to measure how they were coping with change. Feedback on the research results was not available.

Measure how they were coping with change. Feedback on the research results was not available.

The group welcomed the research results from other employees. They served as an indication that they were all in the same boat. The question that logically followed from the group was "what now? Will top management be interested in our result? They expect information from

us anyway - We don't want this just to be another exercise". A suggestion was made by one group member (Mr Ca), that a meeting be held with top management to, give feedback on the progress made on the research progress and the participatory research undertaken at the offices. The group agreed to adhere to confidentiality and to omit names in the report to be sent to management. Miss Ab from office A was requested to arrange a meeting with management. Two representatives from the group were selected to accompany the researchers to a meeting.

*** AFTER SESSION DISCUSSION**

After the session, the two researchers met to listen to the audio tape and to reflect on the content and process of the session. The following decisions were taken:

- The researcher will liaise with Miss Ab from service office A about the proposed meeting with management.
- The two researchers will attend the meeting. The researcher will chair the meeting and allow the two representative to interact directly with management.
- The researchers will continue to play a less directive role in the participatory research process.

*** REFLECTION**

- GROUP INTERACTION

The interaction during the session was mainly between members. Unlike in the earlier session where communication was directed towards the researchers, in this session members communicated directly with one another. The feedback on the participatory research undertaken at the service offices was presented with enthusiasm. This indicated that members felt at ease with one another.

- The fact that members Ab and Ca came up with valuable suggestions which were welcomed by the group indicated the growth in the level of trust in the group. As indicated in chapter 2, if members feel that their opinions will not be valued, fear that they will be rejected or victimised, they are more likely to remain withdrawn and not participate in the activities of the group.

If members feel that they are being respected and trust one another, they are more likely to participate in the group process, thereby contribute to effective interaction. The fact that all members participated in research at their respective offices is an indication of the increase in group loyalty. The presentations which were unique indicated that efforts were made by all to ensure that the research projects were successful. This was also an indication of the increase in the level of cohesion in the group. As indicated in chapter 2 productivity is one of the characteristic of a highly cohesive group. The research results from the different offices had a positive impact on the cohesion in the group. The realisation that their colleagues share the same sentiments as theirs, enhanced their need to stand united. This made them to trust their fellow colleagues, in contrast to the concern which was raised in the second session by some members.

- MEETING WITH TOP MANAGEMENT

A meeting with top management was arranged by Miss Ab and held on the 11th of October 1995, at the Pretoria office of the Gauteng Welfare Department. Present in the meeting were two representatives from the research group and the two researchers. The meeting was chaired by the researcher who explained the purpose of the meeting namely to enable the two representatives to share with management the following :

- perception of the change process and how they were coping
- the results of the participatory research projects at the offices.

The representatives shared the following information with management:

- The change process was slow, confusing and the majority of the employees were being left out;
- Employees were generally dissatisfied with the SMTS and the fact that outsiders were used to manage and co-ordinate the change process;
- Employees were generally insecure and anxious about their fate with the department.

The response from management was the following:

- Management was concerned about the lack of communication between itself and personnel. It committed itself to open the communication channels and to address unresolved issues.
- Management disclosed that there were some elements within the department (middle management), who resisted change, and blocked efforts to involve personnel on the ground. (This was hidden information which the representatives and possibly other participants had never heard).
- Management promised to issue personnel with re-appointment letters by November 1995.
- Management agreed that expertise within the Department should be utilized to co-ordinate the change process. The two representatives promised to share this information with the group.

3.3.4. FOURTH ENCOUNTER- OCTOBER 1995

*** DESCRIPTION**

The meeting was held in October 1995 at the Pretoria office of the Gauteng Welfare Department. During this meeting, the two representatives gave feedback on the meeting with top management. The group was angry and dissatisfied. Emotions were high and the following remarks were made:

- Top management was also part of the blockage of the change process. Top management was not transparent and was unable to fulfill its promises. Management was inconsistent and practised double standards.

- the SMTS were another part of the blockage. They were undemocratic and the opinions of the employees were not considered. The group informed the researchers that even before this meeting they had made contact with each other by fax and a petition was submitted in which they (together with other personnel of the department) demanded that the services of the SMT consultant be terminated. The mood in the group was that of anger and dissatisfaction. At some stage everyone was talking and it was difficult to keep track of what was said. As a result it was difficult for the researcher to get back on track. The remaining part of the meeting was spent reporting on the progress on the research projects.

- A representative from office A, informed that they were not ready to present their findings but experienced different response from their initial findings. Findings revealed that the higher ranked officials were more negative and had no job descriptions for themselves. The more senior, the more unhappy they were.

- At office B, it was reported that the results of the research were not representative since the majority of the people were not prepared to participate in the research for fear of being labelled.

- At offices C and D, it was reported that data had been gathered and analysed. The results would be made available once they had been discussed with the respondents.

*** AFTER SESSION DISCUSSION**

After the meeting, the researchers met, listened to the audio tape and reflected on the content and process of the session. Based on their reflections, the following decisions were made :

- there was a lot of energy in the group which can be used effectively by members to address their situation.

- since there was only one meeting left with the group, there was a need to encourage the group to use the energy fruitfully.

- the last meeting will focus on enabling members to reflect on their experiences of the group's process.

*** REFLECTION**

- GROUP INTERACTION

The group's response to information from management was an indication of high level of cohesion in the group. Members openly expressed their shared experiences. They identified with one another.

The fact that the group even used out-of group-time to contact each other and lobby for support with other employees and petitioned management to terminate the services of the consultant is an indication of the high level of cohesion in the group. Members accepted the responsibility and decided on what actions to take to address their situation. As indicated in chapter 2, productivity is one of the characteristics of a highly cohesive group. During the session, interaction amongst members was open and involved expression and experiences. The focus was on the here and now and members talked directly to one another about what they experienced. Emotions were high and the tone of voice had changed. Members risked by disclosing and openly expressing their feelings without fear of being victimised. The leadership functions were shared by the group. At one stage, the researchers had lost control and it was difficult to get the group back on track. As indicated in chapter 2, a positive relationship between members in a group encourage communication which enhance the interaction of the group as a whole.

- COHESION

The group's response to information from management was an indication of high level of cohesion in the group. Members openly expressed their shared experiences. They identified with one another. The fact that the group even used out of group time to contact each other and lobby for support with other employees and petitioned management to terminate the services of the consultant is an indication of the high level of cohesion in the group. Members accepted the responsibility and decided on what actions to take to address their situation.

3.3.5 FINAL ENCOUNTER - NOVEMBER 1995

*** DESCRIPTION**

The last meeting of the group was held in November 1996 at the Pretoria office of the Gauteng Welfare Department. All group members attended the meeting. During this meeting the group shared its experiences of the participatory research process with the researchers. Each person was given an opportunity to share verbally his/her experiences of the participatory research process. The level of participation was high and members shared their experience of the participatory research process. The group's experiences were summarised by the co-researcher and noted on the flipchart to be as follows:-

Before participating in the research process, members revealed that they were negative and some even questioned the value of joining the group. The pessimism changed gradually and they started to feel more positive about themselves. They felt empowered to continue with the process on their own. Mixed feelings about the participatory research process raised expectations i.e. that their situation will be resolved, however termination of the process made them feel abandoned. The researchers also took turns to share their experiences of the participatory process e.g. that the apathy which existed during the initial stages of the group was gradually replaced by positive feelings and productivity.

The group agreed to continue with the research projects at the service offices and to use the results to be involved in the restructuring process.

*** REFLECTION**

- GROUP INTERACTION

The positive relationship which existed amongst members enhanced the level of participation which was high. Members were relaxed and at ease with another and this was indicated by

the fact that they shared their experiences on the participatory research process.

- COHESION

The positive and mixed feelings shared by the group members is an indication of the level of trust and cohesion in the group. The group valued its existence, the different member's opinions and their situation. In the researchers opinion, termination though expected, was difficult and painful.

3.4. LESSONS LEARNT ABOUT GROUP INTERACTION AND COHESION WITHIN A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS

As indicated in chapter 2, the principal aims of participatory research is the collective involvement in the research process of both the researcher and the respondents. Implied is that there should be interaction between the researcher and the respondents and between the respondents themselves. The researcher learnt the following lessons from the case study:

- * Interaction in literature in participatory research is often referred to and alluded and not explained. It was useful to use theory on communication and group interaction to enhance one's understanding.
- * It is essential to facilitate trust building in a group during the first session even though members knew each other prior to the existence of the group. The researchers took it for granted that since group members work for the same department and knew each other, they will be at ease with one another.
- * Interaction is enhanced by trust and cohesion. If group members trust and identify with each other, they are more likely to relate at ease.

3.5. CONCLUSIONS ON THE CASE STUDY

The conclusions on the case study will be discussed according to the aim and objectives of the study.

3.5.1. AIM OF THE STUDY

THE AIM OF THE STUDY WAS TO REFLECT ON THE GROUP INTERACTION AND COHESION WITHIN A PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH.

This aim was realised through the objectives below.

3.5.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE REGARDING GROUP INTERACTION AND COHESION WITHIN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH.

Knowledge gained from the study through the case illustrated indicates that literature on participatory research does not explain the interaction that takes place. The interaction is often referred to and alluded to and not describe. To enhance understanding of the interaction, knowledge from other theories e.g. communication can be borrowed and applied.

TO OBSERVE AND ANALYSE THE GROWTH OF COHESION IN THE GROUP. The concept of cohesiveness as highlighted in this case, illustrated that for a group to exist, there should be some commonalities amongst members. Such shared commonalities must be emphasised to bring members together to accomplish the desired objectives. Furthermore cohesiveness enhances interaction and increases productivity in a group.

TO OBSERVE AND ANALYSE THE PROCESS OF INTERACTION IN THE GROUP

The process of interaction in this case, illustrated has indicated that the best way of knowing and understanding about other people's situation and enhance their understanding of it is to enter into some form of interaction with them.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the collective participation of those affected and the interaction between them can enhance the development of knowledge, improve the lives of those affected and transform societal structures and social relations. To the members of the group who participated in the research, the process enables them to interact with one another, to look into their situation and come up with solutions which might resulted in the improvement of their lives. To social research the study has shown that adopting a person-centred and holistic approach to research can yield positive results. To developing countries, the study has shown that the development of any country cannot take place without the participation of those affected. If people are not involved in the development process, prosperity cannot be achieved.

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