PASTORAL PARTICIPATION IN A

SCHOOL CONTEXT :

TRANSFORMING TRAUMA

by

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ABSTRACT

The research started in a school context where the teachers were severely affected by the changes in and closing of their school. In my qualitatively based research project, I embarked with the research participants on a pastoral, narrative- and appreciative inquiry approach which assist the teachers to deal more efficiently with the effects of the changes they experienced. By sharing and reflecting on their stories, a climate that's conducive to their well-being was constructed. I describe how my participatory action research invited the teachers to be active research participants, who are responsible for their own construction of richer or alternative meanings in their lives.

Key terms:

Narrative- and appreciative inquiry approach, Contextual theology, deconstructive conversations, ethical, externalization, social construction, hope and meaning, alternative and richer descriptions.

Declaration:

I, Marina Geldenhuys, declare that PASTORAL PARTICIPATION IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT: TRANSFORMING TRAUMA is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH STORY

1.1 BACKGROUND

In March 1993, the secondary school, Citicol, was officially opened. This imaginative and far-sighted undertaking was piloted by the rector, Christo Basson, and management of Atteridgeville Technical College. In its Mission Statement the Atteridgeville Technical College dedicated itself to community service. This was reflected in the wide range of education programmes and services offered to the community. When the institution, Citicol (currently on the previous premises of the Pretoria Technical High School), was placed at the disposal of the Department of Education and Training, there was some hesitation; some questioning of the end goal. After considerable thought and liaison between the Department's Northern Transvaal Region and Head Office, it was decided to offer the institution to the Atteridgeville Technical College to utilize as a satellite campus. It afforded College Management a stimulating and demanding challenge.

From 1 March 1993 this project started to operate on a self-supporting basis as an extension of the main Atteridgeville campus. Twelve dedicated staff members, all subject experts at the secondary level, were appointed. An initial intake of sixty Grade Twelve students was accommodated. I was employed by Citicol as a teacher from the very beginning and was a staff member until my retirement in 2006.

At the beginning of 2005, after twelve years of successful management, the staff consisted of sixteen teachers and twelve administrative staff members. After the initiative of the Education Department, Atteridgeville Technical College, which included Citicol, merged with Centurion- and Pretoria West Technical College. A New management team was appointed to run the campuses under the name of Tswane-South Campus. The principal of the previously named Citicol remained in her post and everything continued as before.

Unexpectedly, in May 2005, the CEO of Tswane-South College changed the organized lives of the staff of this campus. Without any warning the principal of Citicol was demoted and moved to Atteridgeville Campus. The CEO also announced that from 2006 our school would be turned into a business college since an academic school does not fit into the environment of technical colleges. The staff received the news with shock and disbelief. Should the school be changed to a business college, one of the possible implications for the staff is that they could be without work the next year. The current principal was demoted and transferred to another premise and was replaced by a new principal who has never been in the position of running a school.

Our previous job satisfaction changed into fear and uncertainty about the future. Where we once were a group where every staff member was enjoying teaching at the school and the work we were doing there, we were now working in a climate of uncertainty, distrust and tension amongst teachers as well as amongst teachers and the management team. At present staff members are experiencing trauma in the absence of moral support. My own job satisfaction had changed since. I was experiencing the atmosphere in the school as unfriendly and the uncertainty of the future had resulted in my being unmotivated as a teacher. I could not perform to my best abilities in such an environment.

Being aware of my own experiences within the changing context of the school, I came to the realization that the other teachers and myself were all in need of emotional support and caring practices in order for us to survive the trauma. This research project developed from this awareness. My commitment within this research project lay in offering pastoral care and counselling to the teaching staff at our school. When attempting to offer pastoral care and counselling to the teaching staff, it was also imperative that I understood the possible consequences of organizational change on the work experiences of the organization's employees.

1.1.1   Turbulent waters of organizational change

According to Fleisch (2002:179) one of the characteristics of organizational change in education, can be described as "a change from 'top-down decision making' to devolving authority to lower levels of management within a department to allow for flexibility in reaching a goal." However, the change that took place in my school was not so much about devolving authority to lower levels of management. Change in our school context was more concerned with replacing top management with new people and restructuring the basic purpose of the school. I think changes in schools must have as ultimate goal, improved effectiveness and the *why* of change must be addressed. If changes are instilled on a level where management and teachers participate in the process, the "why" of change will be understood. According to Bacharach and Conley (1986:643) communication systems in schools are often antiquated and according to their research they suggest that teachers are rarely involved in the real decision-making processes.

How an institution or organization incorporates change, is important because of the impact on its workers. When there is an awareness of the quality and effect of changes on the workers in the workplace, the changes can contribute to the well-being of the workers (Rossouw 2002:3, Dauphinais & Pederson 1995:vii, Stoll & Fink 1996:92). According to Handy (1991:4), "change is, after all, only another word for growth, another synonym for learning". However, in the context of our school the changes that took place did not have growth as a result, for instance the removal of the principal and replacing her with another principal. In a case such as ours, according to Wessels and Kotzé (2002:131) the workers fall "… victim to change".

Change that does not have growth as a result can be called "discontinuous change". Discontinuous change has the effect of being confusing and disturbing to those affected by these changes, and it will make a big difference to the way they live their lives (Handy 1991:8). The change that was happening at our school was discontinuous and had the disturbing effect on the teachers of not knowing if they were going to be employed the next year. Discontinuous change has traumatic effects on people's experiences within the

workplace. Discontinuous change, for example, the removing of people in a workplace, has effects on many levels within the organization (Handy 1991:8). In this regard Noer (1993:16) says that people who are discarded in an organization, have a significant effect on those who remain within the system and are as a result experiencing discontinuous change.

The principal of our school was unexpectedly removed from her position as principal and re-employed in a much lower position in an office situated outside of our campus. The rest of the staff, of whom many had become friends with the principal, had witnessed this unexpected change and felt a sense of injustice and insecurity concerning the whole incident. To my mind, the staff's feelings of injustice and insecurity resonates with the words of Noer (1993:xiv) who says that people who have survived reduction and layoffs have layoff survivor sickness. Layoff survivor sickness is a generic term that describes a set of attitudes, feelings, and perceptions that occur in employees who remain in organizational systems following involuntary employee reductions (Noer 1993:13). Layoff survivor sickness is widespread and toxic to both the human spirit and organizational survival. All that such organizations gain is a depressed, anxious, insecure, stressed, unmotivated and angry work force (Noer 1993:xv) which not only has an impact on the survivor's life, but also on those close to the survivor (Lyons 1991:2). Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe (1998:82) define trauma as entailing the personal experience of drastic, horrendous, unpleasant, shocking events. I agree with Noer (1993) as the staff remaining behind after our principal had left, experienced these feelings in our traumatic day to day lives at the school.

Furthermore, changing too fast constitutes traumatic organizational change. In this regard Liebermann and Miller (1999:91) state that if the changes are going too fast and therefore not providing time for practice or reflection, the changes "may lead to failure and despair". Adizes (1991:58) says that "[c]hange fuels our internal conflict. The higher the rate of change we experience, the more the mind, body, emotions and spirit get scattered." Furthermore, according to Woods, Jeffrey, Troman and Boyle (1997:49)

teachers' professional confidence may be shaken as a result of sudden, fast changes within their workplace and roles that are perceived as largely negative.

From reading literature on organizational change, it has become clear to me that many organizations face organizational change. One, however, cannot assume that change is necessarily a synonym for positive growth. In this above discussion I have illustrated factors that need to be considered for organizational change to be experienced as positive growth. However, many of these factors were not present in the changes that our school faced and consequently the staff at our school experienced the change as traumatic. In instances where organizations face traumatic change, it is important to take cognizance of the related effects that accompany such change.

1.1.2   The effects of traumatic organizational change

In connection with the above exploration into what I will name traumatic organizational change, it was interesting to have a look at Weingarten's (2003) use of the terms "common shock" and "violation" as a way to understand how trauma impacts on people's lives. Instead of using the word trauma, Weingarten (2003:3) uses the words *common shock.* She reasons "[it] is *common* because it happens all the time, to everyone in any community. It is a *shock* because, regardless of our response – spaciness, distress, bravado – it affects our mind, body, and spirit." According to Weingarten (2003:5) the word *violation* also expresses traumatic experiences. Violation happens in a more subtle way than physical violence and it leaves people feeling awful without knowing why. While they are feeling stressed out (Sunter 1999:13-14) they have to balance family and work commitments.

Marais-Steinman (2002:82) argues that "violence in society has spilled over in the workplace", resulting in stress and work trauma, both physical and emotional. Violation, according to Weingarten (2003:5) happens indirectly through structural inequities and injustice, for example the way in which our principal was laid off and the possibility that our school's focus would change from an academic to a business school. The effects of

violation "may not leave a physical mark, [however,] there can be psychic traces, for violation disrupts our sense of meaning and makes us feel fear and dread" (Weingarten 2003:6). If a person endures the loss of a safe working environment, fear may result in physical pain and illness. Losses, according to Snyder (1998:64), reflect hoped-for goals that are temporarily or permanently removed from being potentially reachable. During a painful experience, this unpleasant experience is at the centre of our mental awareness and physical pain looms in our consciousness (Snyder 1998:64).

In the trauma scene where our principal was dismissed, the rest of the school's staff were the witnesses of this injustice. With regard to witnessing violation, Weingarten (2003:9) goes further to say that "common shock is triggered by our being witness to an event or an interaction that we appraise as disturbing, whether we are aware of this appraisal or not." In many instances the staff at our school had witnessed many organizational changes and interactions amongst staff and between staff and management that have caused common shock. Furthermore, the then current situation at our school was insecure and many of the teachers were also uncertain about their own future, especially if the school would change into a business school. It was possible that the staff could have their roles changed from being witnesses to becoming victims of institutional change.

Within these different witnessing positions the effects of trauma, common shock and violation lead to depression, the lack of motivation, stress and fear (Weingarten 2003:53). Noer (1993:17) says "people who are discarded have a significant effect on those who remain within the system." Joel Moses (cited in Noer 1993:27) articulates the effects of traumatic organizational change on the employees within a specific organization:

> Open hostility is surfacing as never before and its focus is toward the company. The amount of suppressed, covert hostility lurking just below the surface in many people is truly frightening. Unfortunately, much of the frustration, anger, and depression is taking its toll on the non-work lives of our people. Frequently, its manifestations are deteriorating physical and psychological health. Today's survivors are often disillusioned, frustrated bitter, and, most of all, lacking in hope.

1.2   RESEARCH CURIOSITY

Taking the background of this research project into consideration, I identified the following research curiosities:

- What are the effects of organizational change on the teaching staff?
- How can pastoral care and counselling be practiced within a school context where staff is experiencing trauma on a daily basis?

From the above research curiosities, the following preliminary research aims had been identified.

1.3   RESEARCH AIMS

Due to my intention to use the participatory action approach towards doing research as the preferred research approach, I refer to these aims as preliminary aims. This is because participatory action research is concerned with the sharing of power between the researcher and participants (McTaggart 1997:6) and therefore I also needed to allow space for the research participants to formulate their own aims for participating in this research. My commitment towards pastoral care and counselling with the teaching staff had been guided by the following preliminary research aims:

- To invite the teaching staff to share their experiences of traumatic organizational change
- To search ways with the teaching staff to improve the context of our daily working lives through pastoral care and counselling

In attempting to achieve these preliminary research aims, I conducted the research from a participatory action approach to research.

1.4   RESEARCH APPROACH

I embarked on this research journey from a postmodern discourse. Although I am educated according to a modernistic view, in my recent studies I have come to the conclusion that reality cannot be viewed objectively. According to Herholdt (1998:216-224) in modernism, the truth is connected to objective information, which causes a breach between subject and object. Truth is unchangeable with absolute status. Postmodernism developed as a reaction to modernism. Burr (1995:13-14) defines postmodernism as follows:

> Postmodernism is a rejection of both the idea that there can be an ultimate truth and of structuralism, the idea that the world as we see it is the result of hidden structures … Postmodernism thus reflects the notion that social change is a matter of discovery and altering the underlying structures of social life through the application of a grand theory or metanarrative.

Acknowledging the postmodern notion that social change is not only a matter of discovering the underlying structure of social life through the process of applying grand theories, I embarked on this research journey agreeing that there is more than one interpretation of a reality or truth (Gergen 1999:34-35). This awareness of multiple interpretations of reality and the socially constructed nature of meaning allowed me to make use of a qualitative, participatory action approach in my research (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:27).

1.4.1   Qualitative research

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4) define qualitative research as follows:

> … an emphasis on processes and meaning that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.

Reality and meaning, for example an exploration into the effects of traumatic organizational change, were socially constructed during discussions in this research journey between participants and were thus not measured. Sears (1992:148) indicates that those who work from a social constructivist view, will be able "to step into the worlds of others, to portray these worlds through the authenticity of their voices". Thus as a qualitative researcher as well as a participant (as I was also one of the staff members who witnessing trauma at work every day), this research journey was concerned with entering and reflecting the life-worlds of the teachers.

1.4.2   Participatory action research

As a participatory action researcher I embraced a commitment to invite participation from the other participants concerning improving our ways of coping within the context of our daily working lives, which included improving the effects of traumatic organizational change into hope and other life-giving practices. Because I cannot know *for* people, but have to know *with* them (Kotzé 2002:27), not to prescribe ways of changing the effects of daily traumatic experiences, my pastoral care within this research project was guided by the voice of Bosch (1991:424) who argues that spirituality or theology can only be done *with* those who suffer. In contextual theology (discussed in 1.6.3) continued of dialogue take place between all participants who were challenged to maintain this dialogue even when they differ in opinions (Bosch 1991:439). It is a theology from below (Bosch 1991:439) where I am not in a privileged position of knowing for the other participants during our research journey, but am journeying with them. Thus, in my capacity of doing pastoral care and counselling with the participants through participatory action research, we were enabled to achieve knowledge together of how we could improve our ways of coping with the trauma we had experienced. In pastoral care I could never see the participants in my research project as objects, they were knowledgeable co-researchers and agents of changes and improvements (McTaggart 1997:39).

Mouton and Muller (1997:334) indicate that in participatory action research the participants reflect on their social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice

of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. Participatory action research could help our staff and the management team to change our own situation to a more bearable situation in the broader context of our school situation. According to McTaggart (1997:2) the term 'action' is important because the participants' own activities were used for information. McTaggart (1997:2) says participatory action research is a research that

> simultaneously is concerned with changing individuals, on the one hand, and, on the other, the culture of the group's institutions, and societies to which they belong. These changes are not impositions: individuals and groups agree to work together to change themselves, individually and collectively. Their interests are joined by an agreed 'thematic' concern.

This research journey did not as such aim at attempting to change the organizational structure of the school. However, this research aimed at working together with the teachers to change, challenge and transform their experiences of working in an organizational context. Strydom (2000:420) indicates that participatory action research includes the possibility that the research participants, and in the case of this research project, the teachers might improve their quality of life. Strydom (2000:420) argues that people in a particular community develop critical consciousness. They become actively involved in collective efforts to solve their social problems and to improve their quality of life.

The qualitative participatory action research in my research journey, affected the procedures and processes I used in my research.

1.5   RESEARCH PROCESS

Due to the specific nature of participatory action research, my focus was on creating ways of changing or improving the effects of organizational change. During this research process, I have outlined to the participants the agenda and method that we were going to use. My method of data-gathering was an appreciative inquiry process as well as a

narrative inquiry process (discussed in 5.2.1. and 5.2.2.). The outline of this research process follows below.

1.5.1 Inviting research participants

Each teaching staff member was invited individually to participate in the research project. I had explained the aims for the project verbally and had invited each one to group sessions where they embarked on an appreciative inquiry process as an attempt to improve the traumatic context of our daily working lives. In the group sessions, like Anderson, "I want[ed] to ensure that each participant had a voice, contributes, questions and explores …" (1999:67). I wanted us all to benefit from the research. In this regard I share with Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:9) their commitment to doing participatory action research that would primarily be to the advantage of the participants: "Only if participants benefit from the research will it contribute to ethically acceptable academic knowledge" (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:10).

1.5.2 Data generation

I generated the research data by way of group participation with the research participants and the method of doing so was a narrative inquiry process as well as an appreciative inquiry process.

1.5.3 Narrative inquiry

According to Morgan (2000:5) a narrative is "like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story". In explaining the stories, we give meaning to our experiences while we live our lives (Morgan 2000:5, Gergen 1985:266, Müller 1999:8). The narrative inquiry was aimed at providing a space for the research participants to voice their experiences of the effects of organizational change and other traumatic events within the current school context – thus the telling of their dominant as well as survival stories. When the teachers or participants had the opportunity to tell their own dominant story of

how they experienced the changes in our school, they discovered, according to Parry (1991:44) their own voices. Narrative inquiry is then, "…to facilitate a process in which a person finds her own voice to tell a story of her description of her experiences" (Parry 1991:44). In listening to the stories of surviving participants, a supportive relationship developed among the survivors which motivated them to a positive and hopeful future. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999:62) say "[w]here appreciation is alive and generations are reconnected through inquiry, hope grows and responsibility through relationship expands". (Please note that appreciation inquiry is described in chapter 5.) Kotzé and Niehaus (2002:17) suggest that the telling of 'survival' stories, leads to an appreciative inquiry that speaks of practices that motivate staff to create a sustaining community.

In telling our dominant and survival stories, which included the effects and experiences of organizational change, the staff were "gathering data [stories] into the strengths, potentials, achievements, and visions of the Other" (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999:62). In the case of my research project information had been gathered concerning the strengths, potential, achievements and visions of fellow teachers. As a pastoral counsellor, story-participating was part of my pastoral practice. According to Gerkin (1984:25-27) pastoral counsellors are listeners to stories; interpreters of stories and bearers of stories. Although I had participated with the other participants in story-telling, I did not tell my own story. I was in a knowing position concerning my future (I am retiring at the end of the year) and thought that my future was more preferable than the other participants at the time.

I think pastoral narrative therapy is a way to express a contextual theology that includes ethical values such as respect, love, human dignity and integrity. I refer to and agree with Drewery and Winslade (1997:32) who point out that "[n]arrative therapy in Practice is about *doing* therapy respectfully – that is promoting the construction of a client's life without enfeebling her in the process … it is about learning to avoid ways of speaking and listening that unintentionally express disrespect for others." The participants in our group said they had experienced a feeling of disrespect and worthlessness after the sudden announcement of the closing of the school and the possibility of being without work the following year. From a contextual theology perspective I, with the participants,

in a mutual relationship, achieved respect and love for each other. I think respect is built on love and therefore find the words of Isherwood and McEwan (1993:134) important and applicable in my research as a pastoral therapist:

> It is this limitlessness of love that is the basis of God's righteousness and therefore the crux of our ethics. Our ethical task is to develop our capacity for love and loving … The important element is that we expand our ability to love, not that we conform to some absolute value.

During this narrative inquiry, I leaned on narrative therapy's ideas concerning the examination of ideas and practices (discourses) by defining them, examining them and tracing their history. Drewery and Winslade (1997:35) describe a discourse as a "set of more or less coherent stories or statements about the way the world should be". Freedman and Combs (1996:57) call this process of unpacking dominant discourses, deconstructive questioning: "Deconstructive questioning invites people to see their stories from different perspectives, to notice how they are constructed (or *that* they are constructed), to note their limits and to discover that there are other possible narratives" (Freedman & Combs (1996:57). As a pastoral therapist I had, with the participants, examined these "truth discourses" which were causing havoc and destruction amongst the research participants.

White (1991:28-30) defines that when clients separate themselves from the dominant stories that constitute their lives, it becomes possible to orient themselves to aspects of their experience that contradict this knowledge. Such contradictions are ever present and these contradictions are many and varied. To facilitate the process of separating from the dominant stories, or the "re-authoring" process, the therapist can ask a variety of questions, including those that might be referred to as "landscape of action" and "landscape of consciousness" questions.

Landscape of action questions (White 1991:30, Morgan 2000:60) can be used to refer to the past, present and future, and are effective in bringing forth alternative landscapes that stretch through these temporal domains. Landscape of identity questions (White 1991:31, Morgan 2000:61), encourage clients to review the developments as they unfold through the alternative landscape of action questions that reveal:

- The nature of their preferences and desires

- The character of various personal and relationship qualities

- The constitution of their intentional states

- The composition of their preferred beliefs

- The nature of their commitments

As participant researcher I used the processes of re-authoring to explore the survival stories and find ways of improving the effects of the traumatic context that the teaching staff experienced on a daily basis. Morgan (2000:5) refers to re-authoring or re-storying conversations as stories that are central to an understanding of narrative ways of working. The process of re-authoring allows for and enriches the appreciative inquiry process that was also been followed.

1.5.4 Appreciative inquiry

As a researcher I have worked from a social constructionist discourse. Working from a social constructionist discourse, the view is entertained that people support the process of constructing meaning through **conversation** (thus the relational construction of meaning), and therefore people are **responsible** for the meanings that are constructed. Within the social construction discourse this awareness of relational construction of meaning and responsibility (McNamee & Gergen 1999:xi) is termed as 'relational responsibility' (McNamee & Gergen 1999:xii). McNamee & Gergen (1999:xi) suggest that "relational responsibility lies within the shared attempt to sustain the conditions in which we can join in the construction of meaning and morality". During interaction with one another the research participants constructed their meanings of trauma and ways of transforming the effects of traumatic organizational change in their lives. In this regard, the appreciative inquiry process, developed from a social constructionist discourse, maintains that people can together construct meaning and hope in situations where desperation and hopelessness try to maintain the order of the day.

Hammond (1996:7) describes appreciative inquiry as follows:

> Appreciative inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.

Hammond (1996:23-36) uses a designed model of contrast between problem solving and appreciative inquiry of Cooperrider and Srivastva to illustrate the different assumptions made between the problem-solving model and the appreciative inquiry model. Assumptions are the set of beliefs shared by a group that cause the group to think and act in certain ways. In sharing assumptions the group work efficiently because they do not have to constantly stop and consider what they believe and how they should act (Hammond 1996:14). The process of appreciative inquiry model is based on the following assumptions of Hammond (ibid.):

> In appreciative inquiry we focused on doing more of what works as opposed to doing less of something we do not do well as in the problem-solving model. What we focus on becomes our reality – if we focus on what is wrong or what is missing, we tend to see everything through that filter or frame. The result of appreciative inquiry is a series of positive statements phrased as if they were already happening. Because they are amplifications of what has already happened, they are easily visualized, e.g. instead of telling the golfer "Don't hit the ball into the woods", visualize the perfect performance and say "hit it straight down the middle".

Appreciative inquiry values that which gives life to a community or organization. The highest priority of appreciative inquiry, is the constructive discovery of the community's "life-giving" story (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999:60). Through an appreciative inquiry process, the research participants discussed the successes that we had achieved in previous years and how we could repeat these. This way the participants had created new energy that is positive and synergistic. It is this energy that distinguishes the generative process that results from appreciative inquiry. There is no end, because it is a living process.

The statements that had been generated by the participants were grounded in real experience (Hammond 1996:8). The topics that we had discussed, had represented what we really wanted to discover and explore. This way we were able to have conversations about the future we desired and we were able to design a better future. In following an appreciative inquiry process, there had been no boundaries to the teacher's conversations in their participation with one another, because 'each moment of insight can give way to further exploration" (Gergen & McNamee 1999:18).

To talk is therefore never idle. According to Gergen (1999:34,35) we give meaning to our worlds through the use of words – every time we speak, reality is constituted. Anderson (1997:94) refers to Hermans (1993) who says that words are "part of our discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social actions." Through talking with one another we co-ordinated our relating so that meaning, values, and our myriad of social behaviours could evolve and be shaped in the directions we preferred. Through talking we could create change and use our most powerful relational tool – our ability to create stories that then reinvent our lives together (Cottor & Cottor 1999:169). The topic that we explored regarding the change concerning our school and its management team and the hopelessness of our situation, was transformed to something more meaningful. We had designed or constructed new, more lifegiving ways of living our lives for the remainder of the year.

According to McNamee and Gergen (1999:18), the process of appreciative inquiry is directed toward points of practical leverage. Thus, in the context of this research project, appreciative inquiry was a way of undertaking pastoral care in creating with the teaching staff the knowledge that God will always love us whatever the circumstances and that His love enabled us to respect and love ourselves and our participants in our journey to achieve a meaningful worklife. I facilitated the process of identifying practices that had in the past sustained the teachers and re-implemented these practices into our daily contexts of the school. Furthermore, this exploration had also allowed teachers to acknowledge each other for the life-giving effects that they had on each other's lives during their teaching careers at this specific school.

According to Cooperrider and Whitney (1999:63):

> [In] a relational process, the deeper the appreciative interchange (that is, the more people felt valued and in turn opened up in increasingly substantive ways), the more it appears the listeners became self-reflexively aware of the culturally conditioned approaches of their own "true" worlds. In appreciative inquiry we share stories and construct new images of the desired future.

Sharing stories in a group, participants were touched by one another's needs and took the initiative to help. A group transforms the knowledge they accomplished into actions by talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. The group created "provocative propositions" (Hammond 1996:39). Provocative propositions describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate that creates the possibilities to do more of what works. Provocative propositions are derived from stories that actually took place in an organization. Grounded in history, tradition and facts distinguish appreciative inquiry from other visioning methods in which dreams serve as the primary basis for the vision (Hammond 1996:37-45).

1.5.5 Data-capturing methods

During the group conversations, I intended to, with the permission of the participants, audio-tape the discussions. From these recordings, after each group conversation, I wrote a letter to the group. These letters had been a summary of our conversations which made the participants aware of creative possibilities or propositions that have helped them to survive until the end of the year. Epston (1994:31) reflects on the value of letter writing:

> The words in a letter don't fade and disappear the way conversation does, they endure through time and space bearing witness to the work to therapy and immortalizing it. A client can hold a letter in hand, reading and rereading it days, months and years after the session.

Morgan (2000:102) suggests that these letters may comprise of some of the main ideas or thoughts that emerged during the conversations; of questions that the therapist has wondered about since the conversations; of some reflections from the therapist about the

conversations, and of documentation of some of the unique outcomes that were discovered during the sessions.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994:421) regard letters as a research method which can be used between participants, between research collaborators or between researchers and participants. For the purpose of this research, I had been using letters between myself as the researcher and the participants, and the letters reflected the journey that we have embarked on through both narrative inquiry and appreciative inquiry processes. Part of the reflection of the journey was on highlighting the effects of organizational change on the participants' lives as well as reflecting on the processes that we as a group engaged in as attempts to improve the effects of traumatic experiences at work.

1.5.6 Data analysis

The content and the process of the group conversations and the content of the letters written to the research participants, were used for data analysis. Concerning the effects of organizational change, I categorized the effects under certain themes. In this regard, Oliver (2004:142) states that the identification of general themes from research conversations is one way of data analysis. Due to the participatory nature of this research project, after having identified the themes according to the effects of organizational change, I asked the participants to confirm whether they agree with the identified themes. Furthermore, I also invited the research participants to reflect on their experiences and effects of participating in an appreciative inquiry process. These experiences were also documented as data in my research project.

In an attempt to make transparent the discursive foundation from which I have embarked on this research journey, the following section offers an exploration into my discursive positioning as researcher and pastoral therapist.

1.6 DISCURSIVE POSITIONING

The following section illuminates the discursive positioning of the research approach.

1.6.1 Social construction theory as discursive position

Since I intended to embark on this research journey from a social constructionist perspective, I find the words of Gergen (1985:266) applicable when he points out that social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live. In a postmodern, social constructionist worldview people, together, construct their realities as they live them (Freedman & Combs 1996:22-23). Freedman & Combs (1996:22) stipulate four ideas which relate to this worldview:

> Realities are socially constructed; realities are constituted through language; realities are organized and maintained through narrative, and there are no essential truths.

From a social construction theory approach, I agree with Burr (1995:4) that knowledge is accomplished through day to day interactions among people in their social life. In my research process, the participation of the teachers in their relationship with each other, has thus an important role in the construction of knowledge and meaning. Gergen (1994:243) remarked: "World construction takes place not within the mind of the observer but within forms of relationships." Although it was important for the teachers to tell and reflect on their experience of the effects of the trauma, in a social construction theory approach, there is more than the telling of your own story and the reflection thereof; it is the result of a social construction process, as Burr (1995:4) explains in the following words: "Our current accepted ways of understanding the world, is a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other". In connection with the above words of Burr, Drewery and Winslade (1997:40) say that the reality with which we work

is not something there on the "outside", but something that we produce and something that can change continuously.

To achieve more than the telling of their stories of how they were affected by the trauma, which would have limited their potential as excellent teachers, I encouraged the teachers to detach themselves from their dominant stories and to achieve richer narratives of improving or changing the effects of the trauma. I used the words of Foot and Frank (1995:178) as guidelines who said that the client's experience is not wrong, but the story imposed on that experience. Foote and Frank (1999:178) say furthermore:

> This story must be objectified as a social product or construct, held up as a thing to be examined and critiqued, so that the client can be separated from the totalizing, individualizing, discourse that subjugates through normalizing judgements … The therapeutic task is to open a discursive space in which clients can develop their own interpretive story – a story that affords meaning to their experience – and to recognize how the dominant discourse works to deny this story.

It was my aim in my pastoral therapeutic research process, to journey with the participants towards the participants' own interpretive stories where they would be able to distance themselves from the stories (the negative experiences of the effects of their trauma) that were imposed on them, towards lifegiving alternative stories. I thus identify strongly with the contextual approach to practical theology.

1.6.2 A contextual approach to practical theology

In my research, I do not prefer a confessional theology where theological theory is based on certain confessions, for instance church decisions (Van Wyk (1995:86-88), but position myself in the contextual approach to practical theology.

Contextual theology identifies itself today as a theological theory of communicational activity – a shift was made from a pre-modern confessional theology to a modern-scientific theology. Pre-modern and modern-scientific theology, are both a theology from

above (Bosch 1991:423) with rights-based ethical prescriptions (Kotzé 2002:14). Patton (1993:39) gives the following description of a contextual approach: "Contextuality means that the social situation in all its uniqueness informs the thought and action of the reflection of the Christian community". The contextual approach seeks to develop an empowering, life-affirming and hopeful spirituality that is responsive to human suffering (Cochrane et al. 1991:78-80). According to a contextual approach there is not only one truth or fact, but "attempts to interpret knowledge as a social construction process" where "all knowledges, even knowledges of right and wrong, are then seen as part of a continuous stream of interpretation – *we cannot not interpret*" (Kotzé 2002:15).

In the context of my research I and the participants interpreted our own work life and the effects of the traumatic experiences. A contextual approach made it possible for the participants to see themselves as important role players in the process of changes in our school and even the educational system. Because of a contextual theology with a practice-orientated approach, people's experiences (Ackermann 1991:107) make it possible for them to have a space where they will feel safe to have conversations with God and where He can have meaning for them in their lifeworlds (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:68,69). In a contextual theology the emphasis is on the validity of the experiences of the marginalized teachers in the context of their work life and thus, according to Bosch (1991:423) a theology not from above, but where there is an ethical assessment from the start. Kotzé (2002:21) adds that in choosing to ethicize, "the dynamic process of "doing ethics" becomes more participatory and transparent". After the traumatic experiences of the teachers, our group of participants could together (Kotzé (2002:21) negotiate what would be a good work life for all of us in every specific situation and where we could implement the words of Kotzé (2002:21) that "[t]o live is to ethicize, and to ethicize is to participate in living".

1.6.3 Participatory pastoral care as an expression of a contextual practical theology

Because of the ethicizing manner in a contextual approach, I had the appropriate space to practise pastoral therapy with the participants who had been traumatised.

The participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling asks for sensitivity to the suffering of marginalized people in general, but especially for sensitivity to the practical consequences that theological perspective and belief practices might have. Pastoral counsellors need to be conscious of the theological commitments that guide them in their ministries, a theology that is "sensitive to and in dialogue with the lived experience of people must hold a central place in the work of pastoral counseling" (Neuger 2001:56).

According to Rumbold (1986:54) "[p]astoral care is concerned with the meaning of human experience. Its task is not to deliver answers or interpretations so much as to assist in uncovering them". Shifting the focus from delivering answers to assisting people in uncovering answers resonates for me with Kotzé's (2002:6) ideas on participatory pastoral counseling. Kotzé (2002:4) uses the words of Heshusius to describe participatory pastoral counseling:

> [A] fine process of weaving threads of understanding – listening, responding, all the while attuned to participate in a way that would heal and not hurt. Connective understanding is more than a matter of empathy – it is about people dancing in the silence of dark … a search for participatory consciousness that will create their own music and become a healing movement.

During my research with the participants, pastoral therapy from a contextual approach had an important effect on me because of a continued ethical realization in our participation and discussions. Becoming aware of the staff's expressed need for care, is defined by Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen (1991:17):

> The moment of insertion locates our pastoral responses in the lived experience of individuals and communities. What people are feeling, what they are undergoing, how they perceive this, how they are responding – these are the experiences that constitute the primary data of the context

This moment of insertion starts when a person becomes aware of the difficulties and pain of people. I was just as shocked as the staff by the way top management addressed the

change in and of our school, but was not as traumatized because I was close to retirement at that stage. However, as an observer or witness, I was overwhelmed by witnessing the traumatic effect (Weingarten 2003:21) the announcements had on the staff. Weingarten (2003:229) defines "compassionate witnessing" as a platform for a response that is helpful to others and to us. As a compassionate witness I wanted to respond to the trauma by creating a pastoral relational context where these traumatic experiences could be improved or changed. According to Welch (cited in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3) transformative relationships come about when "there is the power of empathy and compassion, of delight in otherness, and strength in the solidarity of listening to others, bearing together stories of pain and resistance". Changing traumatic experiences occurs when one feels the pain of another person … acknowledges one's own pain and finds joy in listening to others, challenges meanings and experiences that emerges out of the conversations with each other (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3).

In my participatory pastoral approach, my aim was to enable the participants to change their traumatic experiences, and to focus on the presenting problem or situation where we worked "with limited target goals" (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:19), where we had to focus only on changing our own problems in adjusting to the changes in our workplace. Although religious functions, for example prayer, can be healing for the teachers who were suffering, pastoral care cannot solely focus on religious functions, especially in a work-related context. Pattison (1993:16) says the following:

> I have already dismissed the idea that religious language or overt reference to theology or gospel is necessary for an encounter to be religiously significant or pastoral. It is important, however, that pastoral carers should maintain a Christian vision, a spiritual life and a sense of being rooted, grounded in and orientated towards God.

In my view, pastoral counselling encompasses a commitment in not telling research participants how to cope and survive within a context of change, uncertainty and trauma. I think pastoral counselling includes a commitment towards searching *together* with the staff for ways to improve and transform their experiences. Pastoral care and counselling accentuate the spiritual way in which you care about and love the people whom you work

with, where you are committed not to care *for* but to care *with* people in need of care (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7) and where you may be able to help the traumatized to make a link between their plight and spirituality.

The participants, in a group, thus focused in this research project not on the changing of organizational structures and management styles, but focused through caring, support and comfort to change the traumatic effects of organizational change on the day to day working experiences of the teaching staff. In my pastoral participation with the staff I strived to consider ethical ways of participating in people's lives.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When considering ethics in participatory research, I agree with Kotzé (2002:21) when he defines ethicizing:

> Ehicizing is not something unseen that some people sometimes do for or about other people. To ethicize is to do everything in participation with the others, or rather, with everyone participating. This implies that all who are involved, implicated or possibly affected by ethicizing in any given situation become participants in the process. Together we have to negotiate what is a good life for all participants in each and every specific situation. To live is to ethicize, and to ethicize is to participate in living, or to put it differently, to live is to participate in an ethicizing manner.

I had thus invited the research participants to participate in the negotiation concerning practices that would help us to change the effects of the trauma that we encountered at school. In my compassionate feelings about the pain and suffering of the teachers, my commitment to changing the effects of the trauma, was ethically based (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3). As such this awareness is situated within the context of the people – the context of their suffering. Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:3) argue further that "[p]astoral therapists cannot but take a position when engaging with people in pain and suffering. Ethically this position means a commitment to transformation, positioning oneself on the side of those suffering, and against all oppressive or exploitative discourses and practices". In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of

data and in the analysis of findings. We, the participants, had not positioned ourselves opposite each other, but had a relationship where we were continually aware of our connection in the traumatic effects of the changes in our school, thus "where the self and others are seen, not as separate entities, but as an ontological and epistemological unity" (Heshusius 1996:131). This consciousness of participation had ethical implications where "all living is moral" when "the self and others are seen as belonging to the same consciousness" (Heshusius 1996:133).

Pastoral care has an ethical beginning and end. Kotzé (2002:11) states that he chooses to focus on the effect that knowledge, truth, doctrines and beliefs have on people in real life. How do they work? Who benefits? Who suffers? An ethical discourse is intertwined with the answers to these critical questions more than with a normative moral system. As a researcher, I did not decide on the best practices for the intended improvement and changes of the effects of the trauma, it was a process of negotiation where all the participants' voices were heard concerning "what is a good life for all" (Kotzé 2002:11).

These above ideas on ethicizing connects with relational responsibility. In this respect Anderson (1997:105) guided me, in my stance as a therapist towards the participants, with the words: "When a therapist invites and allows a client to collaborate, responsibility becomes shared. When a therapist takes this philosophical stance, the dualism and hierarchy between a client and a therapist collapse and responsibility and accountability are shared". According to Lannamann (1999:86-87) our accountability is socially produced in situations that we participate in but do not control. This mindful, but not determining, aspect of social life can be called "joint action". The unintended nature of joint action constructs the institutions within which [people] make sense of their activities to one another. Joint action produces the conversational resources that enable people to account for their actions. Based on joint actions the layoff survivors had ways of making sense of their activities to one another (Lannamann 1999:86-87).

Ethical considerations in participatory research included, in all aspects of the research, the people on whom the research focuses. They need to participate in the decisions about

what to research; what the design and process of the research journey are to be; the reflections and interpretation as the research are co-constructed and how research reports are written (Kotzé 2002:27). I decided that the journey with the participants must be to their advantage and was thus constantly aware of how the participants were experiencing the journey together, that they were participating voluntarily and that they were participating in a therapeutic journey as well as a research project.

I asked the participants' permission to audio tape and take notes during our conversations and also asked permission to use their own words at times for the purposes of this research. My written reports of our conversations were available to them throughout our journey, which enabled them to reflect on how correctly I was reporting on their words, experiences and feelings. Having an openness between us (Cochrane et al. 1991:16) allows us to become self-aware, self-critical and to be aware that ethical ways of being must be "… sought in the everyday struggles of people … who are trying to make moral sense of their own suffering and who are witnesses to suffering that go beyond their own" (Frank 1995:19).

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

A chapter outline is given below to briefly indicate how a collaborative process evolved in the following chapters

Chapter one defines the research aims, research approach and steps followed. It gave an outline of the research journey.

Chapter two focuses on the trauma of organizational change and the effects thereof on the employee.

Chapter three and four reflects upon the narrative inquiry process and the appreciative inquiry process. Chapter four considers the research participants' experiences of traumatic organizational change. I look into the practices developed amongst the teaching

staff in their attempt to transform trauma. I also consider the effects of participating in an appreciative inquiry process.

Chapter five reflects on the research journey.

CHAPTER TWO

CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE

2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

In this chapter I focus on changes in the workplace and the effects thereof on employees and management in a school context. To be able to understand how and why the teachers in our school were traumatized, it is important to know how changes in the workplace affect people. In my research I will refer to the employees and management of businesses and organizations, since today a private school is run on the same basis as that of a business.

The first change that we as a school experienced was the merging of the three colleges of which our school was a part. Although we were part of the merger, it did not affect us in any sense other than being aware of it. The staff continued with classes as before and we enjoyed a stable, disciplined work environment. The second change, however, affected the staff of Citicol severely: our principal was demoted to another position without warning and at the same time we heard that our school was to be changed to a business college at the beginning of the following year. The staff experienced the announcement as traumatic and stressful. Before I embark on the aim in this research, namely the transformation of the trauma of the staff, I will offer some background to explain what changes in general in the workplace are; how management manages change and how it affects the workers. This background discussion concerning the effects of organizational change is necessary in order to explain and understand the way our staff was traumatized.

2.1.1 Defining organizational change

Ballentine (1983:358) defines organizational change as "a relatively extensive and enduring reordering and/or redefining of the process of social organization". Ballentine (1983:359) says furthermore that change within schools require change in the structure, roles and power relationships. Adamany and Bacon (1995:3-4) say a change for the better leads to high performance, improved results, is supported by employees and is institutionalized in a "culture that values continuous improvement". In contradiction where the change of schools were only linked to effectiveness, Stoll and Fink (1996:11) see the change of a school system and a school within that system in a holistic way where the change process "relates to concepts as culture, leadership, learning theory, partnerships, adult learning and evaluation". Handy (1991:5) states that thirty years ago people thought change would mean more of the same, only better, for instance more money and more happiness. Today, in an organization, change can not be guaranteed as more of the same, change is now more risky – it can mean losing your job (Handy 1991:5). I agree with Handy since the changes in our school may result in staff members losing their jobs. Furthermore, "there is an ever-present potential for conflict because of change" (Ballentine 1983:363). Lieberman and Miller (1999:24) agree that "conflict is inevitable in any major change effort".

In my opinion, according to my research, I agree that change was imperative in our school because of educational transformation in South-Africa. The teachers or participants in my research, were not against the implementation of changes in our school, but were opposed to the *way* in which the changes were implemented – the teachers were not part of the decisions made regarding the changes, they were not even aware that any change was going to happen. The teachers felt that they, as teachers, always considered when making decisions, their decisions would be to the benefit of the students. The teachers felt thus that the changes did not promise any positive improvement in our school regarding the students, for instance the following year's grade twelve students would not be able to matriculate at our school and would have to find a new school.

Because of the above said possibility of conflict due to major changes, the correct implementation of organizational change, is of the utmost importance. I will focus in this chapter on how the implementation of change will determine either a positive or negative experience.

2.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE

In an election education manifesto (Fleisch 2002:41) *A Policy Framework for Education and Training,* the ANC committed itself to "transforming the bureaucratic and authoritarian culture of the former education systems". Fleisch refers to the first public statement from the new Gauteng Department of Education that was circulated to schools in November 1995: " ... inequalities of the past should be done away with. The Gauteng Ministry of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education are totally committed to the speedy eradication of these inequalities and will thus structure their policies, procedures and mechanisms to achieve this objective" (2002:47). This governmental commitment towards changes in the education systems had several implications for Citicol and its staff.

The teachers at Citicol were astounded about the authoritarian manner in which top management addressed the issue of change in our school. Wilna, a research participant, made the following comment regarding the way the CEO had announced the changes to the staff: *"I was really so shocked. It felt as if he was erasing the years of hard work and successes in a few sentences."* Ria agreed: "*What an arrogant man! He felt absolutely nothing for us".*

According to Aquila and Galovic (1988:51) the change agent, in our case top management of the three colleges, needs to be informed concerning appropriate management strategies and sophisticated leadership techniques when faced with organizational change. Aquila and Galovic (1988:52) say that "the change-agent must provide constant support to those risking as well as to those who are apathetic, resistant or threatened by change. The degree of success in creating this climate for change will

control the extent of the change effort". The way change is implemented in a school is thus of the utmost importance, especially as Stoll and Fink explain furthermore that schools generally resist change since the teachers are the people "who have to implement educational change and who have been largely left out of policy debates, resisted change and sought to preserve continuity with their past experiences" (1996:5).

Our school is an example of the result when the above way of applying change was not followed. The staff was not prepared in any way for the two major changes to occur. If top management had structured the change of our school or informed us about it before actually implementing the changes, the teachers would have had time to accept the changes (Aquila & Galovic 1998:53). Ballantine (1983:358-359) agrees that the process of change "can take place in rapid spurts or it can be gradual. It can be planned or unplanned. Planned change often takes place as a result of the 'manifest functions' or stated purposes of a system. Unplanned change, in some cases referred to as 'latent functions', may result from unanticipated consequences of planned change". The change that happened in our school, was dealt with in a rapid and unexpected way, and was experienced by the staff as shocking and frightful. Such a drastic change turned the secure future of the staff into an insecure and uncertain one. If the change had happened gradually, going through a process, the staff might have experienced the change as positive, or if not positive, then acceptable.

When our staff heard that our school was going to be changed into a business college, we learned in our conversations amongst each other, how differently each one experienced the news and the effects it had on our beliefs. Some teachers accepted the news as inevitable, while others felt angry and threatened. Lieberman and Miller (1999:25) say "[i]n schools that are reforming, teachers [need to] learn how to manage conflict, not how to resolve it. They try to use conflict productively and to accept it as part of the day to day life in school. While this may seem difficult, it is a necessary skill that, with practice and commitment, can be learned".

The importance of managing the implementation of change in an organization correctly, cannot be understated because it determines the well-being of its workers.

2.2.1 Managing the implementation of change

Although changes are inevitable, the aspect of *how* change is managed, is important. Top management did not consider the participation of the teachers in the making of decisions and did not organize any counselling for the teachers although they were aware of the traumatic effect of the changes on the teachers. According to Aquila and Galovic (1988:52), security is a basic need. Much human striving is to obtain present or future security. Teachers, like most others, are fearful of altering secure and safe practices. In the educational context Aquila and Galovic (1988:52) argue for the need to do everything possible "to reassure teachers so they will not be unduly threatened when changes are proposed".

Teachers at Mitchell's Plain high schools told Fakier (1998:16): "The system isn't there, the in-service training isn't there to teach people how to deal with diversity and some of us are not yet equipped for the changes that are happening around us". Citicol's staff has in many ways expressed similar experiences.

Although change affects the lives of people, the impact of change on people in a workplace can be minimized in certain ways, for instance through transparency from management about what the possible future for the teachers might hold. If the top management had had open conversations with the staff about what was going to happen to them, a relationship of trust could have been built between them. Not knowing, being kept in the dark, resulted in uncertainty and insecurity. Top management should have allowed the teachers to assist in the process of incorporated changes and they should have taken part in decision making (Bacharach & Conley 1986:642).

In an open relationship between management and staff, decision-making is on the table for all to discuss. Such a relationship includes trust and respect between participants and

the outcome of discussions more readily accepted. Adizes (1991:90) says "[d]ecisions need to be made for solving the problems that emerge with change. Those decisions must provide solutions that will make the organization effective and efficient in the short and long run". Because the role of a manager in decision-making is important, I refer to Adizes (1991:178) who explores the characteristics of a good manager:

> Their style is well rounded. They do not excel in everything, but they are capable of adequately performing all roles. They have strengths and weaknesses, but no blanks in their code. Good managers know themselves and is someone who hears, listens and feels. They do not just hear without listening or listen without feeling. They are sensitive to the impact they have on others. They are conscious and are present. Good managers accept their strengths and their weaknesses for the only reason that if you cannot accept yourself, how will you accept others?

Although I agree with Adizes' description of a good manager, one needs to take the context of each situation into consideration and should not assume that these are the characteristics that will be important and relevant in each context. A modernistic discourse influences a person's thoughts of how a manager should be, for instance that a manager should manage changes in the workplace in a specific way irrespective of the context in which the changes happened. The shift from modernism to a postmodern discourse, affected one's understanding of meaning, as contextual and local. This shift results in the realization that "what constitutes a good leader is not specific" (Adizes 1991:178) and depends on context. It was therefore important in the context of our school, that there should be a negotiation between the staff and managerial team considering what they think are good managerial characteristics. I refer to Brueggemann (1993:8-9) who said meaning is inherently contextual. The staff therefore based their expectation of what a manager should be on their interpretation of the context of our school.

Although the staff does not expect of our management to be instant good managers in our changed workplace, we are now aware, after our traumatic experience, how important the expertise of a good leader is in an institution. Any school, and especially a school where

radical changes occur, needs a leader who can be a positive factor in achieving a meaningful outcome. Adizes (1991:90) argues that "[n]othing is ever perfect in itself when it is subject to change. What is necessary is not a single omnipotent genius, but a complementary team". A way in which management can deal with change, is not to generalize their interpretation of change, but to cope with change in accepting and discussing the different opinions of the staff with them.

If the staff of Citicol had participated in the structuring of the changes in our school, we could have become agents of change and not shocked receivers of change. Awareness of and participating in the structuring of change, helps one to decide how to react to it, and will establish a foundation of trust between the participants.

2.2.2 A relationship of trust

Before people will be willing to follow a leader's vision or act on a leader's initiatives, they must trust their leader. This trust cannot be demanded. Leaders must earn it.

(Reina & Reina 1999:137)

In recent years schools have to be run as businesses in order to survive. A business is conducted through relationships, and trust is the foundation of relationships. According to Reina and Reina (1999:9) trust is a relationship of mutual confidence in contractual performance, honest communication, expected competence, and a capacity for unguarded interaction "... trust is related to individual, group, and overall organizational performance". The teachers experienced a relationship of trust between the previous principal and themselves.

Related to the importance of a trusting relationship that existed between the principal and the staff, Reina and Reina (1999:9) reinforce the benefit of trusting relationships: "Whether employees believe a leader or not depend on their perception of the leader's trustworthiness. When leaders create trusting working environments, people feel safe to challenge the system and perform beyond expectations". However, with the demotion of

the principal and the replacement of a new principal the issue of trust became a problem. The new principal instilled many new rules that the staff experienced, rightly or wrongly, as a breach of trust in them. According to Clark and Clegg (cited in Doig 2002:8) the staff in a school will be "more motivated to work if there are less rules". From my own experience, I know that if a principal trusted me enough not to burden me with too many rules, I would be motivated to do more than what is expected of me. The staff accepted and knew there had to be basic rules to conform to, but rules that restricted their role as teachers unnecessary, made them angry and rebellious.

Furthermore, the teachers' uncertainty about their future in this school, contributed towards their expressed need to be constantly informed about any decisions the management team had made. The teachers suspected that top management withheld important information from them – this resulted in the teachers feeling betrayed and that they could not trust the new principal. Betrayal, according to Figley and Kleber (1995:33), is interpreted as "an intentional or unintentional breach of trust or the perception of such a breach. Intentional betrayal is a self-serving action done with the purpose of hurting, damaging, or harming another person. Unintentional betrayal is the by-product of a self-serving action that results in people being hurt, damaged, or harmed".

Reina and Reina (1999:85) say that sharing ideas and information with employees builds trust, as well as enhancing decision making and productivity: "Through sharing, leadership demonstrates trust in people to manage such information. The foundation for trust in work relationships is strengthened, and the organization's capacity for trust expands. Withholding information to gain control, power, and perceived job security has the opposite effect and produces significant loss – it undermines trust in your relationship with your employees".

However, according to Reina and Reina (1999:138), some leaders do not readily share information. The most common reason for this is the fear of loss of control. They fear that not being the only ones "in the know" will reduce their value or power in the

organization. This is relevant in periods of major change, when people are feeling particularly vulnerable and perhaps threatened. They respond out of a need to justify themselves and their role. It is possible that the new principal feels insecure in her demanding working position, but if she wants to build a trustworthy relationship with the teachers, she will have to create trusting working environments where the teachers feel safe and they may then perform beyond expectations (see in this regard Reina & Reina 1999:9).

Reina and Reina (1999:136) say "[r]elationships depend on trust to succeed. When leaders lose sight of this and orchestrate change without sensitivity and awareness toward the people affected by the change, they betray both themselves and the people". Reina and Reina (1999:137) say further on that "[t]he betrayal people experience is not necessarily a result of downsizing or major change but as a result of *how it is managed*. Employees want to be a part of the process, not apart from the process, and they need time and assistance to adjust to the changes. All employees, leaving and staying, deserve to be treated with trust, dignity, and respect". In this regard Seiling (1997:4) also states that "[p]roviding and seeking information, answering questions, and keeping channels of discussion open eliminate surprises and reinforce feelings of trust and belief in the organization". If management had prepared the staff for the coming change in the school, it could have been the beginning of a trusting relationship between them.

Measures, such as where the teachers participate in decision making, will help to establish a relationship of trust between teachers and management. According to Woods, Jeffrey, Troman and Boyle (1997:3) "such measures will liberate schools from the bureaucratic grip and ideological meddling of local education authorities". Lieberman and Miller (1999:xi) agree that "... teachers are at the center of all efforts to improve schools, that without their full participation and leadership, any move to reform education is doomed to failure". The change incorporated in our school, was based on decisions made from top-management downwards, without the participation of the teachers. This kind of change we had experienced, resulted in a relationship of mistrust between us, the teachers, and management.

To my mind, one of the biggest mistakes a manager can make, is to assume that trust will return on its own after a major change such as restructuring, merging or any traumatic event. Thus managers will need to embrace the challenge of rebuilding trust within the workplace. When a traumatic change occurred in the workplace, the workplace needs a manager who acknowledges such change as a challenge to be managed. This acknowledgement also includes attempts from the manager to gain the respect of the staff members. Adizes (1991:175) defines a good manager as someone who is not valued for what he or she *knows* but for who he or she *is.*

Being unprepared for the post as manager and the responsibility that goes with such a position, and while the school is in a process of being changed to a business college, our new principal understandably experienced stress on a daily basis. Burke and Weir (1980:301) underline the serious effect of stress of managers in a workplace in saying "managerial stress exists as a real problem in the work world with serious implications for the health and wellbeing of individuals in management positions". Although Reina and Reina (1999:138) agree with the stressful implications of managers working in a changing workplace, they argue that:

> Dealing with the emotional side of change is difficult but necessary.
> Many leaders are uncomfortable watching their people experience the pain
> of change and are uncomfortable experiencing their own pain. They often
> consider this to be "touchy-feely" stuff, not the stuff of "real business.

However, for better or worse, changes affect the lives of people. In the context of this research project, it was the management and the staff at the school that felt the impact of change in their lives.

2.3 THE IMPACT OF CHANGE

One should always keep in mind that change is culturally, historically and politically specific and as such of importance in how a person will react to change in his or her life. Kleber, Figley and Gersons (1995:4) write that "[a] person is raised in a culture that has

taught him or her to perceive, think, and evaluate in a certain way. These cultural influences have become internalized by the person in the course of this socialization process and shapes his or her responses to extreme and unpredictable events. They determine how a traumatic experience may challenge an individual's sense of identity, as well as the violation and disruption associated with the experience". In accordance to the above Summerfield (1995:20) concludes that "…victims react to trauma in accordance with what it means to them. Generating these meanings is an activity that is socially, culturally, and often politically framed. Since all experience is relative, there will be no easy prediction of how victims prioritize their personal traumas". Traumatic change can be defined as change that has not resulted in the wellbeing and happiness of a person. The result of change can be traumatic or not, and I therefore find the following extract a good example of how change affects people:

It was a Tuesday in November, cold, damp, and overcast, as many are in the North. In the lunchroom, people speculated about what was to come next. "Have you heard when the next cut will be? Who do you think will go this time?" A worker from across the table chimed in, "I have given seventeen years of faithful service to this company. From now on, I can't trust anybody – it's everyone for him- or herself! Out on the production line, employees were moving the product, but performance was nothing like a year earlier, before the restructuring began. The manager peered out of his upper mezzanine office window overlooking the production floor. "Overall labor costs are lower, production is down and declining, and morale has hit rock bottom!" he muttered to himself. "What am I going to do?" (Reina & Reina 1999:135)

The above-mentioned extract indicates the uncertainty as a result of change in the workplace, which contributes to trauma. The staff at Citicol are also facing uncertainty and the traumatic effects thereof. They do not know if they are going to have a job the next year and if they do get a job, whether it will be at Citicol or at one of the other three main campuses. Apart from uncertainty, change may also affect the person's physical or mental health or development (Brett 1980:102). The impact of the disruptive, sudden

change on the staff and the absence of their previous principal, caused emotional pain and even affected the physical health of some staff members.

2.3.1 The traumatic effects of change on physical health

Although change is part of life and no one can stop change, after twelve years of teaching in a safe and secure environment, the staff was not ready for this radical change. The influence of the secure worklife in Citicol, contributed to the teachers' reaction towards the trauma they experienced in accordance to what it means to them. Furthermore Aquila and Galovic (1988:52) point there are great differences in a teacher's readiness for change. Such readiness is affected by age, health, energy, motivation, educational background, and personal experience. One of our teachers had severe health problems and although teaching could not have been easy for her, she is a dedicated teacher who rarely stayed away because of her health. The previous principal accommodated her by allocating only non-physically taxing tasks to her. She experienced misgivings about how she was going to adapt to whatever the new future had in store for her. Traumatic effects of change can be experienced by manifestation of certain health problems, for instance asthma, headache, high cholesterol and stomachache (Van der Merwe 1999:16). According to Marks and Mirvis (1992:18-32) the uncertainty caused by unpredictable actions of managers can result in "upset stomachs, headaches, and nervousness". Although employees may continue to function, "[p]roductivity will suffer as they become more susceptible to minor illnesses" (Marks & Mirvis 1992:18-32).

2.3.2 Traumatic effects of change on emotional health

After the traumatic change the staff experienced pain and loss of security. Reina and Reina (1999:138) make the salient points below about change:

> With every change comes both pain and loss. Culturally, we are taught that it is not good to cause other people to lose, so we mentally minimize their loss. This phenomenon makes it harder for us to see the pain many employees experience with change. The longer the employee's tenure, the

greater the feelings of loss and the greater the need to grieve. And in a world where everything is changing rapidly, many people who previously looked to their workplace as a source of stability now regard it as out of control. It frightens them.

When the staff heard unexpectedly that the principal was moved to another position, and that our school was to be turned into a business college, our staff experienced pain, loss and trauma. "Pain" because we were going to loose everything that we were feeling passionate about in our work, for instance the presentation of lessons, and the satisfaction you experienced in knowing you made a difference in a students life, socially or academically, and "loss" because of the uncertainty of having a job the next year. Socially, the teachers had organized different functions for the students which they had not experienced hitherto; the teachers learned and understood the difficulties the students experienced regarding poverty and broken family lives, and undertook to not only listen to their stories, but also to *do* something about the personal problems of the students, for instance to give food to the students who came to school hungry. Academically, the teachers worked very hard to improve the students' academic levels. Very special and good relationships existed between students and teachers. The top management of the merged colleges who orchestrated the change in and of our school, have up to now ignored the well-being of the staff and the traumatic effect of the change in our workplace.

According to McFarlane (1995:33) "trauma attacks the individual's sense of self and the predictability of the world". The staff experienced the traumatic change in the school as extremely stressful. The "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" of the American Psychiatric Association starts its description of the concept of traumatic stress disorder with the assumption that the individual has experienced an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone. According to McFarlane (1995:33), "[c]entral characteristics of traumatic stress are the experiences of helplessness, powerlessness, and the threat to one's life and sense of control". Stress can be a strong and powerful effect of a traumatic experience. In this

regard Weingarten (2003:44-45) says people who were exposed to the most troubling kind of events, respond with heightened reactivity, because of the sensitivity of their brain and that "... small matters, that might not bother others, present big hurdles for them".

Although there are various responses to post-traumatic stress, I will focus on depression, burnout, hopelessness and avoidance, as these were the stressed responses that were experienced by the staff of our school.

2.3.2.1 *Depression, stress, burnout and hopelessness*

Wells, Sturm, Sherbourne and Meredith (1996:7) define depression as follows: "Depression consists of feelings of sadness or apathy accompanied by symptoms such as irritability, poor concentration, diminished or increased appetite, or loss of interest in activities usually enjoyed". After the change in our workplace, the staff felt depressed and found it difficult to rise in the mornings to go to work, and did not have energy to start with their classes. One of the teachers captured the experience of her colleague in the following words:

> *In the process of organizing functions for the school, the teacher who always manages it with great expertise and success, experienced the organizing of functions since the change in the school, as a stumbling block. When something small went wrong during the functions, she over-reacts by experiencing herself as incompetent. She experienced everything that should be done by her as too stressful and as "a mountain in front of me.*

Depression as a response of traumatic stress results in a person experiencing low productivity and creativity. Furthermore, one struggles to make decisions, to concentrate or to remember (Van der Merwe 2004:27). When a person feels depressed, "it seems to steal our energy, our ability to experience pleasure, our plans and goals for our lives, and even our hope" (Neuger 2001:150).

Stress and depression that result in a person experiencing "burnout" which refers to "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations" (Figley & Kleber 1995:93). Not knowing if we were going to have a job next year, was an emotionally demanding situation to work in. Two aspects are particularly important in burnout: emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishments. Burnout is manifested in a variety of symptoms, such as physical symptoms e.g. aggression; work-related symptoms e.g. de-motivation; interpersonal symptoms e.g. withdrawal from co-workers (Figley & Kleber 1995:93). The staff of Citicol have expressed struggles with depression and burnout stating that they do not feel motivated to work and that they feel like surrendering to hopelessness.

According to Madigan (2003:53) persons describe the feelings of hopelessness as experiences of "no way out", "being boxed in" and "life being futile". If you have had a successful career up to now that has changed without warning and left you without certainty of work in the future, the change may push you into hopelessness. As a way to cope with hopelessness some people tend to avoid the memories of a traumatic experience. By keeping their distance and avoiding discussions about the traumatic experience, they seek to reduce overloading their minimum supply of energy. This outer aloofness in the form of avoidance, disguises inner feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Such people become restless, irritable, withdrawn, insecure and lonely (Gherman 1981:80).

To my mind, to cope with the effects of the trauma, requires empowered participation from the participants.

2.4 EMPOWERED PARTICIPATION

The traumatic shock the teachers experienced during the announcement of the changes in our school, their being unaware and uninformed of the planned changes, generated their disempowerment. Their having no part in the decision-making, separated the teachers from management, and resulted in their feeling victims of the effects of the traumatic

changes. Weingarten (2003:30) propose a disclosure that shifts people's position of unawareness and disempowerment to a more challenging and empowered position full of possibilities. To shift from a position of disempowerment to empowerment I would like to borrow Weingarten's (2003:232) couplets of states of vulnerability and resilience, where the negative is replaced by a positive in every instance. They are: despair paired with hope, helplessness with agency, meaninglessness with purpose, isolation with communion, resentment with gratitude, and sorrow with joy. While the exposure to the changes in our school was inevitable, there was much we could do to mitigate the effects if only we had the will to do it.

From a pastoral narrative inquiry approach an invitation to the participants to tell their stories allowed them to express the states of their vulnerability. Putting their vulnerability and disempowerment into words (chapter 3), was the beginning of an antidote to the effects of the trauma that had inspired it (Weingarten 2003:232). An ethical, pastoral, narrative inquiry approach would not consider the participants as the problem, as White and Epston (1990:16,40) believe the problem is the problem and people's relationship with the problem becomes the problem. White and Epston (1990:15-31) asked for alternative stories that supported the participatory discovery of unique outcomes. To my mind, a participative relationship of the participants in the context of their worklife and personal life, had supported the participants in constructing alternative stories (chapter 4). Externalizing the problems enabled the participants to seek alternative relationships with the effects of the trauma which resulted in empowerment. Empowerment (Seiling 1997:14) is the ability to balance and direct creative energy in directions that have a meaningful worklife outcome. Empowerment includes "the key elements of confidence, decisiveness, control, skills, and awareness" and relational participation relates to the participant's ability to connect to others.

In a participative relationship the group of teachers on our research journey, were moved to an actively, ethical participation in changing our positions to more awareness and empowerment. Ethical awareness included a "participatory consciousness", a knowledge that is "co-constructed in the course of relating with others in a specific context or

situation, at a specific moment in time" (Kotzé 2002:6). Co-constructing new possibilities in a participative relationship empowered the participants to resist trauma and to actively improve ethical behaviour.

2.5 REFLECTION

During the writing of the above chapter, I was throughout aware how my ethic-participatory and postmodern approach formed a framework for my research. In my research methodology, my social construction approach enabled me to shift the cold clinical truths and facts to a warm climate of participatory relationships. The participants and I explored together organizational change and the impact it have emotionally and physically on them. We also explored the importance of how to manage the implementation of change and the importance of trust and the effect of distrust in relationships during organizational changes.

From a postmodern perspective, the content of this chapter is not final, but ever open to more and ongoing perspectives. As described in the following chapter, co-constructing new possibilities is an expertise the participants acquire through knowing how they feel and what they think. An empowered position enabled the participants in *doing* care with each other during the journey of our research project.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF TRAUMATIC ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter 1, as a qualitative researcher, as well as a participant, I reflected on the life-worlds of the teachers and invited each staff member individually to participate in group sessions. When speaking of our group of participants I will refer to them as "teachers" or "participants" and although I speak of "them" and "their", the participants were each awarded a letter as a summary of the session to indicate their approval and acceptance of the letter.

During these group sessions we embarked on narrative inquiry (Chapter 1) where the focus was on how we, the staff, had done well in the past and how we were doing at that stage (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999:60). My purpose in this chapter is to explore the effects the teachers experienced of organizational change and to describe how I used the narrative inquiry process in my participatory pastoral counseling with the teachers. I chose the narrative approach (Chapter 1) because the participants could come together to share their deepest experiences of the trauma, to listen respectfully for the meaning of their experiences as told and enabled them to offer new meanings of "resolution, hope and self-determination" (Waldegrave 1990:7).

Although therapeutic processes, built on psycho-analytic models, which focused on uncovering the past, can help people to facilitate new decisions about living in the present, it does not help anticipating a better or hopeful future (Lester 1995:22). I therefore prefer a narrative process where conversations allow people to tell stories about their experiences and the effects thereof. As a pastoral therapist I confirm and practise Waldegrave's stance that it is the therapist's task to facilitate new meanings which can

develop into stories of "resolution and hope" (1990:11). This approach resonates with Macquarrie's words that we bring our past with us in stories and at the same time "reach out into our future" (1980:47-52). I agree with Niebuhr (1963:92) that the past and the future are "extensions of the present". In telling your story of the past, it changes into a new experience full of possibilities and constructs a future that is different from the past (Lester 1995:13).

Because of the teaching staff's expressed need for care and counselling, we decided to come together in a pastoral, caring group. According to De Jongh van Arkel (2000:190) it is important that the group should have meaning and continuity for those participating in it. Pastoral conversations with one another in our group may have the effect that they will enrich the staff's lives by transforming the trauma and attempt to make their work more meaningful for themselves in a changing workplace. Having pastoral conversations together, we could be supportive of each other in the school community. In this regard Clinebell (1984:352-354) states that one of the advantages of group pastoral care is the presence of mutually giving relationships: "The group climate of interdependency facilitates the growth that comes when one becomes an agent of healing in the lives of others, even when one's own healing is being nurtured by them".

Relationships within a group could be effective in dealing with problems (Pembroke 2004:110). During conversations with one another, hidden or unseen aspects of our traumatic experiences could come into view and could be articulated openly. Conversations and empathic listening could result in a warm, caring presence that is crucial in any healing relationship. The group of teachers in our school, as co-participants of the same experiences, had the ability and the yearning to care for one another. Caring and support is a way of releasing the potentialities that are dormant in most people, for instance the potential to transform pain into joy in applying for another job or to look for small things that will turn everyday experiences into something joyful. De Jongh van Arkel (2000:25) refers to Lindijer and Lindijer-Banning, who wrote that "in a group there is a scope for mutual care and acceptance of one another and offers far less scope for the development of a hierarchy". Since I will use a narrative way of doing therapy, I will take

care not to be prescriptive. In a hierarchical way of doing therapy, where decisions are made from the top downwards in a prescriptive way, "[t]hose people directly affected by these decisions were (and are) never or seldom invited to participate – their voices were silenced" (Kotzé 2002:12).

During mutual care that can take place within a group context De Jongh van Arkel (1999:119) states that "*support or sustaining* seems to be the key word to describe the caring action in mutual care". De Jongh van Arkel (1999:137) defines sustaining as a function of pastoral work: "Sustaining ('to stand by') involves forming and maintaining a relationship with distressed and suffering people that will give them a sense of support and comfort". During pastoral care through group participation I envisioned my role as that of facilitating the creation of a context where teaching staff can mutually care for each other. Furthermore, my role could also be interpreted as encompassing the sustaining function: "The sustaining function is particularly important to people who are oppressed. Sustaining is especially necessary and important at times when no immediate solutions to personal and social conflicts are forthcoming" (De Jongh van Arkel 1999:138). Sustaining is the pathway to a hopeful future because "hope means moving beyond doubt and anger" (Ackermann 1993:67). On this mentioned pathway the participants not only move towards an appreciation of their own and others' dominant stories, but also develop new possibilities and alternative stories to the dominant story they had to face at their workplace.

3.2 EXPLORING NARRATIVES

In my research project, it was important to listen to the teachers' own narratives of how the trauma was affecting them. In the narrative approach I have used in my research project, I agree with Zimmerman and Dickerson (1994:235), who indicate that "the focus here is on *effect* instead of causes". The crisis in our school affected the teachers in such a way that their futures look bleak and hopeless, they have experienced a disintegration of their lives. I shared with the group that if we wanted to invite hopefulness into our lives again, we would have to tell our stories of how the trauma or crisis affected us. We, the

staff, did not have the opportunity to voice our opinions during the traumatic event, thus, by storytelling, the silenced voices of the teachers could be heard after the unsettling process of change.

I shared with my co-participants the importance of narratives, that life is a story; that the stories we remember and the stories we are expecting will shape our present experience (Müller 2000:71) and will include "future anticipations" (Lester 1995:28) of our lives. Events in a person's life make sense only if we can use storytelling to explain "the purposes, intentions, motives and passions of a person" (Lester 1995:28). Thus, the way in which traumatic experiences in the workplace affected the teachers, would be understandable through their narratives. The changes that occurred in our school created new experiences that the teachers could include in their workplace stories, and also "the effects of these change events in their other life stories" (Wessels & Kotzé 2002:133). From a narrative approach Lester (1995:28) claims that life experience is inherently narrative. Human beings make sense out of their experiences by means of stories and each new sensation or "interpersonal transaction is shaped by your mental processes into a story". People not only tell stories, but construct a sense of identity out of stories, "... both conscious stories and those we suppress".

3.2.1   Teacher's narratives

With the threat (losing their jobs and the closing of the school) under which the teachers had to work, the research participants' narratives were a limited indication of how they experienced the culture of the school at the past and present time. While listening to the stories of the teachers, my role as therapist was "... more to bear witness than to intervene, to listen and encourage families [in this project the teachers] to tell their own stories, find their own meanings in the calamity that has forever altered them" (McDaniel, Hepworth & Doherty 1992:63). Applicable to the above, is the following poem:

PLEASE LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving me advice,
you have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me why
I shouldn't feel that way,
You are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something
To solve my problem
You have failed me,
Strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don't talk or do – just hear me.

(Anonymous)

When describing the participants' experiences, I have used their own words (Anderson 1995:28; Morgan 2000:102 and White 1995:36). The value of the participants' own words is reflected by the words of Reinharz (1992:267): "When the interviewees 'speak for themselves' or 'use their own voice', the reader is better able to understand". The narratives of the teachers' that I have used in my research, is a summary of what they told about themselves and their experiences. While listening to the teachers' narratives I made choices of what I thought important to use and not to use of their stories in my research project. In these choices I tried to capture the most important moments of the research conversations. After working together for some years in Citicol, the research participants did not have to introduce themselves or to tell their personal background stories. We were not a big staff and knew each other well. However, we had not as yet had conversations about how each one experienced the changes, because they were afraid of expressing their feelings and opinions. And even if they did try to discuss their uncertainty about their future with management, the response was unsympathetic.

When we started our sessions we were seven (myself included) white and three black teachers. The other white or black teachers on our staff could not attend the sessions because of personal or transport problems. Thabang, one of the black participants who joined the group, was the only male teacher, still very young and previously a student of our school. He assisted Hannetjie in the functioning of student support. Thabang attended

a few sessions, but then excused himself. He said he could not understand the fear and uncertainty of the teachers, they just had to go on with their lives. After Thabang had left the room Wilna reacted crossly. She said: *"I will not attend these sessions if Thabang is here again. What does he know about our pain?"* Ria and Petro replied that they could understand his attitude towards the changes of the school. They said: *"He is still very young with a promising life ahead of him in the after-apartheid's years in South-Africa".* The rest of the group agreed that they understood the reason for his, what they experienced as "unsympathetic", attitude. Veronica, a young black teacher, attended all the sessions but maybe because of shyness never participated verbally. The participants accepted her as an appreciated silent partner. One of the white teachers, Maggie, only attended the first few sessions and then said she was not a group person, she was a private person and would try to cope on her own. The participants respected her feelings.

The research participants told their narratives as follows:

Patricia: *"I am a married woman with two children. I enjoyed my stay because the principal was treating me like a mother would have done. I could share all my problems and frustrations with the learners in class with her. This term I experience the absence of unity among the staff, they are too afraid to share their frustrations. Maybe they don't trust anyone anymore. I feel angry about what has happened".*

Wilna: *"I have been at the school since 1996. I enjoyed working in a small school community where everything was running in a disciplined way, I felt safe with no worries about the future. We can't speak to the new management about our fears, they don't listen and have no empathy. Since the change the atmosphere has been unpleasant in the school. I am extremely frustrated, angry and fear possible unemployment next year, as I have very high medical expenses. I'm plagued by nightmares and am afraid of being shifted to another campus or that it won't be possible to teach my subject".*

Carol: *"I did not experience the school as a safety zone, but enjoyed teaching the students because everything was run in an orderly way. I did not trust the principal completely,*

because of an incident that happened a few years ago, but she did a good job managing the school. After the change or demotion of the principal, the discipline has collapsed. The staff is negative about the future".

Petro: "*I agree with Carol in experiencing the school not especially as a safety zone, but also enjoyed teaching the students. I also enjoyed working with my colleagues, a friendly group of Christian women. However, I was overloaded with work that created conflict with my responsibilities at home. The strain was affecting my health. I think my colleagues have a difficult time because of the uncertainty of next year. I don't experience the change as bad, because I'm in the lucky position of going home after three periods. The way the teachers were handled, without having a chance to participate in decision making was abominable and I don't want to be associated with the school any more".*

Hannetjie: "*I think that in a very robust manner we were informed our principal has been removed from her post and that she would no longer be at our school. Further we were told that the school would be closing down the end of the year. One or two of us tried to say something but to no avail. I am not against change or transformation, but against how it was done. When you take steps that affect people, you have to be careful and take their feelings and uncertainties into consideration. Most of the staff members were extremely traumatized and then the uncertainty started. People started to gossip and the general feeling at school was very unpleasant. I felt terribly sad for the principal's sake and I tried to support her. Three of us have been told that we can no longer teach due to the fact that we do not have teachers' diplomas. At this point in time I still don't know where I will be next year. I was informed that I am needed and that I will not lose my job. But afterwards I have been told that my younger colleague, Thabang, is most probably going to take over my job as student support teacher and I will have to move to another college. That hurts and I have to do a lot of self-talk not to wallow in sorrow. At the moment I feel my loyalty has changed, even though I am not someone who will let the children suffer. I'm not afraid to speak up and voice my opinions".*

Ria: *It feels as if I am just being at school; I am not energetic any more, I know now what a stressful situation means.*

I think it was important for the participants to have been able to express their intense emotions in a relationship where they felt safe (Frank 1998:209). To tell a story implies a relationship. Frank (1998:200) said "stories are not material to be analyzed; they are relationships to be entered". I experienced that my pastoral attitude of unconditional acceptance, love and respect (Drewery & Winslade 1997:32; Isherwood & McEwan 1993:70,134) resulted in them feeling safe to express themselves. It was clear, after listening to their stories, that the teachers were affected badly by the trauma they experienced in our school.

3.3 EFFECTS OF THE TRAUMA

In one of our first conversations I had shared with the participants the importance of gaining clarity on how they were affected by the changes and one way of doing so, was to put these effects on the table and to talk about them. The following effects were discussed:

3.3.1   Stress

As a result of the inhumane way the teachers said they were confronted by the changes in Citicol, they experienced emotions or feelings they did not welcome and even denied. These emotions affected their physical well being.

When external pressures put demands on the physical system, the adrenal glands respond by secreting cortisone-like hormones. The body automatically responds to external pressures. This is the natural "fight or flight" response to the pressures of life (Anderson & Miller 1999:570. If the pressures persist too long, the adrenal glands cannot keep up, and stress becomes distress. The result can be physical illness, or a person may become irritated by things that wouldn't bother him or her physically or emotionally in less

stressful times (Anderson & Miller (1999:57). Fosarelli (2002:209) says the medical world acknowledges that the mind and body are intimately connected, that more and more biologic and chemical evidence favours the notion that one's emotions and reactions could alter physical bodily functions. Eysenck (1996:79) defines emotion as something that involves "bodily changes of a widespread character – in breathing, pulse, gland secretion, etc. – and, on the mental side, a state of excitement or perturbation, marked by a strong feeling, and usually an impulse towards a definite form of behaviour". Health or sickness is an integrated state of balance and dialogue with regard to "body, mind, and spirit" (Bakken & Hofeller 1988:63).

Hannetjie asked the other participants if they were also experiencing stress. She said thoughts of the trauma and the fear of not having a job the next year, invaded her consciousness and made her feel extremely stressed: *"I cannot think of anything else and my blood pressure is skyhigh. I experience back- and neckpains and had to visit a physiotherapist for help. I want to lie down the whole time which makes me feel guilty for I have so much to do. I have to force myself to prepare food for the family. I could not, although I wanted to, talk the whole time about my feelings because I could see it affected my husband and children. But what could they do about it anyway. To be able not to think the whole time of the changes in the school, my husband proposed a weekend away from home, but I even felt that would be too much for me. I just did not want to do anything".*

Ria agreed that she felt the same. She said *"I start the early mornings feeling good, but at the end of the day have a headache and feel exhausted. I love socializing, but now prefer not to have any visitors. Although my friends understand how I feel, they cannot realise the impact of this uncertain work future on me. I wish I had enough money; not to need to work, but I am dependent on the money in order to help provide for the family financially. I am restless and struggle to sleep at night. I can't take the stress any more".*

Petro aired her feelings by saying: *"I want to cry the whole time and use sleeping pills that I have never used before. I know it is unhealthy, but I also can't stop eating. I tried*

unsuccessfully not to think of the uncertainty of my future, but am unable to forget. I can't handle this stress and wish every morning that I don't have to come to school".

Stress, according to Van der Merwe (2004:19), causes low productivity, low creativity and weak interpersonal relationships. The school's management, who did not know how to handle the changes, were also feeling stressed and did not communicate at all with the staff about the change and the teachers' future. Carol, who did try to talk to the vice-principal about the impact of an uncertain future on her, was disappointed and angry because their conversation did not make her feel better. Carol said *"I did try to talk to management but received a cold and unsympathetic shoulder as answer. When I had walked out of the office, I was shocked and angry about the unsympathetic attitude she had towards me. I did not only feel angry, but also anxious and fearful of the unknown future of my work".*

Carol unknowingly embraced the words of Saussy and Clarke (1996:107) when describing her feelings after the above-mentioned conversation with the vice-principal:

> She may first feel *confused*; she may feel *insecure,* because she thinks she has been lacking in making herself clear; perhaps *hurt* because she does not think she was taken seriously; surely *frustrated*, sensing that communication has been obstructed; conceivably *fearful, sad* and *disappointed* that what she hoped would be a working relationship will not be; and, yes, *angry* at what she may sense to be intentional blockage.

Anger may be a reaction to a recent experience of having been rejected or of the hurt that originated in a painful experience (as the teachers experienced) suffered in the past which resulted in repressed rage. The teachers said they had no choice but to keep silent and to repress their anger because of the disrespectfully demeaning, dominant and abusive way in which the CEO had announced the imminent closing of their school. Teachers who did manage to express their shock and anger, were silenced by the CEO. Miller (1991:182) points out that a dominant group never wants subordinates to express anger and uses its power to keep such expressions down - the angry persons then see themselves "as weak, unworthy, with neither right nor cause to be angry".

I agree with Burns (1991:126) that "anxiety creates the myth that we can't function properly" which is confirmed by Hannetjie saying: *"I am so panicky about my work future, while teaching I cannot concentrate to my best ability."* Ria agrees with Hannetjie: *"That's exactly how I feel. I feel anxious the whole time and cannot focus on my work when preparing my lessons. I know I'm not doing my best and know I must try harder to suppress my negative feelings. But I can't manage to do it".* When people are experiencing a high level of anxiety and their thoughts are disordered, their behaviour may be unusual because they may "feel incapable to perform normal tasks" (Burns (1991:126). Anxiety includes a sense of threat, fear of losing control and an inability to focus on one matter at a time. Physical symptoms include hyperventilation, dry mouth, chest and abdominal pains and nausea (Peters 1999:84). The participants' conversations about their anxiety and anger enabled them to view their experience of fear as a sense of threat to their future.

According to Anderson and Miller (1999:15) fear is the natural response when our physical safety and psychological well-being are threatened. When fear is connected with the workplace, for instance fear of change or fear of failure, and these general fears are looked at in detail, they may involve more specific worries, such as being left out of decision making, having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships or getting fired. The participants had, in voicing their fears, an opportunity to see how fear prevented them from doing their best at work. Virtually all of the participants hesitated in our earlier sessions to talk about certain specific work-related issues. When that hesitation (Ryan and Oestreich 1998:4) is linked to concern about personal negative consequences "we become victims of fear". Wilna said she feared the day when she would receive a letter of dismissal: *"I'm 55 years old, where will I get a new job? When still young, I was able to be positive about most things that happened to me, but now it is impossible. Not being able to have a positive attitude about these changes, made me feel even more of a failure. I am used to having work and fear the day I will have to sit at home. And I don't feel old at all."* Carol agreed with Wilna that she feared the day she would lose her job: *"I may well be able to get another post, but where will it be located?*

You are all aware that I don't have a car. This may be a big problem if another school where I might get work, is far from home".

All the above factors of stress, which include anger, anxiety and fear cause physical and mental exhaustion. Because negative emotions deplete the reservoir of mental energy and generates inactivity in a person, Snyder (1998:74) advises following an ongoing self-dialogue of affirming energizing statements such as "I can" and "I won't give up". I do not think the above advice is of much help to the participants, however, because they had to deal with the ongoing uncertainty of their work future. I agree with Weingarten (2003:101) that work-related stress makes people feel emotionally drained and burnt-out.

3.3.2 Burnout

At work, different kinds of stress factors gradually mount so that the workers feel less and less able to accomplish the goals for which they entered the profession. Often there are institutional or structural barriers that interfere with the worker's ability to work effectively. Job conditions where a constitutional context "that appears to thwart one's efforts" to work effectively, produce a gradual erosion of the idealism that motivated the worker's occupational choice. This results in job satisfaction deteriorating and the worker develops symptoms of burnout (Weingarten 2003:102). Burnout (Weingarten 2003:102) consists of physical, emotional, behavioural, relationship, and work-related difficulties. The term "burnout" (Endress 2003:24) implies that the person has exhausted his or her coping sources in relation to stress.

The symptoms of burnout, namely headache, stomach-ache, neck- and backpain, restlessness and tiredness, correlate with the symptoms of stress. One symptom, however, that distinguishes burnout from stress, is an emotional feeling of inadequacy (Endress 2003:26) as reflected by Patricia's and Carol's words: *"How am I supposed to do my work efficiently if I am feeling tired all the time?", "I do not feel as if my hard work over the years is appreciated."* The other participants agree: *"I feel so tired, sick and stressed that maybe I am not doing my work to the best of my ability";* as well as *"The children*

irritate me and I feel guilty about it because I am not usually like that. I love children. One of the star pupils asked me after class, 'Madam, why are you so cross all the time?' I felt so bad".

The symptoms of burnout, compounded by feelings of guilt and inadequacy, resulted in depression.

3.3.3 Depression

When the participants said they experienced "depression" (I defined 'depression' in Chapter 1), it could mean that they were experiencing a sense of having low energy or were in a down-hearted mood. It could also mean that they were experiencing familiar symptoms of "an overwhelming lethargy that drapes itself over them periodically and saps their interest in living" (Neuger 2001:149). A stressful situation (the traumatic experience of the teachers in Citicol) could cause depression which results in a biochemical change in the person's body (Peters 1998:78).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4th edition (DSM – IV: the diagnostic "bible" of psychiatry) details categorization of different types of depression. For the purpose of my research I will focus on the kinds of depressions experienced by the participants.

Major depressions, also called "clinical depressions" are characterized by significant physical, emotional, and relational symptoms. A person who is experiencing a major depression has had continuous symptoms of feeling helpless, hopeless, sad and joyless. He or she may experience eating disturbances and sleep disturbances and a sense of guilt or despair. The participants also experienced a depression known as "Dysthymia", which is a milder form of depression. This kind of depression can be found in people with inadequate financial resources (or the possibility of financial inadequacy), and people without adequate relational support (for instance the school's management who did not support the teachers in their traumatic experience).

According to Neuger (2001:154): "... depression creates a set of cognitions or hermeneutical narrative lenses that shape all experiences into negative meanings. Psychologically, people feel powerless, confused, and desperate. Physically, people feel tired, achy, sleep - and eating disordered, and as if their brain and body have stopped working for them. Relationally, people tend to experience more discord and isolation. And theologically, people lose a sense of the goodness of life or the possibilities for the future".

Harvey (1985:41) perceives survivor sickness (Chapter 1) as a dulling of our "moral sensibilities", which "decreases the probability of our individual and collective survival". He also describes it as "marasmus" which is derived from the Greek, and which means "to waste away". Wasting away – mental and emotional withdrawal and loss of affect – due to depression is a symptom experienced by survivors and victims. The irrevocable outcome of unchecked marasmus is a possible death for the organization and emotional or inner-killing of the survivor (Harvey 1985:41). Wolff (1992:98), a lecturer in Psychology, points out that if a person experiences uncertainty about his or her future, then at least there should be honest information from management about what could be expected. Uncertainty, insecurity, stress and depression originate from the withholding of important information. Petro deplores the silent way in which management treated the teachers after the CEO's announcement: *"My nerves are pretty shot inside. I wanted to enjoy teaching, but I can't. The uncertainty of my work future makes me feel depressed. I want to share with you what I did one morning after the CEO visited the school. I had hitherto kept it a secret, but I trust you will keep it to yourselves. After a sleepless night of feeling miserable, I didn't have the energy to come to this jail. This is how I now felt about this school! Anyhow, on my way to school, I stopped at a restaurant and had an early morning coffee! I sat there for nearly an hour, feeling miserable, thinking of the bleak future ahead and the hateful way of non-communication of management. I then had to force myself to get up to drive here. Of course I felt bad about what I did. I would never have done something like this before."* The other participants responded sympathetically: *"I have understanding for what you did and why. When I drive through the gate of the school in the mornings a mist of negative feelings envelop me. I feel*

depressed and too tired to do any work", "I want to have knowledge of the future but at the same time dread and fear the outcome", "I'm tired and depressed and irritated with everyone the whole time".

3.3.4 Hopelessness

Lynch (1965:48-50) highlights the teachers' feelings of hopelessness when he refers to hopelessness as the "sense of the impossible", that what a person must do, he cannot. Hopelessness also leads to feelings that life is too much for us, of futility when we start to ask "what is the use?" Hopelessness does not imagine or wish, it is deeply passive and its "fundamental wish is the wish to give up". Hopelessness assumes that in any difficulty there are no resources a person can call upon; there is no possibility of help and even if there were help available, there is "no use, no sense in action or in life" (Lynch 1965:50). According to Lester (1995:75-76) a person moves towards despair or hopelessness because hope was invested in one particular accomplishment that other future stories were not developed or that the primary future story is no longer effective, no longer provides hope. When there is no future story, "life becomes scary and one despairs".

At this moment in our discussions it became clear the teachers had lost any hope of a meaningful worklife, they could not open the door to other possibilities. Another form of hopelessness or despair, says Kierkegaard (cited in Lester 1995:77), is when a person feels bound by what already exists, and "has lost the willingness to imagine other alternatives". The hopelessness made them depressed and blocked their future vision of life in the workplace. Their life had no meaning any more. Ria embraced unknowingly the feelings of the other participants when she said: "*I do not want to come to school any more. What is the use? It feels as if there is no purpose in my life here at school. Till now I did not have the courage to talk to anyone, maybe the other staff members may think I am negative. What hope do we have of a reliable, safe future in the workplace?"* Petro echoed her feelings: "*What is there to be positive about? I am afraid that management will hold it against me if I talk openly about my anger and uncertainty of the future. It is wonderful to have the opportunity now to express my feelings with safety."* Hannetjie

agreed, saying: *"One always hears about a light at the end of a tunnel. Well, I do not see any light at the end of this tunnel. And even if there was a light, at the moment I have no energy to reach that light. What a hopeless situation!"*

The participants agreed that hopelessness was a good description of the negative effects (for instance depression, anger, fear) of the trauma they were experiencing, that they could not see any future for themselves in the context of their worklife. It was clear to me that the teachers did not know how they were to cope till the end of the year and that they were uncertain about their future as teachers. They felt as if life held no meaning any more, they were unmotivated to work and saw no hope of a better life in their work situation. They could see no way of opening the closed door, their life at work had no meaning.

In our initial conversation the participants agreed that the way their voices were silenced in the process of changing our school, not only made them feel insecure, but they felt as if their lives had no meaning anymore.

3.3.5 Meaninglessness

Without a meaningful worklife the teachers would not be able to make choices and lend coherence to their day-to-day life at the school as expressed in the words of Hannetjie: *"My life in the school is at the moment meaningless. My days are bleak and I must drag myself out of bed. When I arrive here on campus, I would prefer to go to my class instead of the staffroom. I only went there because we are compelled to go there"*.

As a pastoral therapist, it is important to me, to encourage participants who have experienced their existence at the school as meaningless, to find meaning again in their current life situation in the school. On the importance of a meaningful worklife, I refer to Baumeister (1991:28) who defines meaning as something that "[e]nables people to discern patterns in the world around them and so to predict what might happen. People use meaning to help make decisions, to guide their actions, and to regulate their

emotional states". To Kegan (cited in Redekopp 1990:121) meaning-making encompasses everything humans do. The making of meaning is a continual process that takes on different general forma at various levels of development. As the self changes, so also does the individual's way of making sense of the world.

To make sense of their world, the teachers had a need to find meaning in their work context. It is important to interpret the trauma they underwent, because making meaning thereof, would enable them to see beyond the trauma to the future (Lester 1995:20). Kenneth Gergen (cited in Lester 1995:28) point out that stories provide direction in life, because "making sense out of an event necessitates understanding its process. An event accrues meaning only as we apply narrative structure that connects the event to its impact on the future". Lester (1995:29) adds that "[h]uman beings do not simply tell stories. We construct our sense of identity out of stories, both conscious stories and those we suppress". A breakdown in our story, as experienced by the teachers, "makes one vulnerable to despair" (Lester 1995:30).

In the absence of a meaningful life, the teachers lost their self-worth, which includes self-respect and the knowledge that other people respect them. This was reflected in the following comments by Wilna: "*When standing in front of the class, I experienced the disrespect of the children. They ignored me when I spoke to them and disrupted my classes. I struggled to keep on teaching while I experienced this feeling of disrespect. I wanted to come to school with a feeling of anticipation and being able to be an excellent teacher. At night, in bed, I think of the emptiness I feel inside me. My work at school is not fulfilling any more*".

Skilled craftsmen and musicians may have frequent experiences of making a difference through their specialized, highly trained abilities. In contrast, burn-out in helping professionals "such as some public school teachers and social workers" often become alienated when they start feeling that their efforts are wasted and that they are not making any difference at all (Biesheuvel 1995:142). Because the traumatic change in Citicol has taken the teachers' feelings of security away, with their work becoming meaningless, I

agree with Redekopp (1990:133) that a person who is constrained by needs for security, experiences less meaning-options than a person whose "security, love and esteem needs have been adequately satisfied".

The participants referred in their discussions to their unhappiness in being without a sense of security and feeling unloved. They all agreed that their unhappiness could be linked to a loss of meaning, they experienced themselves as incompetent and at a loss about coping with the worthlessness they had experienced and attributed to themselves. The traumatic event that occurred in the school could have produced undesirable meanings, from which the teachers tried to escape, or the traumatic event might "contradict or disconfirm the person's broad views about self and world, making them no longer viable. The result is a meaning vacuum, a lack of desirable meanings and an inability to make sense of self and world in a satisfactory fashion" (Biesheuvel 1995:266).

The teachers realized that their damaged perceptions of self because of the trauma, needed to be rebuilt or replaced. The participants agreed that they understood the feelings of Patricia who said: *I wish I can be the person again that I was before the CEO walked in to our staffroom. I lost my happiness and security. My life at work is like an empty vacuum*. The participants had to convince themselves they were competent and secure persons again, returning to a "condition that permits effective functioning and even happiness" (Biesheuvel 1995:266).

The participants were relieved about having the other participants in the group to discuss their experience of a meaningless worklife. They remarked that people who did not experience the degrading way in which the change in the school was implemented, could have no notion at all of what they were going through. The participants were now aware that they had interpreted the changes in our school according to how they had been experiencing what happened with them and around them. The stories the participants told one another, were not only historical facts but were attempts to explain how the present situation in the school was affecting them.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on narrative inquiry which gave the teachers the opportunity to tell their dominant story of how they experienced the effects of trauma. From a pastoral, narrative inquiry approach, as a therapist, I have worked towards a process where the participants and I were co-participants in our discussions and where all the participants were able to tell their own stories.

The opportunity to describe and tell how they were affected by the traumatic changes, how they perceived the changes, empowered them to use their own voices (Parry 1991). They were thus the centre of their own stories.

Because of the effect of dominant stories or discourses on the participants' worklives, it was important to recognize and identify these effects in order to have a resistant position towards it (Burr 1995:92). The participants' emotional experience of the changes affected their physical, bodily functions. They experienced high blood pressure, head-aches, sleeplessness and stomach-ache. The narratives of the participants revealed how the traumatic changes affected them emotionally. Stress, which included anger, fear, anxiety and burnout depleted their reservoir of mental energy and generated in their inactivity as persons (Snyder (1998:74). The effect of depression resulted in the participants' feelings of hopelessness and meaninglessness. Despair and discouragement destroyed their hope for a better future. The participants agreed that their feelings of hopelessness had prevented them from seeing themselves in a work-related future and that a meaningless worklife had deprived them of their self-worth.

According to the participants, the process of storytelling was of great value to them. They feel lighter and relaxed after telling their stories. All the participants were affected by the trauma which made it easier for them to open their hearts to the others in the group. They experienced appreciation for the others in the group for listening with understanding and empathy and did not feel alone anymore.

In the next chapter I describe how the pastoral, appreciative inquiry approach, empowered the participants to achieve richer, alternative stories and how these richer descriptions contributed towards the changing of the traumatic effects on their working lives.

CHAPTER 4

THE TEACHERS' EFFECTS ON THEIR TRAUMA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

During the participants' discussions, we had constructed our meaning of trauma and had improved the traumatic effects on our lives of organizational change for effective action that promote the changes we aimed to attain. Through an appreciative inquiry process we were able to construct meaning and hope in what was soon becoming, at that stage of our conversations, a hopeless situation. We realized that in the process of constructing meanings in our relationship as a group, we were organizing the different meanings into stories. These stories gave "direction to our beliefs, values, and future actions in that (our schools) social context" (Cottor & Cottor 1999:163).

I believed the appreciative inquiry process could be positively and applicably used in the participants' journey to construct new meanings and hope in our situation of traumatic transformational change. I refer to chapter one, where I described appreciative inquiry. In this chapter I want to focus on why and how we used the appreciative inquiry process in ways to improve the teachers effects on the trauma because of changes we experienced in our worklife.

4.2 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

I selected appreciative inquiry as an approach in my research, because I think it most likely to help as a process to achieve changes in the teachers' situation where they were negatively affected by the changes in Citicol. I think an appreciative inquiry approach is valuable because the participants could constructively discover their "life-giving" or alternative stories that may give them a new perspective on their worklife story. Behind an appreciative inquiry approach the broadest topic "[i]s the constructive discovery of the

community's (the teachers') or the organization's "life-giving" story" (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999:60).

4.2.1 Sharing of trauma in relationships

Seiling (1997:57) points out that when the worker or member of an organization focuses solely on "me", it may prevent him or her to accept today's new business environment, see differences as fact based, are uncompassionate and inflexible and "find cooperation not comfortable". Hackman and his colleagues (1987:158-159) writes when an individual re-designs his or her worklife, he or she ought to see their work as meaningful and worthwhile, and he or she "[n]eeded to feel personally accountable for the consequences of their efforts". I think for the teachers as individual workers to be responsible for meaning-making decisions is a lonely and difficult way to accomplish changes. I thus do not agree with Hackman and his colleagues because prior to forming a group of participants, the teachers had embarked on a road where each one journeyed alone. The teachers' plans, their understanding of the situation and trauma in Citicol, and control over their actions were without others and might well have resulted in an inflexible attitude towards change.

With a feeling of being used as objects in the way changes were implemented in Citicol, the teachers, although not all of them, had embraced the decision of forming a group of participants. When people acknowledge one another's interdependence and work together interdependently, there is participation (McLagan & Nel 1995:132). In forming a group, we had been able to appreciate the contributions of others, listened to the stories of others, were flexible enough to accept the viewpoints of others and were open to new possibilities. In other words, the participants' perspectives were relationally based, emotions were on the table and we were compassionate toward each other (Seiling 1997:58). The socially constructed discussions of the group of participants reflects the words of Penn & Frankfurt (1999:173) that in being able to listen to each other, to pay attention to their feelings they had "increasingly become a part of the talk".

I agree with Riikonen (1999:148) that it is everybody's right to be considered as a human being or a person who is actualized in and by interaction. The participants experienced that their relationship as relational meaning makers, lead to ways of questioning that form the foundation for responsible action opening up new possibilities and new ways of thinking and acting. Being in a relationship offered the participants (Cotter and Cotter (1999:165):

> . . . a way that they had never considered of looking at themselves, at each other, at their dilemmas, and at their relational and social worlds. It respects their ability to think creatively to consider options seriously, and to act effectively for a new future.

Appreciative inquiry and conversations bring forth new meanings that enable the participants to invent new stories. Creating and appreciating new stories empower change. Respecting multiple perspectives and the construction of multiple selves, stories, and opportunities, enabled them to construct the context for change (Cotter & Cotter 1999:166). The participants had worked as allies where the appreciation of loss of hope became a connection among them (Penn & Frankfurt 1999:179) and where it was useful to envision conversations "in which the sense of independent individuals gives way to the dominant discourse of *we"* (Gergen & McNamee 1999:2), where sharing experiences reduce shame, fosters practical problem-solving and instilled hope (Herman 1992:220).

Interpersonal relationships in a group are typically open-ended, with a stable, slowly evolving membership (Herman 1992:235). The participant became aware that negotiating and exploring to achieve new meanings are an ongoing process and "each moment of insight can give way to further exploration" (McNamee and Gergen 1999:18, Hammond 1996:8) and the participants developed an appreciation of the "richness and possibilities" for their different opinions (Anderson 1999:68). The participants also became aware of the generativity of the conversations, for instance how their own thinking changes and the way they interact with what they are listening to and hearing; they allow and encourage conflict to develop and express pride of ownership in their learning (Anderson 1999:68, Herman 1992:235, Buchanan & Boddy 1992:14). Working together in the above-

mentioned way, strengthened the participants' relationship and constructed a feeling of trust among them.

The participants experienced trust as productive in their partnership that were "strengthened over time" and their humanness also allows and even encouraged imperfection (Seiling 1997:54, McLagan & Nel 1995:133). The participants experienced and agree with Ryan & Oestreich (1998:35-36) that a trusting relationship came from day-to-day experiences that people associate with trust. During and after the participants' discussions, in their trusting relationship, they experienced how they mutually help and understand one another, they experienced enjoyment of each other's company and creative, synergistic problem solving. There was a "high level of rapport and honesty" (Ryan & Oestreich 1998:35) among them which resulted in appreciating each other. McLagan and Nel (1995:133), refer to The Forum Corporation (1991) research, which envision trust as a quality that we attribute to people. In our discussions the participants agree with the above mentioned research that trustworthy people fulfill their responsibilities, they admit their own mistakes and uncertainties and are willing to learn to improve their working lives.

4.3 EXPLORING WAYS TO CHANGE THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

When the participants had started on their journey towards alternative stories, Wilna had asked the following question: *"Although our discussions beckoned me to also tell my story, and although I remember feeling 'lighter' and better after having told how the changes in the school affected me, how can I keep this feeling of hurt and hopelessness away from me?"* The other participants had agreed they still had no hope that anything would change for the better but also agreed that the openness and freedom of being able to freely give their opinions, meant a lot to them. I had thought maybe they were expecting the school to be the only source of their happiness for the future and had proceeded to tell them the following story from the book *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance:*

His son Chris was sitting behind his back on the motorcycle during their whole journey. During some stages of the journey the father allowed his son to stand on the motorcycle's feetrests while holding on to his father's back for support. A new world opened up in front of him which gave him a wonderful experience of pleasure. The father then realized for the first time that his son was only able to look at his back, but that he now will be able to have a view-forward or future perspective and this made a big difference to his motorcycle experience.   (Müller 2000:92).

I had asked the participants if there was a possibility of them viewing the end of the school year as a closed door, expecting no worklife future. Should the participants not open the door, walk through and open other doors to a new future? Maybe, in an answer to Wilma's question, they then would also, just like the boy on the motorcycle, be able to experience hope in our perspective of a new future? The participants had to convince themselves they were competent and secure persons again, returning to a "condition that permits effective functioning and even happiness" (Biesheuvel 1995:266).

 To restore a meaningful life is a relational process. The participants constructed their meanings in their relationship and conversations with each other and "the resulting collectives of meaning" were then organized into stories (Cotter & Cotter 1999:163). These stories give direction to our beliefs, values and future actions in a social context. The teachers perceived in their conversations how different and also alike they had observed events and acted upon the effects of the trauma. The participants had experienced the importance of the words of Cotter and Cotter (1999:163) that being aware of ourselves as multiple selves we could employ many different stories as self organizers. If we change the story, we change the self. We could be able to achieve this in conversations with ourselves as well as in conversations with others – we do it as "we", as a relational activity. In appreciating each other, we can together open new doors to inventing new identities, new worlds, new ways of being (Cotter & Cottor 1999:163). Inventing new ways of being, the teachers could improve the distress, meaninglessness or depression of their worklife (Biesheuwel 1995:267).

To achieve inventing new ways of being in their worklife, as a therapist I assume that the participants could contradict their story of how they were affected by the trauma in Citicol, because there are always experiences standing apart of and that are contradicting the dominant story. Although the dominant story hides these experiences that are fleetingly mentioned, they are present in the dominant story. In narrative language, these contradictions are called "unique outcomes" (White 1995:26, White & Epston 1990:41, Freedman & Combs 1996:89, Morgan 2000:52). According to White (1995:27-28) our life-story is not one single story, but hides "sub-stories that stand outside of the dominant stories" providing "a point of entry for re-authoring work". Morgan (2000:55) refer to these unique outcomes as "… sparkling events to be openings to a new and different conversation – openings to escape the thin conclusions and to move towards richer descriptions". This way, according to White (1995:28-29), we build a "counter plot" or "alternative plot" that "… greatly facilitates the ascription of meaning to a whole range of experiences that have previously been neglected".

The stress and feelings of depression, anger, anxiety, fear, hopelessness and meaninglessness render or portray the importance of finding empowering stories to resist oppressive narratives. It is the only way in which the participants can construct meaning and according to Neuger (2001:86) who remarks that "… it is the meaning that people attribute to themselves and their experiences that constitute both identity and the development of resources for living life". Appreciative inquiry suggests that in every person's life something works and change can be managed through the identification of what works, and the analysis of how to do more of what works (Hammond 1996:5). In my capacity as a narrative pastoral counsellor and using an appreciative inquiry approach, I knew the importance for the participants to create alternative stories; that after the "re-collecting" of their past experiences they had to concentrate on preferred future stories. Searching together for alternative stories, the therapist can contribute to new possibilities of meaning in their lives and this can help the participants to deal with the changes in their workplace. From the stance of therapist, I had to facilitate new meanings which would "encourage the development of new stories of resolution and hope" (Waldegrave 1990:11).

In my narrative inquiry or "deconstructive questioning" with the participants, working towards unique outcomes, I borrowed White's (1995:30-31) "landscape of action" and "landscape of consciousness" concepts (chapter one). Guided by several of our discussions we were opening the door towards a future in our working life. I asked the participants the following question:

"As you reflect on your career, can you tell me the story of a high point; a time you felt most alive, most impactful and successful in terms of contribution to this school and community?" Below is a summarized version of the participants' anwers

Hannetjie: *Because the students had never before experienced a matric-farewell function, I have decided to organize such a function. No one else was willing to help me because it required difficult and nerve racking organization. Thus I had to face the responsibility and stress alone. The function was a big success and was from then on a yearly occasion at the school and remained my responsibility. After each function the students came to me to tell me how much it meant to them and how they appreciated it. It turned out to be the high point in their lives!*

Carol: *Most students do not have breakfast before school and were thus very hungry at the time we had break. With the permission of our principal, I started a little shop on the school-premises. Personally I had financial difficulties to initiate the shop and without a car to use for transporting the stock. I had to make many arrangements to get the stock to the school. It was especially difficult to transport the homemade food from our house to the school in a bus, but I persevered and think it was an essential contribution to improving the students' lives.*

Petro: *I started a Bible-studygroup with the students during break and think it contributed to the students' spiritual growth. During the last year I led the weekly opening of the school with Scripture-reading and prayer. The students trusted me with their personal problems.*

Wilna: *I decided to teach computer classes after school for working or unemployed older people with the principals' permission and at a minimum of cost. They only paid for the books they were using and could keep them after they had completed the course. The classes themselves were free. After a course the students received a certificate that they could use when applying for work.*

Patricia: *The students see me as a mother because I'm also African. I understand their problems and although I could not change anything at least I understand their problems and could converse with them about it.*

After hearing each participants' story, the group reflected and enjoyed a discussion about the contributions of everyone towards the school. Answering the Landscape of action question led the participants to reflect on their above-mentioned past experiences, their experiences of the effects of the trauma of today and what these experiences could mean to their future work lives. To encourage the participants to see if they might use their reflections on their positive contributions to the school in constructing a new work future, I asked them landscape of identity questions:

"What about you made these attributions a high point; what are your best qualities and can you tell me what you value most about yourself?"

These above landscape of identity questions "encourage the articulation and the performance of these alternative preference, desires, personal and relationship qualities and intentional states and beliefs and this culminates in a revision of personal commitment in life" (White 1991:131). I suggested to the group to have conversations and discussions about the above questions, and to ask questions themselves to the group, which they did. I also asked the participants to jot down brief notes, because they would probably find that they wanted to ask other questions and share certain experiences. In journeying over a landscape of relational possibilities, the participants were now in a process of dancing together in conversations, a process of the "to-ing and fro-ing", "back-and-forth" of ideas and feelings – there was a relationally responsive movement between

them (Shotter & Katz 1999:152). This movement is important for uncovering common themes of circumstances when the group had performed well. Thus they were able to uncover themes in order to know how to do more of what had worked. The participants became aware of the hidden possibilities and their capabilities to create a meaningful worklife.

After the participants had answered the questions and had conversations about it, they came to the conclusion they were aware of and appreciated themselves for the qualities they possessed, for instance self-motivation, initiation and an empathetic attitude towards others. The participants were now aware that they could use their good qualities to create a better future for themselves, that doing more of what works, crowds out the insoluble problems, that they will be able to face the future whatever it may have keep in store for them.

The participants felt safe and confident knowing that they were not alone but that they would continue supporting one another and felt free to discuss any problems that might arise on their journey. They have also learned never to expect the organization they are working for to be responsible for their future. Because of their good qualities the participants will always be able to open other doors when one closes in front of them. This appreciative, relational process was telling because the participants felt valued and "became self-reflexively aware of the culturally conditioned approaches of their own true worlds" and because the participants were telling their success stories to each other, the alternatives in this case "were all the more compelling" (Coopperrider & Whitney 1999:63). In this time of our sessions, the group felt energized by discovering their positive possibilities and self-worth.

The question now is how to transform or change this knowledge into actions that will allow the successful circumstances to be recreated. During our trusting and responsible relationship in a group, and from a pastoral, narrative and appreciative inquiry approach, I used externalizing and deconstructive conversations with the participants about the effects of their trauma.

Usually when people seek help from a therapist, they talk of their problem as if it is part of them or inside them (Morgan 2000:17). People identify themselves with the problem when they say, for instance "I am depressed". Such internalized conversations usually exert negative effects on persons' lives that lead to "thin conclusions". Morgan (2000:13) describes thin conclusions as follows: "[T]hin conclusions, drawn from problem-saturated stories, disempower people as they are regularly based in terms of weaknesses, disabilities, dysfunctions or inadequacies." To achieve "richer conclusions", I used with the participants, the externalizing and deconstruction of our stories. According to White and Epston (1990:40) externalizing means that the problem of a person is an entity of its own. With externalizing, a distance is created between the person and the problem. In a conversation talking is about the problem from a distant position. Monk (1997:6) indicates this shift of focus in externalizing conversations when pointing out that "[t]hese conversations attempt to move the focus away from self-attack, recrimination, blame and judgement – to attitudes that work against productive and positive outcomes in counseling."

During our last sessions, our conversations spontaneously included externalizing talking about the effects of the trauma. In facilitating these conversations I have tried to use externalizing not boldly, but to use my words cautiously to improve the participant's initiatives towards healing. We did not only externalize the problem, but "t[ook] it apart" (Monk 1997:8-9). Freedman and Combs (1994:57) said the intention of deconstruction is "…not to challenge a narrative, but to unpack it or to offer the possibility of considering it from different perspectives." White (1995:24) points out that externalized conversations can also be experienced as deconstructive conversations. I think one also can experience the construction of new meaning or "richer conclusions" as deconstructive conversations, because these conversations could help the participants to deconstruct the effects of the dominant stories to alternative richer stories that embrace new life-giving meanings. To reach richer conclusions, I led the participants to begin talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. During these sessions the group created "provocative propositions" (Hammond 1996:39).

4.3.1 Provocative propositions

According to Hammond (1996:39) "[p]rovocative propositions describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate that creates the possibilities to do more of what works." Provocative propositions guided the teachers to keep their best at a conscious level. They describe the patterns of our worklife and symbolic statements because they have meaning well beyond words, reminding us of what is best about ourselves as teachers and how everyone in the group can participate in creating more of the best (Hammond 1996:39).

I used provocative propositions with the group because they are derived from stories that actually took place in our lives as teachers and because this grounding in facts distinguishes appreciative inquiry from other visioning methods in which dreams serve as the primary basis for the vision (Hammond 1996:45). Because we had written down our questions and answers in our discussions about what we had experienced as positive in our worklife, we were able to write down in detail examples of our best experiences in the past. Out of these stories, we had then envisioned what might be and wrote a provocative proposition that had described our idealized future *as if it was already happening*.

The teachers experienced the set of propositions they had written down as a challenge. It describes where they want to be, based on the high moments of where they have been and was a symbol reminding them of the energized moments they found through their inquiry. I experienced with the participants and made them aware how appreciated inquiry created power and drama between them because "[t]he power occurs when the group becomes engaged and excited." The whole energy of the group shifts and everyone there knows it (Hammond 1996:45). Creating provocative propositions was thus an important step of changing the effects of the trauma to something more life-giving, a future the participants envisioned that is "a collage of the Bests" (Hammond 1996:45). It was important that the entire group took part in the process of writing the set of provocative propositions, because that was where the momentum grows. To reach an

agreement everyone has to leave their stamp. The group then shares a clear goal on their journey towards healing that all members believe will happen and accordingly behave to make happen (Hammond 1996:47).

4.4 TOWARDS HEALING

I explained to the participants that we have arrived on our journey in a landscape of identity. The landscape of identity indicates a person who was involved in a specific action. In a landscape of identity a person reflects on happenings that were indicated in the landscape of action, and the reflection on these actions or events (White 1995:31). I explained that we would use questions and answers in a zig-zagging process (White 1995:32) where we will be alternatively in the landscape of action and landscape of identity. In these reflections on the questions and answers, we would be able to reflect on our personal values, faith and successes. The reflections on and exploring of our dominant stories would help us to discover concealed stories in the dominant stories of our lives. Because of these explorations or "panning for gold" the participants would be able to achieve richer descriptions of their lives.

From an appreciative inquiry approach, after their to-ing and fro-ing of ideas towards new richer meanings, the participants decided to focus on a few themes that were experienced by *all* of them. They had discussions about each participants' achievement and journey to a more hopeful future. Because externalizing was a strange or unknown entity for the participants, I decided to use a session, which stretched into two sessions, of play-acting where the *effects* came to visit us. The teachers enjoyed the play-acting and at the same time got familiar with using the effects from a distance. After these sessions the participants were aware and helped each other not to internalize the effects in their stories.

I then asked the participants: "If you compare your worklife with how it was just after the traumatic event in our school, and how you experience it today after all our sessions, how do you experience the changes in the school? If the effects of the trauma were your

visitors today and if they were sitting on that chair (I then pointed to an empty chair), what would you be able to tell them? Would you have the courage to ask them to leave?"

It was not possible for me to give a replica of how the participants had reached richer descriptions during all of our conversations. I thus asked the participants to make short notes of the discussions that might help them to reach richer conclusions and asked them if they would agree to write a short letter to the group of their alternative stories. The group agreed and said they would enjoy it and asked if each one could then read their letter to the group. Petro was absent during our last two sessions because of personal problems at home and did not write a letter. The participants wrote the letters below

Hannetjie: *Fear and uncertainty about my future affected me badly. They invaded my classroom and made it impossible for me to concentrate solely on my lessons. The more I fight with them, the more they occupy my thoughts. I knew I had to control them not to enter my thoughts, but at that time it was impossible. However, stress and depression were strong rivals and it took me a long time to get rid of them. I was forced to ask leave of absence more than once because of severe neck pains that stress had inflicted on me. I felt guilty towards my students and towards my colleagues who had to invigilate my classes in their free periods. The guilt opened the doors for depression. And depression made me tired and sick. It was a vicious circle.*

However, you pointed out to me during our conversation, that I still have a guesthouse business at home. I felt confident again with the knowledge that I am not solely dependent on my money from teaching and that I have the power to organized my own life. Fear and uncertainty gradually diminished to invade my thoughts. Your continuous support and encouragement made me realize that I would be able to pull myself together and I visited a physiotherapist to help with the neck pains.

It was now time to make it possible for Hannetjie to find alternatives of richer descriptions of herself and what she could be capable of (White 1991:126). The group then talked about how much she had meant to the school and that she had done more for

the school than was expected of her, for instance her organizing of functions. The group wanted to know if she was going to stay till the end of the year as she could hand in a twenty-four hour notice. She had replied that she has a responsibility towards the students and would never be able to drop them and said: "*But at least I know now that because of my abilities at school of organizing functions, I would be able to organize and expand my guesthouse business. Yes, knowing and remembering how I achieved organizing all the functions, made me feel I'm worthy of doing the same at any other job.*" Hannetjie achieved with the support of the group, richer conclusions about herself and her capabilities.

Wilna: *I am just going to write down a very short summary of what I had told you in my first story. My poor health is really a big problem and had given the effects of fear, uncertainty, stress and hopelessness a chance to make themselves at home in my life. I will have to pay a really big amount of money to my medical scheme for the rest of my life. I am thus REALLY dependent on my salary and Effects know that!*

But when at home I reflected on our conversations and realized that God had given me a brain and two hands and I had already experienced that I had the ability to give private computer classes. You had encouraged me to focus on my talents of painting and making arty candles. Thinking more and more about my talents gave me the confidence to tell the Effects they are not welcome in my life! I felt now more and more confident that I will be able to manage making money because of my talents, that I am not dependent on others for my life. What a relief!

Wilna had come to the richer conclusion that she is a talented person and using these talents could enable her to live independently of the school. Ria and Hannetjie asked Wilna if they could come to her computer classes. Hannetjie said she will definitely have a need for computer literacy if she is going to expand her guesthouse business!

Carol: *Although I have enjoyed all our conversations, poverty was always a part of my life and now it has intensified its stronghold on me. I don't want to elaborate on it, but we*

are very poor. My husband had never since our marriage been able to get work and I am thus our financial provider. I also had at times to provide financial support for his family. After my husband had an affair, I had to change my attitude of not having a child if I wanted him back. Of course I love my child, but to me it is now even more difficult to manage financially. This uncertainty of having a job next year was the cherry on the cake!

During our conversations I became more aware of my capabilities. I know I am a strong and intelligent person, who has meant something to other people. Yes, our conversations and my conversations with myself had helped, but I was still uncertain if being poor would not be a stumbling block in visions of my future. But after Marina had asked me which strong capabilities in me gave me the strength during difficult circumstances to persevere in running the shop at the school, I looked with new eyes at myself. I think my own financial difficulties made me more aware of other poor people and that this awareness and empathy for the need of others inspire me to do something for them. The awareness that I'm a doer, that I can persevere give me the assurance that I have the possibility of making a success of anything I decided to do. When I became aware of my capabilities of organizing a little shop in difficult circumstances, I thought of maybe starting a little shop in my house. My neighbours are also poor and need to walk far to our Supermarket.

After reading her letter, the participants were excited about Carol's proposition of a little shop. They talked about all the possibilities and Hannetjie's words *"I will help you with the starting of your business. I have experience of starting a business and know the difficulties because of my own guesthouse!"* had brought tears of happiness and appreciation in Carol's eyes.

Ria: *I am in the lucky position of not being dependent on money. My husband has a successful business. I love teaching and together with looking after my family, it gives me a purpose in life. I will hate to wake in the mornings to an empty calendar. Of course I can make do with jobs in and around the house, go to grocery shopping and interest*

myself with hobbies, but I know by this stage of my life that I am not born to be a hobbyist.

It may seem to you that effects of the trauma did not matter to me but my dreams of a purposeful life was shattered. My dreams became angry dreams: I woke up in the middle of the night with my fists clenched. Because I believe that my purposeful work gives meaning to my life, our conversations did help me to become aware how much I as a Christian and believer had meant to the students in connection with their spiritual life. I asked myself then: why not fulfil my life with helping others? I have the means to do it. I have started two weeks ago to organize a local soup kitchen and has thus become a Beverage Lady!

I serve coffee, tea and juice to people whose problems are much bigger than mine, where there were poverty, homelessness, or disabilities. Having direct contact with people with serious problems, gave me the opportunity to chase Meaninglessness out of my life. After serving other people, I returned to my own life feeling refreshed and uplifted.

I wanted to hear more about this experience of Ria and asked her which qualities of herself had helped her to start this soup kitchen. Ria answered that her strong belief in God and her positive attitude towards life helped her. She said: *"I always wanted to follow Jesus's example of helping other people who are not in the same advantaged position as I am. However, I was always too busy with all the work that's part of teaching to find time helping disadvantage people. I did not start the soup kitchen alone, but asked some of my friends at church to help me. To see the hungry expressions on people's faces faded away, gives one a fulfilling feeling. I'm thinking to expand this project to providing clothes and blankets to the disadvantaged as well."*

The participants thought this project of Ria wonderful and wish her all the luck and goodwill to make a big success of it.

Patricia: *You must excuse me for this short letter. I am not a letter writer. I feel very bad about the effect of the trauma on all of us. Although I think affirmative action is needed in our country, and although I am not affected by the effects as you are, nothing has really improved to make a big difference in my life. I still have to catch two buses and a train to school; I still am not able to buy a car with my salary and I still struggle to make ends meet till the end of the month. For a very long time, we did not have any electricity. But I am thankful to the Lord for my children. I see my little house as a safe nest for the children. I am very, very sorry our principal is not with us any more and I too felt sorry for you. To be true I think I have a better chance for another teaching job, even being 45 years of age.*

The participants all agreed they were happy for her to be sure of a job next year and thanked her for her sympathy and understanding of how they experienced the changes in the school. They also appreciated her perseverance and happy personality in spite of her hardships and talked to her about her children, asking her about the children's personalities, asking how old they were and where they were at school. I think it was appropriate of Patricia to use a nest as metaphor for her house. I discussed it with her in our next session:

"Patricia, after our last session, I reflected on your metaphor of a bird's nest for your home. I thought about the expertise that went into the weaving of that nest. The fine skilled weaving of grass and leaves usually resulted in a sturdy and structured nest, which provides shelter against wind, storms and sun. Birds use a variety of materials such as grass and leaves to build a nest. What values, principles and beliefs have you weaved together to provide a sturdy and structured nest for your children? Would you say that regardless of storms you have up to today been able to provide a nest for your children? If I could ask one of your children what they have learnt from you, which will help them one day to build their own nest, what would they say?"

 I wrote the questions down before the sessions and gave them to Patricia. I thought all of us could learn something of hardship from someone who had years of experience.

Although Patricia had answered my questions, at the end we all had a conversation about the building and content of our nests and how important it is in surviving difficult times. Patricia answered: "*My husband, Tsholofelo, and I have built our nest together with the aim that the children must at all times feel safe and secure. They must know that I and Tsholofelo will always be there for them during difficult times. What I consider as really important, is happiness and love. Even when we had been very, very poor, we managed because we were a happy family. Luckily, we always had something to eat. I think my children know we love them and they respect us. I think my children will also be loving parents to their children.*"

In the participants' conversations they agreed that they were all experiencing a sense of togetherness, that they were motivated through a hopeful future, which promised new opportunities and achievements. The participants embraced the words of Lester (1995:17) that in being open and conscious of a new future, time will allow "us to give meaning to our existence so that we construct purposes for survival that create future goals". The participants also agreed about the importance of the motivated role of themselves in the goal-setting process and that they should be realistic in their expectations, that they should "learn to dream what is imaginable and to train [their] expectations on what promises to prove possible" (Erikson, cited in Lester:1995:18).

However, to avoid "anything goes" in our open-ended and trusting relationship, we were aware of the importance of responsibility in constructing new meanings.

4.5 RELATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Tomm (1999:131) defines responsibility as "living consistently within an awareness of whether one likes or dislikes the consequences of one's own actions", whereas Cummings and Anton (1990:258) refer to responsibility as the occurrence taking place when an "individual assumes personal responsibility" for the outcome of an event. Burkitt (1999:71-72) reasons that responsibility in the West is based on the assumption of a lone individual whose intentions, plans, understanding and control over actions

apparently takes place in a world without others. It is seen as entirely within an individual's own power to accept responsibility for his or her own decision to act in the way they did and not in some other way. Tomm (1999:131), Deetz and White (1999:111-120) support such a view of responsibility. Deetz & White (1999:118) refer to and criticize McNamee and Gergen who refer to the term 'responsibility' (1999:xi) not as a moralistic wedge but as a conversational resource and reason that relational responsibility "[l]ies within the shared attempt to sustain the conditions in which we can join in the construction of meaning and morality."

> . . . their reclaiming of voices misses how these voices exist at all, the productive quality of fundamental conflict, the process of entering into decisions we make together, and the indeterminancy of all situations (Deetz &White (1999:1180).

In the context of what happened in our school, namely the way our CEO made decisions alone on issues that affected the teachers' future, I read in the above approach the insensitivity to issues of power and hierarchy. The teachers experienced the CEO as "bosslike" and authoritative and ourselves as "subordinates" and even as "objects" (Srivastva & Barrett 1990:388, Riikonen 1999:148). However, in the scheme of relational responsibility, the model of individual responsibility is fundamentally critiqued and deconstructed. Instead, from an appreciative inquiry approach where the participants were opening doors to construct new life-giving stories, we envisage to do it in a world of relationships and interdependencies in which each individual intersect and connect (Burkitt 1999:72, Lannamann 1999:81). In any joint activity, for instance where the participants, from an appreciated inquiry approach, were in dialogue to create new meanings, responsibility is always shared, so that a single participant is never entirely to blame for a situation or event. Relations and interactions are what "constitute persons and selves so that no person can ever reach a decision, formulate a plan or strategy, using only the bare bones of rational laws" (Burkitt:1999:72). If the teachers individually made decisions towards a better future, every teacher *alone* would be fully responsible, for he or she alone is then the author of their act because it stems from an internally rational process of decision making.

Because relationships are constantly changing through the joint action of those involved in them, Burkitt (1999:74) prefers to talk of 'movement' or 'generative dance' where persons in relationships are constantly repositioning themselves "like dancers engaged in fluid but patterned formations". In this generative dance, people in relationships are always repositioning themselves in respect of others, and influence their views of responsibility, for no action or event occurs outside of it. There is no individual thought, intention, or action that is unrelated (Burkitt 1999:74).

In their relationship as a group, during their discussions and decisions the participants "adopt[ed] an ethics of mutual decision" that does not privilege particular ways of understanding and of being. They were guided, in the appreciated inquiry approach, by the idea that shifting the locus of responsibility from the individual to relational, requires the production of new obligations: to the voices within them selves, to the relationships in which they exist, and to the processes through which these were constructed (Deetz & White 1999:111-116). In a joint action towards new meanings, all participants had responsibilities for its results. The responsibility for all participants is in essence the same: be alive, be trustworthy, and be human (Riikonen 1999:148). During the participants "generative dance", the participants felt safe and secure in the knowledge that they could not position themselves or make decisions in disrespect to others in the group or outside the group (the CEO), because the group had conversations of the pro and cons of every decision in the making. In this "dance" the participants together decide if an idea is appreciated by all, even if they differ in their perceptions.

Before we started our sessions, the participants individually blamed the CEO for his decisions which affected us in such a way that we were afraid any decision for our future could be wrong, and that they could then be held individually responsible for the outcome. In an appreciative relational context, the participants were responsible to each other and for decisions we made in changing the effects the CEO's decisions had on us. The participants thus decided to shift the focus away from a desire to blame and redirect it toward the question: "How is it possible to create and sustain relationships in which everyone figures as a person toward whom we all have moral responsibility?" The

participants experienced the pride of ownership when expressing their voice and being listened to included sharing responsibilities and respect for each other's choices. Thus, from an appreciative inquiry approach, sharing responsibilities made the relationship more "mutually rewarding" and precious (Anderson 1999:69, Aram 1990:176, McLagan & Nel 1995:219) and made us aware that we did not have to focus on 'what is' but could focus creatively on 'what might be' (Frost & Egri 1990:305) in an ethical way. It is an appreciative practice that involves an ethics of speaking, an ethics of listening, and an ethics of acting with one another, it is an ethical process that is always open to choices in the future (Penn & Frankfurt 1999:176). In a joint ethical action, all participants had responsibilities for its results. In dancing together with ideas during our appreciative inquiry approach, the participants felt worthy as human beings (not being treated as objects), they felt alive and trustworthy. Because the participants were jointly responsible for the outcome of their ideas, the support they experienced resulted in their opening doors to optimism, motivation, and self-worth.

After our appreciative inquiry directed towards their successes of the past, the participants had to approach the future. From an appreciative approach, we discussed what the traumatic event in our school could offer positively in the future. We discussed the assets that we remembered of the past: 'initiative to organize functions', the perseverance in running a shop in difficult circumstances', 'using your free time to help other people, being a 'mother' to the students' and 'having an open ear for the troubles of others'. What the participants appreciated most of these discussions, were "being open to a changing self-understanding" (Penn and Frankfurt 1999:178) and that they would be able to use their assets whatever the future kept in store for them (Penn and Frankfurt 1999:178). They knew that they would be able to accept changes and construct a desirable future for themselves, imagining new possibilities that would "[e]nhance creative story making and promote hope for the future" (Cotter & Cotter 1999:166). Lester (1995:63) agrees:

> We constantly develop future stories that express our anticipations of the future and therefore, our hope. A phenomenological approach to human

experiences with hope makes it clear that the capacity to hope reaches into an open-ended future on the one hand and looks for specific content in concrete objects, events, and relationships on the other.

4.6 A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE

It was evident during the participant's journey of an appreciative inquiry process, that resilience was one aspect that helped the participants to survive. It would be pertinent to look at what contributed to the teacher's resilience towards the effects of job insecurity, what resilience implies and what it hopes to achieve.

In view of the authoritative, non-transparent way our principal was demoted to another college, I want to refer to the White Paper on Education and Training (1995,1996). According to the WPET (1995:22), each level of governance is accountable to the other, and must ensure open communication channels and fair administrative structures in support of the principle of transparency. The aim of the government, is to "move away from the asymmetrical relations of power and domination which were prevalent in the management of schools before 1994" (Ngcongo & Chetty 2000:73). In reality, the participants reasoned that this was not achieved in the way changes were manifested in Citicol.

In the past, employees of organizations, for example schools, were "perceived as assets to be nurtured and grown" (Noer 1993:16). Today, many organizations view workers as "things" that can be discarded when profit is not what it should be (Noer 1993:17). Unlike "things" or "machines", discarding the principal of our school, had a significant traumatic effect on the teachers who remained behind.

4.6.1 What resilience implies

Hawley and De Haan (1996:284-285) explain that resilience appears when there is hardship, it carries the ability to bounce back and is associated with wellness. This kind

of resilience does not imply "bouncing back as if untouched, but involves a process of integrating the fullness of the experience into the fabric of individual and family identity and a way people go on to live their lives" (Walsh 1996:271). The participants had experienced resilience as an interpersonal, relational concept. They had explored the skills and knowledges expressed and discussed in their relationship, and that way their capacity for resilience had developed "in the context of environmental support" (Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe 1993:518).

Although the participants knew there was no possibility of having a job in the same environment as the last number of years, they decided to make the best of the remaining year: *"At least we are not alone in this situation","It is a big comfort to have your support whatever the outcome","I suppose you will agree that God will be our companion in whatever we decided to do the remainder of this year"," What a comfort to know God at least will never change or abandon us"*. Although the door to a future in the school was firmly closed, the participants discussed the possibility of opening other doors to new opportunities. Listening to and understanding one another's emotions generate a feeling of safeness which contributed to "the realities of power". The participants had realized the impossibility of getting even with management and experienced, as they vented their rage, that "our helpless fury gradually changes into a more powerful and satisfying form of anger: righteous indignation" (Herman 1992:189). In the safety of a protected relationship we actually experienced when we discussed and described thickly alternative stories ". . . a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory" (Herman 1992:183).

I realized what sustained the participants, was a sense of belonging and that their open and disciplined relationship enhance motivation towards a life-giving future.

4.7 MOTIVATION IN THE JOURNEY TO HEALING

Du Preez and Duminy (1980:65) say the term motivation indicates "an internal force that stimulates one to act in a certain manner in order to achieve a certain goal". Eysenck

(1996:89) defines motivation as a series of processes, which somehow starts, steers, sustains and finally stops a goal-directed sequence of behaviour. In the numerous definitions of motivation, three aspects are generally mentioned in these definitions, namely an energising force that drives people to behave in certain ways, driving forces towards some goal and feedback "that reduces the inner state of tension which energised the action" (Biesheuwel 1984:29, Fitch 1976:114). The above-mentioned descriptions made me wonder if the participants thought the words applicable to their own experiences in our research journey. I therefore asked the participants, applying the appreciative inquiry process, to share examples of what it feels like and looks like to be treated with dignity and respect by posing the question below.

- If you compare your worklife just after the traumatic event in our school with how you are experiencing it now, is there anything different in your attitude towards yourself and your work? The participants answered as follows:

- *"The effects I experienced after that traumatic day, was terrible. I did not want to think of the future because I could see no future. I was totally de-motivated, even in my work. But today, I'm really happy to say, I can think again of a future."*
- *"Yes, knowing and remembering how I achieved organizing all the functions, made me feel I'm worthy of doing the same at any other job."*
- *"If I have achieved something meaningful for the students in difficult circumstances, I may well be able to survive stumbling blocks in the future. I feel more than just alive, my life is now meaning something."*
- *"I feel a lightness inside me that was not there before. I do not see the future as threat anymore."*
- *"I am more hopeful that there will be an outcome for me in connection with work and I'm enjoying working with the students again. Best of all, I'm the whole time aware of not being alone, that the others in our group are there for me if I need to discuss something that's bothering me."*

During the participant's conversations they had agreed that they were all experiencing a sense of togetherness, that they were motivated through a hopeful future, which promises new opportunities and achievements. The participants embraced the words of Lester (1995:17) that in being open and conscious of a new future, time will allow "us to give meaning to our existence so that we construct purposes for survival that create future goals". The participants also agree to the importance of their own motivated role in the goal setting process and that they should be realistic in their expectations, that they should "learn to dream what is imaginable and to train [their] expectations on what promises to prove possible" (Erikson, cited in Lester:1995:18).

Due to the staff's experiences of hopelessness it became important for me, as a pastoral therapist, to reflect on a theology of hope as a response to this experience of hopelessness.

4.8 HOPEFULNESS

Although it is important to help people find a "connection between their present lived experience and the grounding narratives that historically have given that experience meaning" (Gerkin 1986:30), according to Van den Blink (1995:205), the need of people to discover their self-worth and of having hope rekindled is more important. I agree with Van den Blink because I knew that the staff's insecurity about being employed the next year, created a feeling of hopelessness. I found the following argument of Lester (1995:24), in connection with the situation in our school, applicable in the sense that if we want to understand ourselves we have to remember our temporality and that in the present moment of changes in our school "we are surrounded by time past and time future". Lester (1995) argues furthermore that pastoral care and counselling with people who experience hopelessness should include helping them evaluate their "stance toward each dimension of time". A pastoral theology of hope emphasizes temporality, that the past and future are a part of our very being. Lester (1995:22) says:

> Hope is rooted in the past because we remember the mighty acts of God and our personal encounters with the transcendent. Hope is empowered from the future from where it receives its vision. Finally, hope is active in the present as it energizes and motivates us to live so that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

'Hope' is defined by Rumbold (1986:59) who poses that "[i]n everyday language hope refers to an idea, a vision or a wish concerning the future, an expectation of something which is desired". Grant (1985:85) writes that "...hope combats the conditions of crises, and it empowers and sets one's mind free to God's promises. Hope presents opportunities for spiritual growth". Ackermann (1992:67) refers to hope as follows: "Hope is to refuse to accept despair or defeat. Hope is resistance. It actively resists the void of hopelessness by embracing suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance ... it refuses to accept defeat." Resistance is the struggle of people to survive within the system. Survival, within the work context, is about "finding a way to live with the injustices resulting from change practices that do not allow all 'workers' or 'employees' to have a voice" (Wessels & Kotze 2002:132).

I find the words of Ackermann (1991:82), spoken from a theology of hope perspective, very important when she says that Christian spirituality keeps hope alive, even in hopeless situations, that hope is another way of saying we "believe in the God of righteousness and justice. To lose hope is to lose faith in God ..." The position of the teachers in our school, was an unjust position. Graham (1995:232) argues that "caregiving in a mode of relational justice challenges [or resists] the social system that tolerates or even requires victimization". Weingarten (2000:402) reflects on the importance of hope and therefore argues that hope needs to become the responsibility of the community. The traumatic experience of not knowing if they are going to have work the following year, had to be transformed into a hopeful future because "hope means moving beyond doubt and anger" (Ackermann 1993:67). Therefore, in pastoral care with the research participants, our aim was to transform a traumatic experience into a hopeful future through trusting, caring relationships with one another in a group setting, because "[h]ope is capable of freeing one from the clutches of despair or hopelessness. The power

of hope gives people the freedom to decide their possibilities" (Grant 1985:90). Ackermann (1992:66) says hope is linked to faith and faith involves action: "While acknowledging the realism of disappointment, brokenness, of anger and despair, to hope means to engage hour by hour with life in such a way that our deeds express that which we hope for".

It was important in our therapeutic group, never to give up on hope. From an appreciative inquiry perspective, the participants perceived the future as open-ended, not determined but filled with possibilities. During the participants' discussions, the group decided how to become actively involved in changing negative experiences to experiences where they might claim happiness for them selves. They realized that they could not achieve hope alone, that hope had pushed them toward relationships because "it is trusting of others and thrives on intimacy and mutual love" (Lester 1995:95). Where appreciation is alive between people through inquiry, hope grows and responsibility through relationship expands (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999:62). In caring for and appreciating each other, the staff was able to build on their strengths and individual potential through inviting hopefulness into their lives.

I think the participants belief in God had strengthened their vision of a hopeful future, because we not only experienced His comfort on our research journey, but also experienced Him as a companion, guide, encourager, teacher and restorer. God was not only present with us during our research journey, but invited us into the future. Our belief in God allowed us to adopt an anticipating consciousness that is energized by hope rather than despair (Lester 1995:69). The Lords trusting companionship during our journey suggests intentionality about the future based on our hope and trust in God, even when the future is not yet visible.

4.9 REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

Although the participants may still sometimes have misgivings about their future, our research journey has empowered them to believe in new beginnings and trusting

relationships – above all in their relationship with God. Being aware they are not the problem, but that the problem is the problem, has empowered them to experience the richness of their alternative stories which sustained them towards open doors to a hopeful future. To choose to journey relationally, made the exploration of the journey easier in achieving "new ways of being" (Reinharz 1992:211).

A pastoral, appreciative inquiry process made the participants aware of their ability to create stories that reinvented their lives, they constructively discovered "life-giving" stories. We implemented the words of McLagan and Nel (1995:132) in working together in participation, acknowledging one another's independence while journeying together interdependently. Working together creatively, the participants appreciated and trusted each other and perceived in their discussions how differently but also similarly they had experienced the effects of the trauma. With a pastoral appreciative inquiry approach as a guideline in my research, I shared with the participants the importance of a recollecting of their past experiences and to be able to construct preferred future stories, new hopeful future stories. Attempting to move the focus away from internalizing the effects of traumatic change towards the achievement of hopeful, richer stories, I used with the participants the externalizing and deconstruction of past stories. We used provocative propositions by concentrating on what had worked in the past and to participate in creating more of the best for our future (Hammond 1996:39). While constructing more of the best for the future we reminded ourselves of our relational responsibility (Cottor & Cottor 1999:170) which involves an ethic of listening, and an ethics of acting with one another. It involved an appreciative practice. At the end of our research, we distanced ourselves from despair – the power of hope and our faith in God made it possible for us to embrace the future.

Looking back on the journey, Morgan's words resonate with my own understanding that the unique outcomes and alternative stories could only be expressed by the participants, since "[a]n event that stands outside of the dominant story is only a unique outcome if the person consulting the therapist judges it to be so" (Morgan 2000:56). I therefore find it important that the reflection on the research journey, if it was worthwhile and useful to

them, should be measured by the participants themselves. I found the research journey worthwhile and useful to me as a therapist and am deeply indebted to the participants. In the last chapter, the participants and I reflect on the journey of this research.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This last chapter reflects on the complete research project and does not include only how the teachers were affected by the changes in the school, but also includes, in a group set-up, active pastoral, narrative inquiry and appreciative inquiry as well as therapeutic conversations with the teachers. This research journey took place over a period of eight months. I would have enjoyed our research journey more if the duration of the research journey had stretched over a longer period, but time was limited. After the group sessions and after the school year we contacted each other to bring ourselves up to date with occurrences in our lives. Although everyone could not attend every time, we even had group conversations after our research project.

This research differs from other research projects because I experienced the same trauma as the group or participants. The school had sentimental value for me as I was one of the first teachers of the school and experienced and saw the growth of the number of students over the years. The research thus started out of my own experience *together with* the experience of the other teachers and not from an objective position. On the one side, this personal experience of the effects of the trauma put me in the same position as the participants during the research journey. I experienced with them the humiliation of being treated as an object during the announcement of the CEO and thus have a deep understanding of their reaction and feelings after the announcement. But on the other hand, as a therapist, I had to be in a "not knowing" position. This dual position resulted in my using at times "we" and "our" words, and at times "they" and "their" words. I have learned during my research the value of a narrative and appreciative inquiry approach. This approach includes a concept of hope, is not problem-oriented or solution oriented and allows me to be in a non-prescriptive position. This approach enabled me to ask

questions about and listen intently to the teachers' concerns. In my dual position, this approach made it possible for me to shift to and fro from a counsellor's position towards an involved participatory position *with* them.

While listening to the participants, I came early to the conclusion in my research that although I experienced the same shock as they did during the announcement of the CEO, I had already decided to retire at the end of that year while their future was uncertain. I therefore refrained from giving any comments on my beneficial position. If I had participated in telling my own story, being in a better position than they were in connection with the future, I could have created a distance between myself and the participants. Chapter 3 conveys how each participant had experienced the effects of the trauma in a unique way, which gave me the opportunity to do my research *with* the participants and not *about* them.

5.2 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH CURIOSITIES

This section reflects on the research curiosities, namely what the effects of organizational change are on the teaching staff and how pastoral care and counselling can be practiced within a school context where the staff is experiencing trauma on a daily basis.

5.3 THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the question of how organizational change affected the teaching staff. The process of a pastoral and narrative inquiry, as described in chapter 3, contributed to the changes in the effects of the teachers' trauma. The effects of the trauma that had influenced the participant's experiences of a stable worklife, were stress, burnout, depression, and hopelessness.

The abnormal event of disclosing to the teachers that our school would be closed at the end of the year, had a stressful effect on them. The stress they experienced, related to the words of Weingarten (2003:43) that "[w]hen stress is intense, when the way we

understand ourselves, others, and the world, is disrupted, and when we feel fear … stress can produce a trauma response, which is a *normal* response to abnormal events and experiences". The disruption the participants experienced, resulted in the gradual mounting in them of the feeling that they were less and less able to accomplish the goals for which they had entered the teaching profession. The stressful conditions under which they had to work were barriers that interfered with their ability to work effectively and "produce(d) a gradual erosion of the very idealism that motivated the person's occupational choice" (Weingarten 2003:102). When job satisfaction deteriorates, according to Weingarten (2003:102), the person begins to develop symptoms of burnout, which consists of physical, emotional, behavioural, relationship, and work-related difficulties. The effects of helplessness, hopelessness, sadness and joylessness experienced by the participants, were described by Neuger (2001:152) as depression. The participants had expressed these effects in their dominant stories (chapter 3) in which they had evaluated themselves, their worklife and future in negative terms.

The participants and I had learned during the process of narrative inquiry in our sessions that the consequences or effects of our traumatic experience were eased by sharing our stories. Our participatory need and eagerness to improve the traumatic effects were constructed in the interplay of our telling, listening and reflecting.

5.3.1 A pastoral, narrative inquiry approach

A pastoral, narrative inquiry approach (chapter 3), made it possible for the participants to express and reflect on their stories from their own perception. Externalisation (White1991:28) had allowed the participants to distance themselves from the effects of the trauma and had made it easier for them to listen for unique outcomes (White & Epston 1990:74). The unique outcomes (chapter 4) enabled us to co-author alternative or richer stories (White & Epston 1990:17). Not to decline into a "knowing" position, I concentrated during our group conversations on what was important for the participants, on what they desired to talk about (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:30). I thus formulated

my questions in accordance with the course of our conversations and from a participatory narrative inquiry plan.

During our group discussions, I concentrated on what was important for the participants. I formulated my questions in such a way that it enabled me to follow their thoughts (Reinharz 1992:39). My questions to the participants were not planned beforehand, but our discussions determined my questions. The literature of narrative therapy as guidelines in my discussions with the participants, were invaluable to me and I experienced how the literature was expressed in the practical dimension of my research.

During the evaluating of the research process, the meaningful experiences of the participants were important. A standard procedure during the course of this research project, was the participants' feedback. During my facilitating of the group sessions, I regularly asked for feedback from the participants about their experiences of a session or a specific conversation, and the summary of the sessions in letters were a replication of the participants' own words. The participants' own words and not my interpretation of the sessions, thus indicated the turning points in the narrative inquiry conversations and discussions. This method of having regular feedback from the participants and of journeying *with* them in their experience of their worklife, encouraged them to disclose their successes.

In a pastoral, narrative inquiry process, the dominant story's influence diminishes as new and richer stories emerge. Documentation could help to widen these richer stories because they are recorded. These recorded stories of preferences, knowledge and commitments are available for people to access at any time (Morgan 2000:85). Although documentation included letter-writing, notes of sessions, certificates, video and audio recordings, e-mail correspondence and so forth, I mainly used letter-writing.

I concluded during my research that letter-writing in the therapy process was and is in itself a therapy because it is "an extension of the conversation we had been having" (Epston 1994:32) and is "useful in continuing stories and thickening them" (Freedman &

Combs 1996:208). During the conversations in our sessions, knowledge and perceptions could have been lost, but because I wrote the letters from a reflective position, such missing knowledge could be captured or created. It resonates with the words of Epston (1994:32): "In my letters, I am always tuning in to what opens up new possibilities, any glimpse of an alternative to the client's problem-saturated story". My letter-writing to the participants, opened the possibility for us to have conversations about things that were not clear to them and about which they were concerned or anxious. The letters could be read at any time, and to my mind, this way of reflectively reading during our sessions enriched co-constructed knowledge.

I experienced that the participants, after reading the letters of our conversations, accessed themselves more positively. I think the crux of a pastoral, narrative inquiry process is not to change people or institutions, but first of all to change the negative perceptions they may have experienced about themselves to a positive perception. Reading letters that concentrate on positive inquiries about the participants, opened new positive perceptions of themselves that they may have missed during our conversations. A new dimension of the participants' perception of themselves was achieved over and over again because of the re-reading of letters.

I agree with Freedman and Combs (1996:208) who summarized the value of letters as follows: "For us, letters serve three main purposes: (1) to summarize and recap our meetings, (2) to extend ideas or stories that were initiated in a therapy conversation, and (3) to include people who didn't attend a meeting". I experienced the letter-writing as valuable and indispensable during my research. The availability of the letters at any time during our research, enabled the participants to re-read and reflect on the letters. According to the participants this reflective re-reading of the letters made it possible for them to enrich meanings that were co-constructed during our sessions. The participants shared their letters with friends and family outside our group which helped them to have a better understanding of how the participants experienced the trauma. Our conversations after the participants had read the letters, also enriched my life as an inexperienced

researcher who still has much to learn. I also experienced the positive feedback of the participants on our letter-writing, at the end of the research, as very rewarding.

Because of my own involvement in the changes that occurred in the school, I experienced an intense empathy with the participants. After the announcement that the school was only going to function till the end of the year, there was a feeling of uncertainty and distrust among the teachers. The participants experienced a need to talk to their colleagues, but an atmosphere of apprehension and fear among the teachers prevented them from doing so. The group's conversations contributed to their feeling safe to express themselves. The pastoral, narrative inquiry process and my position as a colleague, enabled me to cry and laugh with the participants, to be part of their pain and insecurity. Had I been in an objective position, I would not have been able to understand the participant's experiences as well as I did.

5.3.2 Reflection on a pastoral, appreciative inquiry process

 In the appreciative inquiry process (chapter 4) we achieved our aim with the research project. During the course of the appreciative inquiry process, I always invited the participants to be part of decisions we had to make. They not only participated in decision-making, but in every change I had to make in the writing of the research stories and reports. Towards the end of our journey, we were talking about "our" research, a relational research that includes responsibilities.

Chapter 4 describes in detail how the pastoral, appreciative inquiry approach empowered the participants to create or construct ethical, alternative and richer descriptions. I write about the deconstructive and externalizing conversations helping the participants to achieve richer conversations about their experiences of the effects of the trauma. The process of "re-storying", or the creation of new stories, was important in creating alternative descriptions. According to White (1995:27-28):

Life is multi-storied, not single-storied. Apart from the dominant stories of our lives, there are always sub-stories… It's the sub-stories themselves, and also these aspects of experience that stand outside of dominant stories and the substories, that really provide a point of entry for re-authoring work.

To my mind, the appreciative inquiry process provided a space for the participants where they could express "ignored meanings of their experiences" (Foot & Frank (1999:179). The participants experienced the words of White (1991:16), namely "a sense of agency" when they achieved richer descriptions of their lives. White states that "[t]his sense is derived from the experience of escaping "passengerhood" in life, and from the sense of being able to play an active role in the shaping of one's own life…". To my mind, the above words expressed the "sense of agency" the participants achieved in their own lives, for instance their changed attitude towards Thabang. Thabang, a black teacher, did not understand why the teachers were afraid and uncertain of their future. The participants and especially Wilna, voiced their discontent with the "unsympathetic" attitude of Thabang (chapter 3) towards their circumstances. When I referred to that session again, the participants replied that they were now able to understand Thabang's different perception of the changes in the school and they accepted and understood that "there is more than one truth". They discovered that they were not dependent on the perception of others, but were able to be actively in control of shaping their own lives. I was amazed at how they embraced the methodology of our research in the practice of their lives.

The richer descriptions of the participants' experiences empowered them to accept the changes in their worklife in such a way that they constructed new changes for their future in using provocative propositions (chapter 4). During our sessions the participants discovered we could talk about possible plans against the effects of trauma; plans that had already been undertaken by them and had worked. The participants also experienced the way in how the group's support, creativity and activities sustained them during their need to overcome the effects of the trauma. Hannetjie, for instance, discovered that her creativity pushed Stress into the background. When she was creative, her stress (Anderson and Goolishian 1992:27) had "dis-solved". Our deconstructive conversation, empowered Hannetjie to break away from the effect of Stress, which had led her to

believe she was a stressed person, and enabled her to embrace her own ignored creative possibilities. Creating new possibilities for her future, included her capability to dissolve Stress.

I think at the end of the research, it was to the participants' benefit that they accepted and realized a harsh reality, namely the reality that the function of an organization is not to protect them from the hardships of life, but that it can even contribute to their fears and uncertainties. I reached that conclusion, because the possibility of being unemployed, activated them out of a vacuum of individual fears towards the bonding in a group, where they had the opportunity to voice their own fears and where their own perceptions were accepted. The participants discovered in the last sessions of our research that the possibility of them being without work was actually a gift from the organization – it was a wake-up call that helped them to frame their own choices and to be aware of their own possibilities and strengths (Noer 1993:216).

I had kept the words of Spiegel (1993:170) as a guideline during my research, namely that the issue in all of our lives is really quality and not quantity. Spiegel writes that "[i]t is how you live your life, and how fully you use your own resources, and do what you want to do in the world and make and cherish relationships that are important". The words of Spiegel resonated with my experiences of the participants' lives. The pastoral, narrative inquiry approach and the pastoral, appreciative inquiry approach helped the participants to embrace the quality in their lives. They achieved awareness that life meant more to them than a teaching job and that it is "important to give life to years, not just years to life" (Anderson 1993:41). They had achieved awareness of their capabilities and their strengths and that God's love will always sustain them during their life.

In the light of our research journey where the participants and I experienced the narrative and appreciative inquiry process, I saw more clearly how story-telling and story participation had enabled us to move towards a more meaningful and coherent account of our own lives, including our spiritual lives. Telling our stories and re-telling our stories in a pastoral environment of listening companionship and caring collaboration, invited the

participants to create more meaningful and coherent narratives (Peterson 1980:74). It occurs to me that the value and quality of the appreciative inquiry process contributed to the participants experiencing "katharsis" (White 2000:77) in listening to other people telling their stories. If we stayed in a context of blaming the management for their injustice, our antagonism would have intensified (Gergen and Gergen 1999:206) and how would we then have been able to proceed? An appreciative inquiry approach in our research enabled us to use our problems as a springboard to further inquiry. It contributed to all of us moving away from criticism of management and criticism of ourselves, toward the dreams and possibilities of a new life, which was not dependent on our current worklife. To explore alternatives thus sustained the possibility for conjoint constructions of meaning.

I experienced and sensed our construction of meaning, during a pastoral, appreciative inquiry process, as a time where we felt deeply together the pain and anticipation of work loss and shattered dreams and the exploring of future dreams. During our sessions we became genuinely moved by the other through our relational engagement, which included "ethical interest and fusion of time: stories remembered, voices of the past, stories anticipated, voices in the room, voices in the future" (Frankfurt 1999:178). To my mind, the value of a pastoral, appreciative inquiry was our construction of visions outside of our dilemma. Our circle of voices generated a performative quality as we moved from the effects of trauma in our lives, to our lives in effects, to our lives after the effects. A pastoral, appreciative inquiry opened possibilities for the participants' circle of voices to create a "perception of an extension of their lives" (Frankfurt 1999:179) outside their school lives. The participants journeyed away from blaming the management, and developed an appreciation of the richness and possibilities that come from difference as they moved "from a need for consensus to an openness to uncertain and yet-to-emerge possibilities (Anderson 1999:68).

Describing the effects of the trauma on the teachers and concentrating on their own unique experiences, put my research in an ethical frame. The way I thus achieved and explored my research, was not only an epistemological action, but also an ethical action

(Kotze 2002:21). My respect and appreciation of the participants' undervalued and ignored capabilities (White 1995:20) expressed my ethical way of journeying with them and contributed to creating a friendly and open climate for change.

I had regularly used letter writing (Epston 1998:95). Keeping a written record of the therapeutic conversations and discussions afterwards about the contents of the letters, was a leading factor in our research journey. I invited the participants after each session to write a letter. The invitation was an act of ethicizing because it was an acknowledgement, as I have previously mentioned, that I did not hold a "privileged position of knowing" (Kotzé:2002:30): "We are in this together. The more we participate in such a way that the voices of all, especially those who have been previously silenced, can be heard, the more we can research and co-consult, in an ethical manner, an ethical, just and ecologically sound world to live in". Because of my ethical approach, the group and I were active participants in the research, where we did "everything in participation with the others, or rather, with everyone participating" (Kotzé 2002:21).

 The above words of Kotzé, correlated with relational responsibility that I used in chapter 4 during my appreciative inquiry approach. The participants constructed a space during our research where we shared the pleasure of sharing. In this space our responsibility was to say who we were, from which point we spoke in the multi-local, ambivalent way while we reflected on our conversations and letters. We constructed a space for mystery and surprise that we shared with our co-participants with whom we talked, a "space allowing us to be changed, in the multiple circuits of our subjective togetherness" (Marzari 1999:196). I experienced the relational responsibility during my research as a challenge. As researchers, participants and I worked from a social constructionist perspective, where we acquired an appropriate conceptual framework to explain how our methodologies, our actions and practices contributed to the construction of a particular space for ourselves and others. In our constructive space, all of us were responsible for our actions towards new meanings and for its results. Our responsibilities (chapter 4) were in essence the same: be alive, be trustworthy, and be human (Riikonen 1999:148).

I think the ethical manner of participation I used, encouraged and sustained the participants to improve or change the effects of the trauma, and to invite trust and respect into our relationships. My participatory action and ethical approach resonated with the words of McTaggart (1997:39): "It does not treat people as objects for research, but encourages people to work together as knowing subjects and agents of change and improvement". I think the mutual respect of the participants for each others' experiences and capabilities as teachers and human beings, empowered them (chapter 4) to attain unique outcomes at the end of our research journey.

I experienced and described in chapter 4, how the participants had achieved richer meaning in the pastoral, appreciative inquiry process, with the presence of God in their conversations. The narrative inquiry approach and appreciative inquiry approach were never undertaken separately from pastoral care and counselling. To reflect more effectively on the above-mentioned approaches, I want to reflect on my pastoral care during this approach.

5.4 REFLECTIONS ON PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING

The second research curiosity was addressed in chapters 1, 3 and 4. and was expressed as follows: How can pastoral care and counselling be practised in a school context where the staff is experiencing trauma on a daily basis?

A modernistic discourse focused on objective knowledge while attempts were made to find certainty and dominance. Brueggemann (1993:5) described this knowledge as scriptural, universal, general and not attached to time. To achieve certainty Theology accepted this way of interpretation, with the result that knowledge was limited to one truth and in the hands of a knowledgeable, professional person, for instance a pastor. Being in such a position, led to the empowerment of one person and disempowerment of a whole congregation. Brueggemann (1993:5) said about objective knowledge that "the 'disinterested', 'objective' ones at the centre could dominate the margin". Pastoral therapy, in the context of a postmodern discourse, put the pastoral care and counselling of

people back in an ethical dimension of social justness. Graham (1996:43) indicated a paradigm shift in pastoral theology from a postmodern discourse. She indicated the paradigm shift as:

> a questioning of the individualism of contemporary Western pastoral care and a greater emphasis on social justice dimensions of Christian ministry; a move to reconnect the pastoral counselling movement (as a specific arm of pastoral care) with the life of local Christian congregations; a similar quest for a more distinctive theologically-based foundation for pastoral care as a reaction to the dominance of psychologically-derived models; and a tension between the personalist, therapeutic tradition of pastoral care and counselling and the symbolic, liturgical and sacramental modes of wider pastoral activity.

The Christian congregation or community was estranged from the pastoral counselling movement because of an individualistic impact. Pastoral care and counselling, in a postmodern context, have the possibility of being theologically-based and of being in the context of the Christian congregation which could contribute to integrate the therapeutic tradition of pastoral therapy with other activities of the church. Rossouw (1993:895) reasoned: "A theology that pretends to be a timeless and a closed system of theological knowledge, unaffected by cultural shifts, runs the risk of becoming absolute…". Because of the above mentioned paradigm shift, Brueggeman (1993:10) summarise the present pastoral situation: "Thus I propose that the shift from an objective claim of hegemony to a contextual, local perspective accurately describes our pastoral situation". A postmodern discourse asked thus for a pastoral approach which is committed to a specific situation and to be contextual.

In a climate where the modernistic view of subjective and objective knowledge were accepted, and contextual and inclusiveness excluded (Dill and Kotzé 1997:22), it would not have been possible for me, in my research, to position myself in an ethical way. I had believed the participants should be part of the process where their belief in God had meaning in their own context; where universal truths were not forced on them. To practice therapy as such, a postmodern discourse gave me, from an ethical point of view, a better context for participating with the participants. Although the participants cared for

one another within the group and were part of that group, each one was unique. I agree with Sevenhuijsen (1998:15) and (Toombs 1992:17) that the ethic of caring starts with acknowledging the difference between people and that each one has his or her unique view of their world and their place in that world.

In following such an approach where the participants were able to construct meaning in their own unique context, the participants were able to prevent further negative effects, such as, for instance, stress and hopelessness. Story-telling their experiences in their own context with one another, enabled the participants to express a contextual theology. A pastoral, narrative approach made it possible for the participants, whose voices were silenced in the decisions of organizational changes in Citicol, to actively participate (Monk 1997:3) in pastoral therapy. As a pastoral counsellor, I was conscious of the theological commitments that guided me in my counselling, a theology where sensitivity to and in dialogue *with* the lived experience of people, " … hold a central place in the work of pastoral counselling" (Neuger 2001:56).

I experienced that the participants who needed care and support enriched their lives in their mutual pastoral conversations, which enabled them to find a way or place for themselves in a complex and changing worklife. Furthermore, I viewed pastoral care as a spiritual and religious practice, which helped the participants to prevent stress or other effects of the trauma they had experienced, and helped them to achieve "growth, testimony and intensifying of faith" (Louw 1983:41). In my research with the participants I experienced that pastoral care was much more than addressing a crisis or traumatic experience which threatened physical and emotional health. Health is more than the absence of illness, health includes the "physical, psychological, interpersonal, environmental, institutional, and spiritual" (Clinebell 1991:211).

When the participants conversed mutually about their personal experience and relationship with God, from my contextual point of view, they had constructed new richer meanings in their conversational context. Conversations about what God meant to the participants, were not based on timeless truths, God meant something to them in a

specific, unique situation. God is involved in our lives, "… God is not sitting above the world in judgement but is involved in the becoming of the world" (Isherwood & McEwan 993:68). The spiritual conversations of the participants, were not *about* God, but what He meant to them in their traumatic experiences. Their stories included the belief that God was present with us and suffered with us.

During our research we discovered that we were not dependent on what we experienced as the injustice of management towards our school and teachers, but discovered through our appreciative inquiry process, that we could build a life outside the school. The appreciative inquiry process empowered us to use the organizational shift as an opportunity to be actively involved in our own possibilities, to use our own strengths which we had received from God. Being able to discover our own possibilities and strengths, enabled us to socially construct the possibility of a meaningful and hopeful future. From an appreciative inquiry approach, we therefore could appropriately respond to reality in looking for the signs of providence within the everyday happenings of our lives. The appreciative inquiry process made us aware that God enabled us to exclude bitterness and hopelessness in our lives, that we are agents of our own life and that it is our ethical responsibility to have loving and respectful relationships with others as God wishes us to do. Their experiences of God's presence in their journey were pinned down as follows:

"Although at first I was angry with God, I know I couldn't have survived without my faith in Him"; "God gave me the strength to persevere in my work, I experienced God's presence in every difficult day"; "It was His presence and His love that kept me going from one day to the next". Isherwood and McEwan (1993:70) express God's relationship with us: "It is this limitlessness of love that is the basis of God's righteousness and therefore the crux of our ethics. Our ethical task is to develop our capacity for love and loving … The important element is that we expand our ability to love, not that we conform to some absolute value".

5.5 REFLECTIONS ON MYSELF DURING MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

During this research project I learned much about myself, about the topic of my research and how to do research (Reinharz 1992:194). After 35 years of not studying, I found it a major adjustment to start again, but also a major challenge. More than once it crossed my mind to give up. I realized that I would never have been able to continue with my studies if I were dependent on myself. I would never have been able to finish my research, if not for the grace of God, the help, support and input of my superiors, the input of the participants and the support of my family and friends. The support of others during my research work accentuated the importance of participating. The positive results, as described in chapter 4, of the research project that I had initiated, not only gave alternative and richer meanings to the participants, it also gave me a feeling of self-contentment.

The knowledge I had accumulated in the reading of literature for my research project, enriched my life and enabled me to use my acquired knowledge as an indication of how to construct more knowledge in my journey *with* the participants. I learned that I had to base my knowledge not on theory alone, but especially on the life experiences of the participants and their relationships with each other. These qualitative relationships where knowledge and meaning were constructed, were in the end more important and lively than the impersonal quantitative numbers and tables in a research project. My experience during my research, can be read in the words of Ballard (1996:29,30):

> [I]t was not simply an issue of research data. It was, and is, fundamentally an issue of values, of how we choose to conceptualize others and our relationships with them. It was true that these ideological issues were not separated from my research program – they had *become* my research program.

The above-mentioned statement was explored and confirmed in this research project. I learned the importance of trusting relationships (chapter 2) in a group. I also experienced my research as a learning and listening experience. Not only did I broaden my literature

knowledge, but experienced the words of Reinharz (1992:194) during my research that "[m]any…researchers report being profoundly changed by what they learn about themselves". I experienced anger and frustration after the harsh words of the CEO were spoken, words that embedded themselves deeply in me. Because I was acutely aware of the despondency in myself and the other teachers, I had, after thinking deeply about it, realized that we needed encouragement. Encouragement may help the teachers to make positive, motivating deposits in the hearts of others. At the same time in my life, I needed to do a research project for my studies in practical theology and thus realized that a research with the teachers could be of encouragement not only to them but also to me.

Because I had decided before our traumatic experience in the school that I was going to retire, I had already created new possibilities for my life after my retirement. My studies were one of the possibilities and this research project with the teachers was my first step in changing a possibility to a reality. The first steps of knowing that I was going to do something, to help myself and others, generated a feeling of self-worth within me. But the journey was not an easy one! I had to confront self-doubt of my capabilities. The fact that I did not need to follow a prescriptive approach, but a participatory approach, eased my feeling of responsibility and made me realize again and again the importance of relationships in a crisis. The group's interaction not only helped them to shape their lives, but helped me to shape my worklife as a pastoral counseller and also my life in general, to a positive experience. I did not take the revealing of their lives for granted during the telling of their narratives and appreciated the trust they extended to me. Their trust in me made me aware that they accepted me as worthy of being the counsellor on our journey.

I experienced our therapeutic conversations as spiritual experiences. During our journey my co-travellers contributed to a strengthening of my belief in the importance of including spirituality in my therapeutic conversations because it not only nurtured their belief in God but also my own. My own uncertainty with respect to a future without a regular income changed during my spiritual conversations with the participants. God enabled us to be active passengers on our journey towards a hopeful future, while the appreciative inquiry process guided us in *how* to walk the line to create a hopeful future

while we use our faith, our hope and our love as our ethical responsibility in our relationships with others. Our conversations during the appreciative inquiry process, not only strengthened their belief, but also mine, that there is "hope beyond hope" (Lester 1995:67). Our spiritual conversations made it possible for me to embrace the passage of Romans: "For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom. 8:25-25).

Learning during my research was not enough; my research was also about interpretation *and* changing of situations. The participants and I thus experienced the research as a living process in which we and the situations we found ourselves in, were changed (McTaggart 1997:36,40). At the end of the journey the participants, including myself, constructed a climate of love and trust for each other where positive changes were created. The participants and I experienced the process of positive or progressive changes as the most meaningful time in our research journey (chapter 4). I think we were able to create rich changes in our personal lives. If we had not invited spirituality into the therapeutic conversations the participants would only have created thin descriptions rather than the thicker and richer descriptions in the co-authoring of their alternative stories. These alternative stories (White & Epston 1990:17) were preferred to the initial trauma-saturated stories the participants initially presented. I appreciated the to-ing and fro-ing of ideas in our group, because it was a therapeutic process which engaged me, as a therapist, in acts of meaning that contributed to the generation of rich descriptions of my own work and of my therapist identity (White 1997:132).

The participants' civility towards me, made my hard work worthwhile! We created for ourselves a trusting and respectful relationship. A relationship where each one could express their experiences of the effects of the trauma – our voices became alive!

5.6 REFLECTIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

I concluded from the feedback of the participants' letters, that my pastoral, narrative and appreciative inquiry approach, contributed to them being able to have open and appreciative conversations with each other.

Hannetjie wrote about the open conversations with her co-participants: "*The knowledge that my co-participants in our journey, accepted and acknowledged my views, helped me to relax and to see myself as a capable woman who could manage my life*". Because the participants agreed that they would think of each other in their prayers, Carol commented that "*the knowledge that God is there for me, sustained me and gave me strength to persevere.*" The group sessions encouraged Wilma not to be afraid of loneliness after her operation. She said: "*We have created a close relationship, a community. As a result, we got to know each other very well and I gained some insights that I might not otherwise have had the chance to do.. The idea of being alone after the operation, deepened my uncertainty of how I'm going to cope next year. Now I know how important it is to address these deeper issues of isolation and loneliness*".

The words in the participants' letters about their discussions were a reflection of how the constructing of their stories were woven together with their social support system. I thus think there is a mutual involvement in people's stories that can be read in the words of Burr (1995:137) when she said "[w]e are dependent for our identity upon the willingness of others to support us in our version of events. Narratives are subject to social sanctioning and negotiation". At the end of our journey I invited the participants to reflect and express in letters what the research journey had meant to them.

5.6.1 Hannetjie

I can't tell you how much I appreciated your invitation of being a participant in our research journey.

If I had not been part of a group, I maybe would still have been despondent. The acceptance and trusting relationship I had experienced in the group, encouraged me to express my feelings with an openness I did not know I possessed. The other participants' sincerity, frankness and openheartedness had meant a lot to me. I learned to accept their opinions that differed from mine and I not only appreciated the care and love I received from them, but also experienced that their stories supported and guided me to a better understanding of myself.

The group's conversations and the letters I received during our research sessions, had enabled me to see myself as a strong person. I realize now that I'm an excellent organizer and look forward to expanding my guesthouse business! I don't want my relationship with the other participants to end and am going to make an effort to arrange regular meetings of our group for the future.

I had experienced the presence of God during our research conversations and feel confident that He will also be my supporter and companion on my future journey. If it happens that I do get a student support job next year, I will remember not to allow myself to be dependent on the safeness of the job. I will be the proprietor of my own life! May God be with all of us!

5.6.2 Wilna

Marina, thank you so much for everything you had done for us and that you have agreed to keep on having conversations with me when we are finished with the research.

I enjoyed especially the sessions where we played the role of host to the effects we had experienced. When uncertainty visited me after our sessions, I repeated the play at home which gave me a feeling of power over my unwelcome guest! I will never forget the camaraderie and trust I experienced in the group. I appreciate it that the group understood my fear of an operation next year and the medical expenses it included. The

operation was like a mountain in front of me, but the knowledge that the participants will visit me afterwards, that they are going to support me, gave me power over my fear.

I experienced the letter writing after our sessions as the opening of a book. The way you described me in your letters made me see myself from a distance, it was as if I discovered myself! Reading the letter again makes you realize your own possibilities, even if you said we had created our own past. I absorbed more when rereading the letter and understand certain things better. What a wonderful way of journeying through our research!

My nightmares are gone and I sleep better. I also feel nearer to God. He had above all sustained me during our journey. He gave me the strength I needed to persevere whenever the effects tried to push me in the wrong direction on our journey. I'm confident that even while I'm aware of the highly competitive world of the computer business, that I will be able to teach people computer work.

5.6.3 Carol

Before we had started our sessions, I had carried a baggage of feelings with me that had nothing to do with what had happened here in the school. I was always angry and depressed. The way I had experienced the effects of the trauma, had intensified these feelings. It felt sometimes if I was carrying my family's problems as well. My own father and mother did nothing to support me. I therefore experienced the support of the participants as very uplifting which helped me to have a new outlook on myself and my problems.

I felt angry towards my husband for being out of work. When we had constructed new outlooks on our own lives in connection with what had happened in the school, I had realized that I could do the same with my life at home. My husband is now just as eager as I am to start a little shop at home. We have already started to dream together and are determined to make our dreams come true!

The letters I had received from you, made me aware that I am an able person and that depression was trying very hard to disable me and to crush my happiness. After I had read and re-read your letters I felt more positive about myself. I really, really think that letter writing and the reading thereof, give you time to absorb what is being said and to use the positive contents to help you building a new future.

During our sessions, my faith went to a new level. I knew without doubt that God is aware of my situation. I knew that if I will not give up hope, if I will have the right attitude, that I will see the day when God would restore my work life and personal life to a new life where I will experience happiness.

5.6.4 Petro

I felt comfortable and secure in sharing my experiences of the effects of the changes in the school with the group. The group conversations rescued me from my emotions that were in chaos and from my sense of failure as a teacher. The turmoil that was going on in my mind after we heard of the changes that were going to happen, made it difficult for me to hear from God. My own stories and the rescue-team's conversations made me aware of so many good things about myself. I felt relaxed during our conversations which made it easier to talk, and our conversations about God made me aware again that He is still there and is journeying with me and the group. I experienced each session as constructive of my spiritual and physical life.

5.6.5 Patricia

I think it would be very sad if I reach old age and look back at my life as a teacher and feel nothing but regret about what I did or did not do. The participants helped me during our conversations to make choices about my future that I'm sure will bring me happiness. I had learned that I hold, with the grace of God, my future in my own hands and that only I can create new beginnings out of my experiences. Hardship in the past showed me that happiness is more important than money.

Our research journey together, our spontaneous conversations about our feelings, the feedback of our discussions in letters gave me, as a black woman, the opportunity to experience myself and the white participants as close friends. We had the same hopes and beliefs of and for the future!

The positive reflection of the participants about our research journey verify or confirm their appreciation of what they had experienced and the difference it made in their lives. I think the fact that they felt safe to share their experiences developed a trust between them, a trust that helped them to become aware of the richness of the dialogue between them and also of their self-dialogue. I read the sense of confidence as their voices were invited to participate about their inner feelings. I read their appreciation that our spirituality was an integral part of our journey and not something separate, that God is comfort, companion, guide, encourager, teacher, and restorer. And I read that in the course of our journey they believed that they would be able to end the journey well, they made the encouraging words of God their own in Ephesians 3, to be "able to do beyond all you can ask or imagine".

I read they learned to appreciate the richness and possibilities that come from difference and also valued an openness to uncertain and yet-to-emerge possibilities. In accepting Bons-Storm's (1998:18) account of 'truth', namely that there are no essential truths, was most helpful to them. It made them aware of the possibility of change. The words of Bons-Storm (1998:18) that "[t]ruth can be understood as the road … through changing landscapes and changing contexts. It is an avowed truth of where one stands 'for the time being'", allowed the participants to see that the effects of their trauma was contextual, that questioning the truth of these effects helped them to see a time when their current truth might be different. The above mentioned words of Bons-Storm, made them aware of the richness and generativity of their conversations, of the way their own thinking changes and the way they interact with what they are listening to and hearing.

I read in the letters that the participants discovered "sparkling moments" in their past which enabled them to create possibilities that might work in their future. An important

part of his work, according to White (1995:20), "relates to facilitating the expression of lived experiences that have been neglected". These neglected experiences are many times the things that work in our lives. Keeping their "best at a conscious level" (Hammond 1996:39), enabled them to have reflective discussions that developed into new stories (Freedman &Combs 1996:89). Because provocative propositions (Chapter 4) are reality-based, the participants were able to connect to them and were inspired to do more of what works. They thus felt as if they had re-discovered themselves! They experienced that co-operation and collaboration to create valued outcomes can become the focus of a conjoint effort to create change rather than attempting to fix a flawed effort.

As expressed in her letter, the participants' open and compassionate conversations made Patricia, and all the participants, aware that we have accepted our differences, that accepting each other's differences gave us a deeper insight into the uniqueness of human beings and what we can accomplish together in collective actions. Individual blame for political changes in our school thus dissolved. Collectively we have created new meaning in our lives that gives us hope for a new future. The participants express pride of ownership in the research project, feeling accountable for their own learning and feeling a responsibility to each other. They no longer hold sole responsibility for their truths; it is shared and therefore more mutually rewarding. Everything the participants have experienced, I have experienced with them. No one of us holds what Kotzé (2002:30) describes as a "privileged position of knowing", we were guided by concerns of what had changed our relationships towards more just and ethical ways of living (Kotzé 2002:30).

5.7 REFLECTION ON WHAT I COULD HAVE DONE

In conversations with the vice-principal of our school I became aware that management had not known how to handle the changing process in our school which resulted in their being stressed. They had not known beforehand about the changes that were going to take place and were thus not prepared for the whole situation. Looking at my research journey from a broader perspective, I am wondering now what action I could have taken to improve the relationship between teachers and management. Because all of us in the

school were affected one way or another by the changes in our school, I am now wondering if it would have been better if management were present during our last few sessions as outsider-witnesses.

Narrative therapy often invites an outsider-witness group, comprised of two or more people. People in the outsider-witness group listen in silence to the participants and can be seen or not seen (hiding behind a screen). They then re-tell what they have just heard, while the participants listen in silence. People in the outsider-witness group listen, question and comment on the alternative stories of the participants and contribute to a rich description of the conversation they have witnessed (White & Epston 1990:17). Their conversations are guided by "the principles, ethics and practices of narrative therapy" (Morgan 2000:122) and they have the opportunity to "talk about how the conversation they have witnessed has affected their thinking about their own lives or work, and/or its potential to shape and contribute to their lives or work practices in the future" (Morgan 2000:124, Carey & Russell 2003:4). White (1997:94) elaborates:

> In these re-tellings, many of the significant expressions of life that would otherwise pass like a blip across a person's screen of consciousness, and disappear off the edge into a vacuum, are pulled down into the story-lines of their life. But, more than this, the re-tellings of the outsider-witness group encapsulate the first telling, but exceed the boundaries of it. In this way, these re-tellings contribute significantly to the generation of rich descriptions of the stories told and the knowledges and skills expressed.

The uncertainty of management about handling the situation after the changes had been announced, resulted in conflict and misunderstandings between management and teachers. I experienced a strong anger from the participants towards management during my sessions with them, but realized afterwards that the participation of management in one or two of our sessions as outsider-witnesses could have enabled a link to be made between what happens in the therapy room and their working together. The above-mentioned conclusion of inviting management to be part of our research, leads to the question of "when". At what point could I have invited the management to a few

sessions? Should the invitation have been at the beginning, middle or end of the research? Possibly the participants, as the leading actors in my research, could have told me when to invite them or if we should have invited them.

If the participant's preferred stories were witnessed and responded to by a significant audience (in this instance management), we could have constructed a bridge between us where we could acknowledge and understand each other. The participants could then claim their preferred identity as part of a community of acknowledgement (Carey & Russell 2003:5).

5.8 POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following matters could have been researched in a more sufficient way, and asked for broader research.

5.8.1 Research within a school community

Any school consists of a management team, administrative team, teachers, students and in some schools, sport coaches. Research that positions itself to create or construct a support system is, to my mind, an essential need. Pastoral care does not only include individual care (Graham 1996:52), but also "pastoral practice". If more participants participate in the research, more possibilities and knowledge can be created. There can be a broader to-ing and fro-ing of possibilities between them. All the participants in a school context who experienced sudden big changes, as happened in our school, need care and support.

Research that includes the students, especially when a school will be closed, will be of great value. I think the grade elevens who would be in grade twelve the next year, may be severely traumatized. Such a change would affect their transport, their adaptability in a new school and to a new way of how new teachers present their classes. The research could also include the parents of the students who would have to consider new schools

and the payment that might differ from what they were accustomed to. The more participants included in the research, the more solutions, meanings and possibilities for action could be constructed (McDaniel, Hepworth & Doherty 1992:210). Research which included all the team members of a school, could contribute to the research process and the well-being of the participants.

Conversations with the participants have highlighted the importance of a good relationship between teachers and management. A good relationship between teachers and management might help to soften the blow of traumatic changes and expedite the acceptance of the changes and the constructing of new possibilities in life. A study that focused specifically on the relationships between all school members, would make an important contribution to research.

5.8.2   Recommendations for practical theology and pastoral care practices

Although working and researching together to accomplish outcomes in difficult situations was explored and confirmed in this research project, to my mind research that focuses on a broader support system for persons who are struggling with the effects of traumatic experiences, is an essential need. Pastoral care, according to Graham (1996:52) is not only individual care, but rather "pastoral practice". The church community can be involved to journey with their fellow Christians who experience the effects of trauma. The more caring people in a church community that actively help and support each other during difficult times, the more solutions towards healing can be found.

I think a research project that explored the relationship between appreciative inquiry and Theology, could contribute to research and could be of use in a congregational context. During my research I explored pastoral, appreciative inquiry which included richer, alternative stories. Although I had explored with the participants how their meaninglessness in life after the traumatic changes, turned into hopefulness because of their belief in God, such research that encompasses traumatic experiences can be

explored more deeply and broadly. Such a research project could for instance include the church community.

5.8.3 Recommendations for doing appreciative inquiry in a church community context

I sincerely hope my suggestions can be a way of "doing" pastoral care with church members who have experienced trauma. I experienced during my research the importance of Bosch's approach of doing Practical Theology from the "bottom up". It is an approach where the pastor is not prescriptive or "looking down" on church members, but collaboratively engages *with* them – especially members who are suffering from traumatic experiences. Such an approach will distance the pastor from purely academic Practical Theology and will enable him to embrace and collaborate with the suffering members from a position where "collaboration takes place outside the academy" (Ackermann 1996:44).

I suggest the pastor invites church members with traumatic experience to generate groups where the participants could listen to each others' descriptions of their traumatic experiences. Listening to each others' stories or descriptions and understanding the pain of others, is to my mind, "doing" theology. Listening to others could help a member to find inner support in the stories of the other participants and could generate a new sensitivity for them and for their own inner selves.

The pastor of a church community might also use an appreciative inquiry approach with his congregation members during an evening church service. Although the church bestows authority on the pastor, placing him or her in a hierarchical and dualistic position, the pastor should have "the personal freedom to choose how to accept and exercise that authority" (Anderson 1999:66). If the pastor chooses a collaborative atmosphere, the members might feel safe enough to be involved in constructing knowledge and different perspectives about faith issues they might be wrestling with. The pastor will not have to subject the members to rules and codes, but a new ethical

sensibility which respects difference will develop (Bracken 1995:11). The members might find that their stories harbour voices of appreciation with positive qualities that would "open new avenues of conversation" (MacNamee & Gergen 1999:33). These positive issues of relevance and importance to the members may be significant building blocks for the future benefit of many members of the church community. The generating of positive qualities might give new meaning to how the Christian communities live their lives, it can become a very effective guide for inquiry, understanding, of inventing possible changes, and of acting in any relationship.

5.9 CONCLUSION

An outstanding, unforgettable experience during our research project, was the relational engagement of the participants combined with the ethics inherent in our sessions that had affected our choices. I constantly made valuative decisions for myself in response both to the participants' realities and to my own. I allowed their suffering and pain to co-exist with my own feelings that were evoked by being with them. The trauma we had experienced had given us the opportunity to learn more of our faith. Our God had invited us into an open-ended future, a future of faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). We experienced that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1). Our faith in God, allowed us to embrace a hopeful future. Although the end of our teaching lives loomed as a reality in our future worklife, we experienced the research journey as a key to unlock new beginnings.

My inexperience and uncertainty at times of how to proceed during this research project, sometimes overwhelmed me, but I am grateful for having persevered. All of us received positive possibilities to take with us on new journeys. I thus embrace the words of Barrett (1999:197): "Just like the clients I work with, I had been changed forever – changed through the process of listening to them and being compassionately there for them in their most painful narratives".

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