

**NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AS A TOOL FOR PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION
IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT**

by

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SUMMARY

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AS A TOOL FOR PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

The development of high calibre managers is one of the major issues faced by organisations in their quest to become “learning organisations”, and places an increased emphasis on adult learning and especially on managerial learning. This emphasis is given further impetus by the rate of change in organisations, creating the need for adult learners to accelerate learning and, in particular, to change their way of doing things. Despite the influence of post-modernism and social constructionism in the broader field of psychology, management development efforts have not consciously acknowledged this influence. This has resulted in most management development methods and learning theories continuing to promise, in the modernist idiom, the provision of “best” answers to a multitude of managerial problems. This has created the need to examine learning theories and development methods from a post-modern framework with the aim of opening up debate on alternative methods of facilitating individual and organisational learning.

In this study narrative therapy and one of its associated techniques, the reflecting team, were investigated as a method of facilitating transformative learning. Management development narrative interventions were facilitated using narrative therapy. Discourse analysis was used as a data processing method to determine whether the technique had resulted in perspective transformation in terms of managerial issues. Results indicated some shifts in perspective, but concluded that more research and refinement of the narrative technique in different management development contexts would be necessary before it could be recommended as a tool for effecting perspective transformation. Factors such as organisational symbolism and organisational storytelling were also identified as issues for further exploration. The study thus succeeded in creating openings for further exploration of alternative management development methods.

Key terms: Post-modernism, social constructionism, Transformative Learning, perspective transformation, management development, narrative therapy, reflecting team, discourse analysis, organisational discourses, deconstruction.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis deals with a narrative approach to management development.

In this chapter the orientation of the research is explained through providing more background, stating the problem, confirming the research objective and model, outlining the paradigm perspective and giving a synopsis of the research design and methodology. The division of chapters of the thesis is also indicated.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The success of every organisation centres ultimately on the effective performance of its workforce. Successful performance is, however, becoming more challenging with the advances in technology and the multitude of other changes in the world. Many organisations fail – a survey found that one third of the firms in the “Fortune 500” in 1970 in the United States of America had vanished by 1983 (De Geus, 1997). The situation in South Africa is probably even more complex, taking into account the struggling economy, low literacy levels and other negative social factors.

Flexibility has become a key metaphor, goal and means of maintaining and increasing economic success. Organisations are expected to respond flexibly and rapidly to market changes, as well as to ensure flexibility not only within workplaces, but also between them. “Within this context are located interlinking discourses of flexible organizations, flexible workers and a consequent perceived need amongst managers (at a range of levels) for flexible structures, modes and contents of learning to service these organizations and workers” (Garrick & Usher, 2000, p. 2).

Consequently, organisations are on a constant lookout for techniques, solutions and theories that may help them to achieve and sustain successful performance through flexibility. This search has led to a new interest in learning and in particular organisational learning. In Peter Senge's (1990, p. 4) book "The Fifth Discipline", he writes how a businessman explains the reason for the interest in learning as follows:

The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage. As the world becomes more interconnected and business becomes more complex and dynamic, work must become more 'learningful'. It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organisation... The organisations that will truly excel in the future will be the organisations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation.

In response to this emphasis on learning, many organisations are striving to become "learning organisations", described by Karash (1998) as organisations in which people at all levels, individually and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about. Dixon (1994) describes these as organisations that have systems, mechanisms and processes in place that are used continually to enhance their capabilities and the capabilities of those who work with it or for it, to achieve sustainable objectives both for themselves and for the communities in which they participate.

Dixon (1994) highlights the following aspects in the definition of the learning organisation:

- the organisation is adaptive to its external environment;
- it continually enhances its capability to change/adapt;
- it develops collective as well as individual learning;
- the results of learning are used to achieve better results.

One of the most important characteristics of the learning organisation, then, is the ability to facilitate the learning of all its members and the ability to continually transform itself.

This continual transformation could be seen as both the cause and the outcome of post-modernism as a generalised social consciousness that involves the undermining of foundations, centres of authority, canonical knowledge and more decentralised forms of social and economic organisation (Lemert, 1997). According to Garrick and Usher (2000), this has contributed to an acute consciousness of change, a stimulation of diversity and difference and a consequent need to be

flexible. There is a general requirement in the workplace to be adaptable in uncertain and troubled times.

In addition to this need for continual transformation as a "learning organisation", business organisations have recently started to emphasise the issues of "knowledge management" and the management of "intellectual capital" (Stewart, 1997; Marsick & Watkins, 1999). Garrick and Usher (2000) are of the opinion that learning at work, when viewed through the lens of knowledge management and intellectual capital, assumes a new meaning, intimately linked to organisational goals and interests. According to them, learning is then reinscribed as a core component of intellectual capital and directly related to an organisation's knowledge products.

It is clear that individual learning lies at the root of the concepts learning organisation, intellectual capital and knowledge management. Individuals are the primary learning entity in organisations and they create organisational forms that enable learning that facilitates organisational transformation. Organisations employ adults and are therefore concerned about the adult learner and how to support and enable adult learning.

As the challenge to create learning organisations and to manage intellectual capital intensifies, the need for high-quality management talent increases. "Emphasis on managing new products and services, technological advances, global business activities and alliances, and improvement of competitive performance – all create strains on managerial abilities and adaptability. The more rapid rate of change experienced in many organisations today, compared with a generation ago, compels special attention to the development of managerial talent" (Walker, 1992, p. 222).

The diverse workforce in South Africa places even more pressure on the manager to create a culture of learning in the organisation. The past and its discriminatory practices make the manager's job even more difficult. According to Walker (1992), leadership is needed in such situations to help the group to unlearn some of its cultural assumptions and to learn new assumptions to adapt to the new conditions.

The delayering of organisations also places more strain on first line management, as the middle management layer is eliminated. South African organisations have the additional task of implementing Employment Equity policies. Previously disadvantaged groups have to be prepared for management within very short time periods. Several organisations try to achieve this feat by implementing accelerated management development programmes. These programmes usually consist of various development methods, ranging from assessment centres to mentorship and coaching.

When one analyses the content of the programmes devised to enhance organisational and managerial learning, it is clear that, whatever the method, the following practices are promoted (Lyons, 1993):

- the embracing of diversity in race, gender, age, experience and global perspective;
- the importance of continuous improvement and re-engineering;
- the facilitation of organisational learning by using multifunctional and/or cross functional teams;
- the treatment of employees as assets or investments;
- the requirement that managers and employees be self-controlled/self-managed/self-disciplined;
- the sharing of information at all levels;
- the viewing of change as a constant condition;
- the encouragement of risk-taking and creativity;
- a focus on openness and shared values;
- a playing down of the command and control authority/ hierarchy;
- the reinforcement of double-loop or generative learning while retaining single-loop or adaptive learning for routine functions.

The nature of these practices seems to have been influenced strongly by post-modernistic thinking such as anti-foundationalism, pluralism and resistance to “one correct answer” and relativism. There is also a strong correspondence with the definition of a post-modern organisation given by Boje and Dennehy (2000). They define the post-modern organisation as comprising a networked set of diverse, self-

managed, self-controlled teams with many centres of co-ordination that fold and unfold according to the requirements of the tasks. Work teams are organised in flat design, employees are highly empowered and involved in the job, information is fluid and continuous improvement is emphasised throughout.

According to Stronach and MacLure (1997), elements of post-modernist thinking can definitely be identified in current management literature. According to these authors, Tom Peters (who initiated the notion of the learning organisation) envisages a world of flux, of near anarchy and collapsed meta-narratives, wherein the new task of management is to manage disorder and instability.

Vargas (2000) indicates that post-modern organisations are characterised by the following characteristics:

- wide and immediate knowledge availability for decision-making processes;
- complexity and uncertainty;
- the development of telematics;
- the digital economy;
- technological complexity;
- electronic work- and marketplaces;
- globalisation;
- new systems of labour organisation.

Most of the responsibility to implement these practices and to transform the organisation from the old bureaucratic paradigm to this new, "open" paradigm is on the shoulders of the manager. This assumes a change in the manager's management/leadership style.

This responsibility leads managers to search out "right answers" and "quick fixes" to their dilemmas. "Indeed, 95 percent of the books in the world have been published in the last ten years and one of the largest growth areas for publishers is 'management'. Prescriptions abound, and the thirst for managerial medicine, however bitter, to cure the ill-health of organizations is seemingly insatiable" (Blanter & Belcher, 1994, p. 110).

These solutions are, however discarded with regularity and this leads to a questioning of the conventional and implicit story-line which has framed those areas of knowledge. Scientific metaphors are being replaced by those of story-telling (Blantern & Belcher, 1994). "Those things that we have taken to be self-evident characteristics of social reality are re-viewed as cultural conventions, the product of social processes, and constructed in the interests of those with the power to establish them" (Blantern & Belcher, 1994, p. 111).

According to Blantern and Belcher (1994), this constructionist consciousness has had an impact on the field of psychology, which has long been a training ground for the epistemology of management development. The fact that there are so many alternatives is in line with the post-modern rejection of an overall truth and the development of smaller, more local "truths" (Ménard, 2000). "Our culture has turned into a huge supermarket of worldviews in which contemporary consumers are less and less looking for *the* truth, unique and exclusive, and much more for one or several ways to express the meaning of their lives" (Ménard, 2000, p. 6).

Despite the influence of post-modernism and social constructionism in the broader field of psychology, management development efforts have not consciously acknowledged their influence. In practice there is a variety of management development methods and learning theories available. The manager is expected to learn and subsequently apply these practices by attending workshops and seminars, by reading, formal studies, action learning projects, experiential learning and so on, where the focus is still on providing "best" answers to a multitude of managerial problems. The managers are usually provided with one or two theoretical frameworks (thought to be "the right answer") that they then apply to their own situation. Burgoyne, Pedler and Boydell (1991) summarise the result of such an approach by stating that ideas bought and sold as right answers quickly become empty techniques and the life goes out of them. According to these authors there are no easy answers to the complex problems of organising work.

The demand to be consciously aware of the influence of post-modernism and social constructionism on organisational and individual learning has created the need to examine alternative learning theories and development methods. The aim would not

be to develop a “better” or “correct” theory of individual or organisational learning, but to open up debate on alternative ways of facilitating individual and organisational learning.

One of the main posits of post-modernism is the relativity of meaning. As White and Epston (1990, p. 5) state: “It is now widely accepted that any statement that postulates meaning is interpretative – that these statements are the outcome of an inquiry that is determined by our maps or analogies or, as Goffman (1974) puts it, our interpretive frameworks”. This creates the need for a learning theory that can explain how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meanings, and the way the structures of meaning themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional (Mezirow, 1991).

This need has influenced the formation of the so-called transformation theories of learning. Transformational learning involves learning that adults experience as challenging their perceptions, values, or assumptions, or ways of relating to others, themselves, or their environment (Maciuka, Basseches & Lipson, 1994). Common to most of these theories is the aim of mobilising meaning, rather than of fixing it. Another element common to all these theories is the use of language to mobilise meaning. As Boje (1994, p. 434) observes: “If organizational participants can learn new ways of dialoging their firms, then they will also learn to decipher and govern their organization and environment in different ways”.

According to Boje (1994), storytelling could be the preferred sense-making currency in organisations and it is in the collective dynamics of storytelling that discursive practices construct knowledge and power relationships. He believes that organisational learning (and by implication individual learning) is constituted by the storytelling.

Another common element of transformational theories is the emphasis on using reflection to achieve a change in perspective. It is doubtful whether the traditional management development methods succeed in creating enough opportunities for reflection. In this regard, it might be worthwhile exploring narrative therapy, a

technique that is often used in family therapy. According to White and Epston (1990), this method provides a context of reflexivity. Narrative therapy is a social constructionist model that proposes that problems be maintained through language-based belief systems. Social constructionists believe that reality can never be known, and that there are numerous ways of viewing the world (Wetchler, 1999). The implication is thus that if you change your view of a problem, that the problem will in essence also change.

There are many commonalities between the transformational theories and the thinking underlying narrative therapy. Wetchler (1999) states that narrative therapy is based on the assumptions that:

- meaning is created through the structuring of experience into stories;
- people ascribe meaning to their experience and constitute their lives and relationships through language;
- problems are maintained when a person believes that only one view of a problem exists. The goal of Narrative Therapy is to help clients realise that their dominant story is not necessarily reality, but simply one way of viewing the problem (Wetchler, 1999);
- individuals should gain a reflective perspective on their lives.

It might be useful to explore the use of this technique in management development to achieve transformational learning. According to White and Epston (1990), the narrative mode does not lead to certainties but to varying perspectives and that is exactly what a management development method is expected to achieve in a post-modern paradigm. A specific management style cannot necessarily be prescribed to managers, but they must be aware of possibilities and they must learn new ways of dialoging the organisation to be able to facilitate organisational learning. Hopefully, these new perspectives will lead to the adoption of more functional managerial/leadership behaviour, as the situation requires. Hofstede (1993) reflects the need for new perspectives by pointing out that organisations are trying to mould management style according to western theories, but that most managers experience difficulty applying this because of context.

An alternative approach to adult learning and management development, based on post-modern thinking and its associated paradigm of social constructionism, might enable organisations to foster learning in a post-modern paradigm.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A new agenda of organisational demands and expectations is emerging. Doyle (1995) predicts that this agenda will have complex implications for managers, as it requires them to change their attitudes to management and to acquire new skills. Within this context management development is viewed as one of the key organisational processes in the delivery of successful organisational adaptation and renewal (McClelland, 1994). Organisations increasingly display post-modern trends, giving rise to a number of issues in the philosophies, frameworks and practices of contemporary management development. Adult learning theory is an important consideration in management development, where managers are expected to transform their frames of reference on a continuing basis within a very fluid environment.

Several theories try to explain adult learning, but few of them seem to meet the need of explaining the perspective transformation necessary to function in a post-modern paradigm. The concept of narrative has come to play a major role in many fields, including transformational learning. Individuals learn by constructing and reconstructing narratives to make meaning of information and events (Brooks & Clark, 2001). The construction and reconstruction of narratives reflect a social constructionist approach.

The bulk of organised adult learning takes place in business and falls therefore in the realm of industrial and organisational psychology. Traditionally, industrial psychology focused more on the psychological and physiological aspects of learning, neglecting developments in other fields, such as education, sociology and even the physical sciences. The role of underlying meaning structures, for example, beliefs and values in learning, has also been neglected, because of the focus on observable behaviour as the end result of learning. Industrial psychologists had to prove that whatever method or theory they used, resulted in a measurable

improvement back on the job. A mainly positivist/modernist approach was followed in explaining learning. The individual had to learn to conform to what was expected by the particular organisation. Multiple perspectives were usually not tolerated. The linking of a narrative approach to learning for transformation has also not been explored extensively in theory.

Organisations are now starting, however, to expect more flexible learning and behaviour and the old development methods do not seem to be meeting this challenge. This is especially the case in management development where a flexible approach to management/leadership issues seems to be required.

The following research questions can be formulated around adult learning, management development and management style:

- (1) To what extent does Transformative Learning Theory explain adult learning from the post-modern as well as from the social constructionist paradigms?
- (2) Are current best practices in management development meeting the needs of post-modern management development?
- (3) Would it be possible to develop a management development intervention based on narrative therapy with the intent to facilitate managers in developing an "alternative" view of managerial issues?
- (4) Would the application of narrative therapy in a management development intervention facilitate transformational learning, with specific emphasis on a perspective transformation?
- (5) What lessons could be learned from such an application and how could the resulting recommendations benefit industrial psychology as a discipline?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to evaluate the use of narrative therapy as a tool for perspective transformation in management development.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are formulated:

1.3.1 Objectives: Literature Study

The objectives of the literature study are:

- (1) to critically examine the ability of Transformative Learning Theory to explain adult learning from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms;
- (2) to evaluate current management development best practice from a post-modern paradigm, as well as social constructionism in order to determine compatibility;
- (3) to propose a management development intervention based on narrative therapy.

1.3.2 Objectives: Qualitative Study

The objectives of the qualitative study are:

- (1) to implement the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI);
- (2) to analyse the results from the MDNI implementation;
- (3) to make recommendations with regard to management development interventions aimed at facilitating the learning organisation.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

The interpretation and presentation of research is largely influenced by the specific paradigm from which the researcher works. Kuhn (1970) introduced the word paradigm to mean a basic orientation to theory and research. The following orientations influence this research.

1.4.1 Field of study

The primary discipline within which this study is situated is industrial psychology. Schultz and Schultz (1990) simply define industrial psychology as the application of the methods, facts and principles of the science of behaviour and mental processes to people at work. Organisation development (OD) is a sub-discipline within this field with some points of relevance to this research.

French and Bell (1999, p. 26) define organisation development as "a long-term effort, led and supported by top management, to improve an organization's

visioning, empowerment, learning, and problem-solving processes, through an ongoing, collaborative management of organization culture – with special emphasis on the culture of intact work teams and other team configurations – using the consultant-facilitator role and the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research”.

One of the major “families” of OD interventions consists of education and training activities (French & Bell, 1999). Within training and development the focus of this study is on management education and development, with specific emphasis on adult learning. Van Dyk, Nel and Loedolff (1992) view education as a comprehensive concept that may include the concepts of training and development. Education may be defined as activities that aim to develop the knowledge, moral values and understanding required in all walks of life rather than knowledge and skill relating to only a limited field of activity. Van Dyk, Nel and Loedolff (1992) define training as the systematic process of changing the behaviour and/or attitudes of people in a certain direction to increase goal achievement within the organisation.

Management development is viewed as a process by which managers obtain the necessary experience, skills and attitudes to become or remain successful leaders in their organisation (Van Dyk, Nel, & Loedolff, 1992). The link between OD and management development is highlighted in Larsen’s (1996) view that management development is increasingly seen as a vital ingredient in the overall organisational transformation process, enabling the organisation to meet the external and internal demands of the future.

Management development and leadership development will be used interchangeably in this text, as there is a significant overlap between the concepts and because a balance of both aspects is necessary in an organisation. It must be noted that these definitions are formed from a positivist, modern paradigm and that the aim of the study is to break out of this mould and to explore an alternative to this view.

Various definitions of adult learning exist, but the one that will be accepted in this study was formulated by Marsick and Watkins (1990, p. 4):

Learning is the way in which individuals or groups acquire, interpret, reorganise, change or assimilate a related cluster of information, skills and feelings. It is also primary to the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organisational lives. Learning might be limited to a specific change or reinterpretation, or it may take place over a longer period of time. Learning is sometimes identified through measurable changes in behaviour or it may represent a change in an internal viewpoint that is difficult to quantify.

In their efforts to establish a comprehensive theory of adult learning, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) classified adult learning theory into three categories:

- those anchored in adult learner characteristics;
- those based on an adult's life situation; and
- those that focus on changes in consciousness.

The categories, with their relevant theories, are summarised in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1
CATEGORIES OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Category	Learning theory
A. Theories based on adult learner characteristics	Andragogy – Malcolm Knowles Characteristics of Adults as Learners (CAL) - KP Cross
B. Theories based on an adult's life situation	Theory of Margin - HY McClusky Proficiency Theory - AB Knox The Learning Process Model - P Jarvis
C. Theories based on changes in consciousness	Perspective Transformation - J Mezirow Education for Social Change - P Freire

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) conclude their efforts to identify a single theory of adult learning by stating that a phenomenon as complex as adult learning will probably never be adequately explained by a single theory and that each of the seven attempts contributes something to understanding how adults learn.

The theories based on changes in consciousness share a focus on the creation of meaning and its impact on knowledge and learning within the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms. As this research was conducted from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms, the theories based on changes in consciousness will be explored further and used as a major criterion in the research.

The research will in particular focus on Jack Mezirow's (2000) "Transformative Learning Theory". Since its introduction by Mezirow in 1978, the concept of transformative learning has been a topic of research and theory building in the field of adult education (Taylor, 1998). Mezirow is also viewed as the major developer of transformative learning theory, although other perspectives on transformative learning are emerging (Imel, 1998) and Freire (1972) has also influenced Mezirow's theory significantly (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

The interest generated by the theory has contributed to its further development by Mezirow and it has evolved "into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton, 1994, p. 22).

Of all the adult learning theories, Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory seems to be the most promising in meeting the need of facilitating the change in frames of reference necessary to function in a post-modern paradigm.

1.4.2 Relevant paradigms

Post-modernism and social constructionism influence this research.

1.4.2.1 Post-Modernism

Most theorists are reluctant to define post-modernism, because defining it is viewed as positivist and modernistic and in direct contrast to the gist of post-modernism. One can at best highlight some of the aspects of this movement. Marshall (1997) thinks that it might be better to see post-modernism as a complex map of late

twentieth century thought and practice rather than any clear-cut philosophical, political and/or aesthetic movement.

Gephart, Boje and Thatchenkery (1996a) identify three broad themes which guide their investigation of postmodernism:

- postmodernism is the social era immediately after modernism and is viewed as a new and distinct social order that involves something new and is a break with the past.
- postmodernism is a cultural movement or worldview that reconceptualises how humans experience and explain the world.
- postmodernism is an artistic or cultural style that provides an aesthetic reflection on the nature of modernism.

Despite the resistance to definition, most people agree on the broad indications of the existence of this paradigm. It seems to refer to a feeling that in the new age doubt is pervasive, tradition is in retreat, and moral and scientific certainties have lost their credibility (Shawver, 2001). Lyotard (1984) observed that post-modernism is incredulity towards meta-narratives. Shawver (2001, p. 1) calls post-modernism “the new philosophy for the sceptical”.

This observation is based on the post-modernistic challenge of global, all encompassing views, “be they political, religious or social..., reduces Marxism, Christianity, fascism, Stalinism, capitalism, liberal democracy, secular humanism, feminism, Islam and modern science to the same order and dismisses them all as logocentric, transcendental totalising meta-narratives that anticipate all questions and provide pre-determined answers” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 6). This is also described as anti-foundationalism (Goudzwaard, 1995).

Some other ideas or claims of post-modernism are (Barrow, 1997):

- reality is not a given. Everything is viewed as relative – as a product of specific circumstances and time frames. Pluralism is advocated;
- power relations determine the reception and survival of ideas;
- our culture is perceived through the prism of our language;

- as a consequence of the above, there can be no detached, disinterested reasoning, no objective argument, no timeless truth, no intrinsic beauty, and no correct interpretation.

Briton (1996) discusses two forms of post-modernism. According to him the post-modernism of resistance seeks to question rather than to exploit cultural codes and to explore rather than to conceal social and political affiliations. Critical post-modernism tries to understand events in terms of their situated meaning. In this study no distinction will be made between different types of post-modernism, but the aim of the study will be to explore and to understand events in terms of their situated meaning.

1.4.2.2 Social constructionism

Hevern (1998) explains that the terms “constructivism” and “social constructionism” refer to two general strains in psychology. He believes that the term constructivism is used in two senses. The first and more general sense embraces the perspective that understanding of reality is not a one-for-one representation of what is “out there” but the result of both individual and social processes, mediated by language, that alter, select and transform experience. If viewed like this, constructivism is an umbrella term, which includes a broad spectrum of positions.

The second and, according to Hevern (1998), more restrictive sense of constructivism refers to the notion that individuals or intelligent agents actively fashion or interpret their experience via various processes. Here the emphasis is on the personal and agentive aspects of experience as constructed (Hevern, 1998).

Philip Candy (1989, p. 98) has identified the following assumptions of constructivist thinking:

- people participate in the construction of reality;
- construction occurs within a context that influences people;
- construction is a constant activity that focuses on change and novelty rather than on fixed conditions;

- commonly accepted categories or understandings are socially constructed, not derived from observation;
- given forms of understanding depend on the regular change of social processes, not the empirical value of the perspective;
- forms of negotiated understanding are integrally connected with other human activities;
- the subjects of research should be regarded as “knowing” beings;
- locus of control resides within the subjects themselves and complex behaviour is constructed purposefully;
- human beings can attend to complex communications and organise complexity rapidly;
- human interactions are based on intricate social roles – the governing rules are often implicit.

According to Hevern (1998), social constructionism comprises the understanding that human beings are born into a social world and from their earliest moments live their lives inextricably bound to the social matrix. This is especially effected through language that serves as an a priori interpretative framework for experience. Thus, social life has a determinant role in establishing not only what experience an individual will have, but also how that experience will be interpreted.

In this study more emphasis will be placed on social constructionism as this paradigm has a strong influence on the research methodology used and will be discussed in more detail in several of the chapters.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative approach to research will be followed in this study. In contrast to positivist, quantitative research designs, where researchers' hypotheses and procedures are determined at the outset, the research design in qualitative studies remains flexible both before and throughout the research process (Taylor & Bogdon, 1984). This does not mean that the qualitative, social constructionist researcher does not follow a general methodology and some general research interests, but

merely that the specifics of his/her approach evolves as he/she proceeds. There are, however, certain dimensions of social research that might influence the decisions that a researcher makes before conducting a research project.

According to Neuman (1997), the four dimensions directing social research are: the purpose of doing it, its intended use, how it treats time and the research techniques used. These dimensions will now be discussed in relation to this specific study.

1.5.1 The purpose of social research

Social research may be organised into three groups, namely exploratory research, descriptive research and explanatory research. Neuman (1997) describes the goals of the three approaches in Table 1.2:

TABLE 1.2
A COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESEARCH

Exploratory Research	Descriptive Research	Explanatory Research
Become familiar with the basic facts, people and concerns involved	Provide an accurate profile of a group	Determine the accuracy of a principle or theory
Develop a well-grounded mental picture of what is occurring	Describe a process, mechanism, or relationship	Find out which competing explanation is better
Generate many ideas and develop tentative theories and conjectures	Give verbal or numerical picture	Advance knowledge about an underlying process
Determine the feasibility of doing additional research	Find information to stimulate new explanations	Link different issues or topics under a common general statement
Formulate questions and refine issues for more systematic inquiry	Present basic background information or a context	Build and elaborate a theory so that it becomes more complete
Develop techniques and a sense of direction for future research	Create a set of categories or classify types	Extend a theory or principle into new areas or issues
	Clarify a sequence, set of stages, or steps	Provide evidence to support or refute an explanation or prediction
	Document information that contradicts prior beliefs	

(Neuman, 1997)

The type of research undertaken in this study could be described as mainly descriptive, with strong exploratory elements. Neuman (1997) admits that descriptive and exploratory research have many similarities and that they usually

blur in practice. In this research an attempt will be made to describe the development of managers and management thinking in organisations. The study will explore the use of an essentially family therapy technique, narrative therapy, in an organisational setting.

In the descriptive mode the focus will fall on “how” and “who” questions: how did the managers construct certain concepts and perspectives, who are the actors sustaining the managers’ specific story? In the exploratory mode the “what” question will be addressed: what is narrative technique really about; what is the impact of the technique on the quality of discourses on managerial challenges? Exploratory research is difficult to conduct, as there are few guidelines to follow, steps are not well defined and the direction of inquiry might change frequently.

1.5.2 The use of research

According to Neuman (1997), researchers differ in their orientation with regard to the use of social research. Some focus on using research to advance general knowledge, whereas others use it to solve specific problems. Those engaged in basic research (also called academic research or pure research) seek an understanding of the fundamental nature of social reality. Basic research focuses on refuting or supporting theories that explain how the social world operates, what makes things happen, why social relations are the way they are, and why society changes (Neuman, 1997).

Those engaged in applied research primarily wish to apply and tailor knowledge to address a specific practical issue. They might want to answer a policy question or solve a social problem (Neuman, 1997).

The research study in question could be classified as applied research. It will focus on social constructionism and post-modernism as relevant paradigms in management development and the application of narrative therapy in the construction of an alternative management development intervention.

1.5.3 The time dimension in research

An awareness of the time dimension is helpful because different research questions or issues incorporate time in varying ways. Neuman (1997) divides quantitative research in two groups. In cross-sectional research, researchers observe at one point in time. Although it is simple and usually the least costly, it cannot capture progress or change. In longitudinal research, the features of people or other units are examined at more than one time. It is usually more costly and complex, but is more suitable to tracking progress and change. Neuman (1997) further distinguishes between three types of longitudinal research: time-series, panel and cohort.

In time-series research the same type of information is collected from a group of people or other units across multiple time periods. Stability or change in the features of the units can be observed or researchers can track conditions over time. In a panel study the researcher observes exactly the same people, group or organisation over time periods. The time periods usually stretch over a period of months or years. A cohort analysis is similar to the panel study, but rather than observing the same group of people, a category of people who share a similar life experience in a specified time period is studied.

It is difficult to describe the current study in terms of these dimensions. It is not cross-sectional, because the observations will not happen at only one point in time. It is not purely longitudinal either, because although multiple time periods will be used for observation, those time periods are close together. It might be described as a panel study within a short time frame.

1.5.4 The unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is a discourse. The various discourses within the transcribed text of different group discussions are identified and analysed. A discourse is described as “a system of statements which constructs an object” (Parker, 1992, p. 3).

1.5.5 Role-players in this study

The researcher, who is a registered psychologist in the category industry, completes the literature overview during Phase 1.

The following role-players are involved during the qualitative research in Phase 2:

- two client organisations;
- the participants during the MDNI-sessions, managers with varying levels of seniority within the client organisations;
- the reflecting teams consisting of selected managers from the bigger group of managers from the client organisations, as well as a permanent reflecting team member. The permanent team member is a registered psychologist in the category counselling;
- the facilitator during the MDNI-sessions. The facilitator is also the researcher;
- the discourse analysis team consisting of the researcher, the permanent reflecting team member and another psychologist in the category counselling.

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method consists of two phases, namely a literature overview and a quantitative study.

1.6.1 Phase 1: Literature overview

This phase consists of three steps:

Step 1: to examine critically the ability of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory to explain adult learning from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms.

Step 2: to evaluate current best practices in management development from a post-modern paradigm, as well as social constructionism. This is done by studying current literature and, where applicable, classic works.

Step 3: to propose a management development intervention based on narrative therapy. A literature overview of narrative therapy will be provided, followed by a suggestion for the application of its principles in a management development context.

1.6.2 Phase 2: Qualitative research

This phase consists of 10 steps:

Step 1: A description of the participants in terms of biographical data and context

Step 2: A description of the components of the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI)

This step includes descriptions of the development of the MDNI, the rationale, the objectives, the components and the administration, interpretation and justification for inclusion in this study. This step also includes an examination of the criteria for soundness in this study. The issues of validity and reliability are not necessarily the same as in a quantitative, empirical study. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), qualitative researchers emphasise validity while quantitative researchers emphasise reliability and replicability of research. This is, however, not to say that qualitative researchers are not concerned about the accuracy of their data. A qualitative study is still a piece of systematic research conducted with demanding, though not necessarily standardized, procedures and is not an impressionistic, off-the-cuff analysis based on a superficial look at a setting or people (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Care will be taken to put checks in place to ensure accurate data recording, but from a constructionist viewpoint the issues of reliability and validity might have to be treated differently in this study.

Step 3: Data gathering through the administration of the MDNI

In this study qualitative data collection methods will be used. Neuman (1997) is of the opinion that some techniques are more effective when addressing specific kinds

of questions or topics and that it takes skill to match a research question to an appropriate data collection technique.

The data-collection method that will be used in this study is tape recordings and transcriptions of sessions during which the narrative technique was used. Because of the constructionist approach to the research, these sessions will be seen as an arena within which particular linguistic patterns may come to the fore. From a constructionist perspective, analysis is not viewed as a separate phase that starts only after the data has been collected, rather, the different phases overlap (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Step 4: Data processing

Constructionist methods of analysis share the aim of revealing the cultural materials from which particular utterances, texts or events have been constructed (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 1999). In this study, for example, an effort will be made to reveal specific management/leadership constructions within texts from different organisations. One of the methods of analysis that will be used in this study is discourse analysis. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) define this as the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts. Questions that will be explored in this research include what discourses underlie management behaviour in different organisations and whether those discourses change over time.

Step 5: To formulate issues for exploration

Step 6: To present, discuss and integrate the research findings

Step 7: To formulate conclusions (or openings)

Step 8: To discuss the shortcomings of the study

Step 9: To formulate recommendations

Step 10: To integrate the research

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters in this research are presented as follows:

Chapter 2: A critical examination of the ability of Transformative Learning Theory to explain adult learning from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms

Chapter 3: The evaluation of current best practice in management development from a post-modern perspective as well as a social constructionist paradigm

Chapter 4: Narrative therapy and a proposal for a management development intervention based on narrative therapy

Chapter 5: Qualitative research

Chapter 6: Results and interpretation of data

Chapter 7: Conclusions, shortcomings, recommendations and integration

1.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the background to and motivation for the research were provided. The research objectives in terms of the literature study and the qualitative study were discussed. The paradigm perspective of the study in terms of the field of study and relevant paradigms was explained and a brief overview of the research design and method was provided. The chapter concluded with a layout of the chapters to follow. In the next chapter Transformative Learning Theory will be investigated in more detail.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

In this chapter the ability of the Transformative Learning Theory of Jack Mezirow to explain adult learning from the post-modern and the social constructionist paradigms will be investigated. Firstly, a broad outline of the transformational theories of adult learning will be provided. Secondly, Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory will be discussed in more detail, whereafter a thematic framework for post-modernism and social constructionism will be suggested. Lastly, Transformative Learning Theory will be compared to this thematic framework.

2.1 OUTLINE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORIES

Transformational learning is learning that adults experience as challenging to their perceptions, values, and assumptions, or to their manner of relating to others, themselves, or their environment (Maciuika, Basseches & Lipson, 1994). Transformational learning is, according to Merriam and Caffarella (1999), about dramatic, fundamental change in the way people perceive themselves and the world in which they live. This type of learning therefore focuses on the cognitive process of learning and some of its components are the mental construction of experience, inner meaning and reflection (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

In her efforts to define transformational learning, Clark (1993b) asks what is different about the changes that transformational learning generates, since all learning results in change of some kind. She answers her own question by stating that transformational learning produces more far-reaching changes in the learner than does learning in general. These changes have a significant impact on the learner's subsequent experience. Transformational learning shapes people and afterwards they are different in ways both they and others can recognise.

According to Clark (1993b), the process can be gradual or sudden, and it can occur in a structured education environment or in ordinary life situations. She views transformational learning as a normal part of life and as intimately connected to the

developmental process. Learning as a transformational activity has been explored by many theorists, for example Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Paolo Freire, Stephen Brookfield, Jack Mezirow, John Osborne, John Weiser and Laurent Daloz (Maciuika, Basseches & Lipson, 1994 and Clark, 1993b).

According to Clark (1993b) the common elements in all these approaches are:

- a humanistic view of the person, believing that human beings are capable of change and free to act in the world;
- understanding knowledge as a construction that humans make rather than an objective truth that they discover;
- a democratic view of society in which individuals are responsible for their collective futures.

The transformational theories of adult learning have had a major impact on the practice of adult education and these areas of influence are summarised in Table 2.1:

TABLE 2.1
SUMMARY OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORIES WITH REGARD TO
ADULT EDUCATION ELEMENTS

View of the learning process	Dialogic and internal process of reconstructing perceived reality.
Locus of learning	Internalised psychological and socio-cultural constructs/frames of reference (meaning perspectives and meaning schemes)
Purpose of education	Emancipation from distorted perspectives
Teacher's role	Facilitates critical reflection and critical discourse Provides emotional support
Manifestation in adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning journals • Self-reflective learning • Dialogic learning • Collaborative learning
Principles and conditions for the practice of adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is an equal partner in education • A secure environment that fosters the trust necessary for critical self-examination and the expression of feelings (Mezirow, 1990) • Flexible content

Clark (1993b) identifies several contributions of transformational learning to the understanding of adult learning in general. Her comments can be summarised as follows:

- it adds a new dimension to adult learning. The work that was done in this category gave rise to Merriam and Caffarella's (1991) third category of adult learning theories.
- it also carries learning theory to a next level. Before the advent of transformation theories, learning theories focused more on the description of learners and their situations, rather than addressing the actual process of learning. Transformational learning deals directly with this process.
- transformation theory further contributes to the understanding of learning by construing learning in terms of meaning formation. The theorists involved situate learning directly in the interpretation of experience. As Mezirow (1990, p. 11) writes: "No need is more fundamentally human than our need to understand the meaning of our experience". This expanded the whole concept of learning to include all the ways in which adults revise their understanding of things as they engage in life day by day. In this way learning can be conceptualised as the vehicle of adult development, which is an expansion of the previous understanding of the role of learning in adulthood.
- at the same time, however, transformational learning makes the understanding of learning more complex. Multiple psychosocial factors have to be considered, as it is no longer enough to speak of learning as behavioural change. Reflection, a concept that is central in many learning theories, is in some ways more visible and accessible in transformation theory. This offers an opportunity to learn more about the reflection process.
- the role of dialogue or discourse in the transformational learning process is stressed. This further contributes to the understanding of reflection, because that discourse reflection is made public.
- transformational learning has had a significant influence on community based adult education.
- several workshops and courses on critical thinking have been included in adult and continuing education programmes.
- it has also led to a greater focus on the transformative dimension of teaching. Mezirow and his associates (2000) discuss several ways that transformative learning can be facilitated to include such things as journaling, analysing

metaphors, doing life histories, and using literature to stimulate critical consciousness.

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) state that there is always some danger in singling out particular writers as the major theorists of a particular line of inquiry. "In the case of transformational learning, Mezirow has been the primary architect and spokesperson" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 319). The focus of this study is on the contribution of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory in explaining adult learning in the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms.

2.2. MEZIROW'S THEORY OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Mezirow (1991, p. xiii) briefly explains the history from which his theory emerges as follows:

My approach to transformation theory... has as its current context the insurgence of constructivism, critical theory and deconstructivism in social theory and in all the social sciences, law, literature and art. Transformation theory also grows out of the cognitive revolution in psychology and psychotherapy instigated by scores of studies that have found that it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance.

As such it is based on specific constructivist assumptions. Mezirow (2000) is of the opinion that transformation theory includes a conviction that meaning exists within a person, rather than in external forms such as books and that the personal meaning that a person attributes to his/her experience is acquired and validated through human interaction and communication. According to Mezirow (2000), a person's actions towards situations are based on the meanings that the person ascribes to the situation. These meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process that an individual uses in dealing with the things that he/she encounters. As far as any particular individual is concerned, the nature of a thing or event consists of the meaning that that individual gives to it.

Mezirow (1991) states that this does not negate the existence of a world external to a person but only asserts that what a person makes of that world is entirely a function of his/her past personal experiences. He is of the opinion that conception determines perception, and humans can know reality only by acting on it and that because of this a person's present interpretations of reality are always subject to revision or replacement (Mezirow, 2000).

Although Clark (1993b) accepts that Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation is constructivist, she also maintains that it rests on a humanistic understanding of the person. According to Clark (1993b), Mezirow's point of departure is that adults have the potential for a high level of freedom of thought and action. Mezirow (1990, p. 375) also stresses the issue of individual control when he states: "Becoming reflective of the content, process, and especially the premises of one's prior learning is central to cognition for survival in modern societies. It is the way we control our experiences rather than be controlled by them, and it is an indispensable prerequisite to individual group and collective transformations". Mezirow (2000) pigeonholes the area of application further by stating that it has particular relevance for learning in contemporary societies that share democratic values.

This emphasises the socio-cultural nature of the process of making meaning (Mezirow, 1995) and led Taylor (2000a, p. 2) to state that the theory "seeks to explain how adults' expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning individuals derive from their experience".

Mezirow (2000, p. 7) describes Transformative Learning as:

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action based on the resulting insight.

Mezirow (1981) states that critical reflection and awareness of why people attach the meanings they do to reality might be the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning. Barkmeier (2001) confirms this by stating that in reflecting on the way the world is viewed, people can identify the assumptions they take for granted and they can change those assumptions if they find them inadequate.

Grahame (2001) is of the opinion that although the original theory focused mainly on a rational process, it has evolved to begin to view the imaginative, emotional and creative aspects of the transformative learning process.

2.2.1 Instrumental learning and communicative learning

According to Mezirow (1990), people learn differently when learning to perform than when they are learning to understand what is being communicated to them – therefore there is a distinction between instrumental and communicative learning.

Instrumental learning takes place when people engage in task oriented problem solving – how to do something or how to perform. It involves the process of learning to control and manipulate the environment or other people. The process which is used in learning how to do things is the basic method of problem solving used in the natural sciences (Mezirow, 2000).

Communicative learning involves understanding the meaning of what others communicate concerning values, ideals, feelings, moral decisions and such concepts as freedom, justice, life, labour, autonomy, commitment and democracy.

The validity of assertions pertaining to these concepts is determined by a two-dimensional assessment. The assertion itself is firstly critiqued. Secondly, the relevant social norms and cultural codes that determine the allocation of influence and power over whose interpretations are acceptable, are critiqued (Mezirow, 2000).

In contrast to instrumental learning, communicative learning focuses on achieving coherence rather than on exercising more effective control over the cause-effect relationship to improve performance. The hypothetico-deductive approach is used to

do problem solving. "Communicative learning often involves a critical assessment of assumptions supporting the justification of norms" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 9).

According to Mezirow (2000), most learning involves elements of both domains and Transformative Learning Theory describes the transformation process pertaining to both domains of learning.

2.2.2 Meaning Structures

According to Mezirow (1990), it is not possible to understand the nature of adult learning without taking into account the cardinal role played by a person's frame of reference when making meaning (making sense) of an experience. A frame of reference encompasses cognitive, emotional and conative components and is, according to Mezirow (1997), composed of two dimensions, namely, habits of mind and a point of view.

(1) Habits of mind or meaning schemes

Mezirow (1997) defines habits of mind as broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes may be cultural, social, educational, political or psychological. Mezirow (2000) further postulates that habits of mind are articulated in a specific point of view.

(2) Point of view or meaning perspectives

Mezirow (1990) defines meaning perspectives as the structure of assumptions within which a new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience during the process of interpretation. Meaning perspectives involve the application of habits of expectation to objects or events to form an interpretation.

A point of view results from a habit of mind or meaning scheme and involves the complex of judgements, beliefs, attitudes and feelings regarding specific issues (Mezirow, 1997).

Meaning perspectives can be acquired through cultural assimilation or intentional learning. A person's structures of meaning are strengthened, extended, and refined by experience, because it reinforces the person's expectations about how things are supposed to be (Mezirow, 1990).

Meaning schemes and perspectives profoundly influence what people do and do not perceive, comprehend and remember. Anxiety is generated when experience does not comfortably fit these meaning structures. Humans tend to block out an experience or resort to psychological defence mechanisms to provide a more compatible interpretation, if an experience is too strange or threatening to the way they think or learn (Mezirow, 1990).

According to Mezirow (2000), learning can take place in four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view or by transforming habits of mind.

Meaning perspectives are transformed through a critical reflective assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, and psychic distortions acquired through the process of introjection, the uncritical acceptance of another's values. While it is desirable for learners to understand how ideology in the wider sense affects distorted epistemic and psychic beliefs, for purposes of making educational interventions these perspectives need to be differentiated from distorted, normative social beliefs, here designated as ideological (Mezirow, 1990, p.14).

2.2.2.1 Epistemic distortions

These distortions have to do with the nature and use of knowledge and include the following distortions (Mezirow, 1990):

- the presupposition that every problem has a correct solution, if the right expert could be found;
- the belief that a phenomenon produced by social interaction (for example, the law, the government, environmental destruction) is immutable and beyond human control;

- using description as prescriptive knowledge (for example, using what psychologists describe as life stages as standards for evaluating a particular individual's development);
- regarding an abstraction as though it were an existing object;
- interpreting reality concretely when an abstract interpretation is required;
- the early positivist supposition that only those propositions that are empirically verifiable are meaningful.

2.2.2.2 *Socio-cultural distortions*

This type of distortion involves taking for granted belief systems that pertain to power and social relationships, especially those currently prevailing and legitimised and enforced by institutions. Examples of socio-cultural distortions are: mistaking self-fulfilling and self-validating beliefs for beliefs that are not self-fulfilling or self-validating and assuming that the particular interest of a subgroup is the general interest of the group as a whole (Mezirow, 1990).

2.2.2.3 *Psychological distortions*

A psychological distortion concerns presuppositions generating unwarranted anxiety that impede taking action. An example would be a traumatic event in childhood that leads the parents to forbid certain behaviour. Although unconscious, the issue may still inhibit adult action by generating feelings of anxiety when there is a risk of breaching the prohibitions. Adults have to challenge these distorting assumptions (with guidance) in order to learn and to be fully functional (Mezirow, 1990).

This research argues that these distortions also exist in the realm of management and if not transformed, will have a negative impact on the development of a manager. Examples of the presence of these distortions might be deducted from the research on executive derailers where executives display certain behaviour that can cause them to fail even when they have all the other necessary descriptors. Byham, Smith and Pease (2001) mention some of these derailleurs, namely aloofness, arrogance, cautiousness, dependence, distrustfulness, eccentricism, low tolerance for ambiguity, melodramatic behaviour, mischief, passive aggression, perfectionism and

volatility. A further analysis of these derailers might indicate the presence of some of the above-mentioned distortions underlying this behaviour.

2.2.3 Critical reflection

The process of critical reflection is for Mezirow (1990) central to the process of knowing. Mezirow (1990) reserves the term 'critical reflection' to refer to the challenging of the validity of presuppositions in prior learning. He maintains that critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place. It is not concerned with the how or the how-to of action but with the why, the reasons for and consequences of what people do.

Critical reflection is important in objective or subjective reframing (Mezirow, 2000). Critical reflection on the assumptions of others encountered in a narrative or in task-oriented problem solving constitutes objective reframing. Subjective reframing involves critical reflection of an individual's own assumptions on the following (Mezirow, 2000):

- a narrative, where an individual would apply insight from someone else's narrative to his/her own experience;
- a system, in which case the person would reflect on and become critically aware of issues in the economic, cultural, political, educational, communal or other systems;
- an organisation or workplace;
- feelings and interpersonal relations;
- the way a person learns, including his/her frames of reference.

Brooks (1991) found that critically reflective employees tend to look inward for direction and values, rather than outward towards the organisation. She did find, however, that the risk factor in the situation determined whether or not critical reflection led to taking social or political action. The critical reflection can thus be inhibited by an organisation if the criticism of assumptions is made too costly.

Another important finding by Brooks (1991) is that critical reflection in the context of an organisation focuses upon implementation of policy and strategy. If an organisation restricts critically reflective employees' access to policy and strategy, it prevents implementation that could help the organisation to respond more appropriately to changing situations.

2.2.4 The phases of transformation

According to Mezirow (1990), the most significant adult learning occurs in connection with life transitions. The learning process (as in perspective transformation) can occur either through an accretion of transformed meaning schemes resulting from a series of dilemmas or in response to an externally imposed epochal dilemma, such as a death or being passed over for promotion.

The process of perspective transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma to which a person's previous patterns of response are ineffective (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In his studies with women returning to college after a break, Mezirow (1991) noted patterns in self-descriptions of personal change. He consequently suggested that the process of personal transformation involves ten phases, namely

- Phase 1: a disorienting dilemma
- Phase 2: self-examination with feelings of guilt and shame
- Phase 3: a critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions
- Phase 4: recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- Phase 5: exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
- Phase 6: planning a course of action
- Phase 7: acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
- Phase 8: provisional trying of new roles
- Phase 9: building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
- Phase 10: a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow, 2000)

Mezirow (1991) cites several examples of research confirming these phases. It is also thought that perspective transformation appears to account best for the process of transition between stages of adult psychological development in major life-span theories. A heightened sense of critical reflectivity is, for example, crucial to Erikson's "identity crisis" of late adolescence and to integrity in adulthood (Mezirow, 1991). This process of perspective transformation is probably triggered off in managers when they make the transition from technical specialist to manager. Research has shown that managers find this transition the most difficult part of the management task (Hill, 1992).

2.2.5 The ideal conditions for learning

Mezirow (2000, pp. 13-14) listed an ideal set of conditions that participants in an ideal discourse would experience:

- more accurate and complete information;
- freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception;
- openness to alternative points of view with empathy and concern about how others think and feel;
- ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively;
- greater awareness of the context of ideas and more critical reflection of own and other's assumptions;
- an equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse;
- willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgement as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgement.

Mezirow (1989) uses these conditions as criteria for judging the superiority of a meaning perspective. Mezirow (1989) accepts that there are constraints to the ideal of critical discourse and that it is only significant as a standard to assess educational and social practices. "These ideal conditions constitute a principle; they are never fully realized in practice" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 14).

2.2.6 Criticism of Transformative Learning Theory

Since its introduction by Mezirow in 1978, Transformative Learning Theory has stimulated much discussion and analysis in the field of adult education (Taylor, 2000b). According to Taylor (2000b), most of the studies were predominantly theoretical critiques and the empirical studies are mostly available as dissertations or conference proceedings.

Initial criticism of the theory by Ekpenyong (1990), Griffin (1987), Clark and Wilson (1991), Collard and Law (1989), and Hart (1990) seemed to focus on the social context within which the theory could be applied and seemed not to address the mechanics of the theory per se.

Taylor (1997, 1998, 2000b), however, undertook a literature review of over 45 individual studies of transformative learning and found that the studies in the review clearly demonstrate that a variety of adults in different stages of their lives and in a variety of settings and conditions experience perspective transformations. According to Taylor (1997), these studies also confirm that the revision of meaning structures seems to be initiated by a disorienting dilemma, followed by a series of learning strategies involving critical reflection, exploration of different roles and options, and negotiation and renegotiation of relationships.

These studies also revealed the need for a more holistic and contextually grounded view of transformative learning in adulthood. This more encompassing understanding includes four factors identified in Taylor's (1997) review: affective learning, non-conscious learning, relationships and the collective unconscious.

Taylor (1997) is of the opinion that although Mezirow mentions these issues, they are not receiving the attention they deserve. Taylor (1998) eventually identified and summarised his conclusions from the literature of the seven areas of contention with regards to Transformative Learning:

(1) Individual change versus social action

The issue here is that Mezirow seems to focus more on personal transformation than social transformation. Although he encourages critical reflection of epistemic or sociolinguistic assumptions, he does not believe that all transformations need to lead to or involve social critique (Mezirow, 1989). This might result in Mezirow overlooking strong social forces that could influence the fostering of Transformative Learning.

(2) Decontextualised view of learning

Although Mezirow recognises that adult learning is situated in a social context, he does not consistently maintain the link between the construction of knowledge and the context within which it is interpreted. This could explain why some disorienting dilemmas lead to a perspective transformation and others not. This issue is of particular interest to this research, as one of the objectives is to establish whether the use of narrative technique will facilitate a perspective transformation.

(3) Universal model of adult learning

Mezirow (1991) seems to be caught between an aspiration to develop a universal adult learning theory and the recognition of cultural determinism. According to Taylor (1998, p. 31), "before linking transformative learning to other fields and cultures, it needs to be firmly established in its own right, as a viable theory of explaining how adults learn".

(4) Adult development: shift or progression

Mezirow (1991, 1994) suggests that perspective transformation parallels the process of adult development, where the latter represents a more incremental process. This has led to criticism from Tennant (1993) specifically, who believes that Mezirow should distinguish learning experiences and personal changes that are fundamentally transformative and emancipatory from those that are simply part of the social expectations associated with the different phase of life. According to Tennant (1993), development, in the conventional sense of moving through expected (or normative) life cycle events, lies outside the definition of perspective transformation. This aspect could have an influence on this research, where a

gradual perspective transformation might not be visible within the short duration of the study.

(5) An emphasis on rationality

This emphasis on rationality in the form of critical reflection has led to critique that rational thinking is a particularly Western concept and, in the Western World in particular, one which is also gender specific, privileging men, the middle and upper classes, and whites (Clark & Wilson, 1991). Empirical studies (Neuman, 1996, Sveinunggaard, 1993) support the significance of rationality in perspective transformation, but also stress the interdependent relationship with feelings. Again, this issue has an impact on this research, as the facilitation through narrative technique should have the right balance between the rational and emotional components.

(6) Other ways of knowing

The contention is that Mezirow neglects this component. This refers to ways of knowing other than critical reflection that have also proved to be significant in the process of perspective transformation (Taylor, 1998). Examples are intuition, affective learning, relational knowing and its more subjective components such as trust, friendship and support. According to Taylor (1998), several studies show that transformative learning is not just rationally and consciously driven, but incorporates a variety of extrarational and unconscious modalities for revising meaning structures. This research will have to take this area into consideration by being aware of the dynamics of helping relationships and the dynamics of transformative learning within the context of those relationships.

(7) Perspective transformation: the model

In his discussion, Taylor (1998) focuses on three particular aspects related to the steps/phases of the model of Transformative Learning, namely the steps or phases of a perspective transformation, the catalyst or trigger of a perspective transformation (the disorienting dilemma) and the outcome or definition of a perspective transformation. Although Taylor (1998) found that research in general supports the steps in the process of perspective transformation, he concludes that it does not always follow the same sequence and that some of the critical phases or

steps are not included in Mezirow's model. Taylor (1997) cites, for example, research that found the process of perspective transformation to be more recursive, evolving and spiralling in nature than that presented by Mezirow. Mezirow (1995) concurs in a later publication that the process does not always follow the exact sequence of phases.

Most studies examined by Taylor (1998) supported the concept of a disorienting dilemma and some studies such as those by Clark and Wilson (1991) and Clark (1993a) broadened the definition to include "integrating circumstances". Again, most studies supported the definition of a perspective transformation, but expanded it to include other ways of knowing (Taylor, 1998). The model will be "tested" to a certain extent in this research, as the study will attempt to identify and describe a perspective transformation in the managers who participate.

Taylor (1998, p. 45) concludes his review of the unresolved issues in theoretical and empirical literature with the observation that it is "these researchers' own frame of reference in regard to the structuring of the self that prevents them from arriving at a congruent understanding of transformative theory".

Taylor (1998) does, however, concede that there are still concerns about the process of a perspective transformation, specifically with regards to:

- the lack of recognition of the role of emotions and relational knowing;
- an overemphasis on critical reflection;
- the various components and phases of the model;
- lack of recognition of a higher level of consciousness, as well as the collective unconscious.

It is expected that some of these unresolved issues will have an impact on this research. Individual change versus social action is a contentious issue in the post-modern paradigm and the various components and phases of the model will be evaluated during the implementation of the MDNI.

2.2.7 The possible contribution of Transformative Learning Theory to Organisational Learning Theory

If manipulated effectively, Transformative Learning might assist in the practical application of the concept of the learning organisation (Senge, 1990). The goal of organisational learning is to transform the organisation, which from a Transformative Learning Theory perspective would involve reflecting critically on the organisation's current assumptions. This is of particular importance in this research, as the eventual perspective transformation (facilitated by narrative technique) would entail the managers viewing certain organisational and/or managerial issues in alternative ways.

According to Barkmeier (2001), organisations learn as a result of the individuals learning within them. "In order for organizational learning to occur, individual mental models must be surfaced and critically analyzed for shared vision to be formed. This is very much related to the idea of transformative learning, as there is an element of critical reflection, discernment, and development of a new vision involved" (Barkmeier, 2001, p. 2).

The learning organisation as described by Peter Senge (1990) consists of five interrelated disciplines, namely shared visions, mental models, personal mastery, team learning and systems thinking. The essence of transformational learning, namely the questioning of underlying assumptions, and the role of dialogue and reflection, are evident in the interconnected disciplines of the learning organisation.

Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening personal vision, focusing energy, developing patience, and seeing reality objectively (Senge, 1990). The objectivity mentioned here corresponds to the concept of "decentration" mentioned by Mezirow and Piaget (Hagan, 1991). Decentration refers to the ability to analyse things in the world from a perspective other than one's personal or local perspective.

Senge (1990) defines mental models as deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures of images that influence how people understand

the world and how they take action. Very often people are not consciously aware of their mental models or the effect they have on behaviour.

For Senge (1990, p. 9), the discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward: "learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on 'learningful' conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others".

This concept clearly corresponds to Mezirow's concept of meaning perspectives and the consequent process of perspective transformation. The important role of dialogue as mentioned in the transformation theories is also stressed. The goal of dialogue in Transformative Learning is to bring assumptions to the surface, which must happen if a shared vision is to be developed (Barkmeier, 2001). By consciously adopting the principles of Transformative Learning, it is suggested that the creation of a learning organisation can be achieved.

Transformative Learning could also assist in providing the necessary learning processes to secure the concept of "continuous learning". As Mumford (1994, p. 17) states, "Continuous learning and 'learning how to learn' will become empty clichés unless real effort is put into enabling individuals to understand what is involved and to develop the necessary skills". The principles of Transformative Learning would again assist in facilitating an individual's understanding of his/her own learning.

The nature of the current world of work necessitates constant perspective transformation. Binney and Williams (1997) state that the type of organisational transformation needed today requires radical shifts in thinking as well as in behaviour. A perspective transformation, as defined in Transformative Learning, could be described as a radical shift in thinking. The implication of this for management development is that any management development intervention should provide the opportunity for perspective transformation to assist the manager to function more optimally within the organisation.

The theory of Transformative Learning seems to hold promise for application in management development and the learning organisation, as the goals of the majority of these type of interventions coincide with the goal of programmes based on Transformative Learning Theory – to help adults to learn about the validity and authenticity of both the assumptions on which their understandings, values, beliefs, opinions and feelings are based, as well as the norms and cultural codes that inform them.

2.3 THE ABILITY OF TRANSFORMATION THEORY TO EXPLAIN ADULT LEARNING FROM A POST-MODERN PARADIGM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

The post-modern and social constructionist undertones in organisations today, as explained in Chapter 1, necessitate a critical examination of the ability of the transformational learning theories to facilitate adult learning in a post-modern paradigm, as well as in a social constructionist paradigm. The dominant paradigm in most organisations and learning theories is the modern or positivist paradigm, based on the Western rational tradition (Mezirow, 1996). Post-modernism and social constructionism challenge, however, the positivist, long established concepts such as cognition, rationality, language and development. These challenges could have a major impact on the nature of learning and learning theory. Although Transformative Learning Theory seems on the surface to meet these challenges, this section will now explore the real ability of this theory to meet these challenges. It is, however, necessary first to define the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms before attempting a comparison.

2.3.1 Post-modern themes

Researchers are often hesitant to define post-modernism, as they see the act of defining something as a modernist approach (Dill & Kotzé, 1997). Edwards (1994) states that there is no simple definition of postmodernity. There are also a number of different terms which are often used interchangeably, for example, postmodernism, the post-modern, postmodernity, postmodernite and postmodernisation (Edwards, 1994).

Boje (2001, p. 2) believes that there are many versions of post-modern theory. "These range from the extreme positions of Baudrillard (rejecting real in favor of simulation and implosion), Lyotard (rejecting all grand narrative in favor of networks of local ones) to approaches by Best and Kellner that integrate the work of Marx and the spectacle writing of Guy Debord. The critical postmodern approaches incorporate a concern with how systems of ideas affect the material condition".

Gephart (1996) views postmodernism as having two meanings. It is firstly viewed as a cultural form or social era that follows modernism, and secondly as an epistemology, a method or style that reconceptualises the way in which humans experience and explain the world.

It seems as if postmodernism does not designate a systematic theory or a comprehensive philosophy, but rather diverse diagnoses and interpretations of the current culture, depicting a multitude of interrelated phenomena (Kvale, 1992). It is, however, possible to identify common themes within this paradigm, and these common themes will now be discussed briefly in order to establish a framework within which Transformational Learning Theory can be interpreted.

2.3.1.1 An anti-foundational stance and pluralism

Chagani (1998) believes that the common thread between those who are loosely labelled postmodernists (Nietzsche, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Lyotard) is a radical anti-essentialism or anti-foundationalism. Bryant and Usher (1997) describe this as disembeddedness or undermining of certainties and hitherto secure foundations. Burr (1995) explains this as the post-modern rejection of the idea that the world can be understood in terms of grand theories or meta-narratives (Burr, 1995).

This suggests that foundational meta-narratives which ground Western modernity's claim for privileged universality in its notion of science, humanism, socialism, and so on, are flawed (Featherstone, 1991). Attempts to provide overarching rational explanations and to give a true account of the world inevitably result in forms of totalitarianism (Edwards, 1994). These attempts cannot embrace the diversity of social life and can only cope with that diversity by suppressing it (Edwards, 1994).

Lyotard (1984), one of the first prominent post-modern authors, argues that the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.

Postmodernism, instead, emphasises the co-existence of a multiplicity and variety of situation dependent ways of life (Burr, 1995). Hassard (1996) states that post-modern analysis succeeds in distancing itself from the assumptions of unity implicit in the Enlightenment notion of reason. "Unlike modernism, where there is faith in the recovery of a relationship with Nature, postmodernism gives rise simultaneously to increasing liberation from the natural world and to the splintering of culture into discrete spheres" (Hassard, 1996, p. 46). A result of this shift to pluralism, then, is to seek less pretentious modes of knowledge which are more sensitive to local differences as intellectuals swap their role as confident legislators for that of interpreters (Featherstone, 1991).

2.3.1.2 Perspectival reality

The deployment of sophisticated information and communication technologies challenges long-standing traditions in complex and contradictory ways (Usher & Edwards, 1998). The development of technology, especially the electronic media, increases exposure to a multiplicity of perspectives, undermining any belief in one objective reality (Kvale, 1992). This leads to the post-modern focus on the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality (Kvale, 1992).

Baudrillard (1983) writes about a world constructed of models or simulacra which have no referent or ground in any reality except their own. In this view the world is no longer real, but a simulation of the real. "In the media and consumer society people are caught up in the play of images, simulacra, that have less and less relationship to an outside, to an external reality. In fact, we live in a world of simulacra where the image or signifier of an event has replaced direct experience and knowledge of its referent or signified" (Sarup, 1993, p. 164). There is no meaning beyond the image's own self referentiality (McKerrow, 1997). The surface reflection becomes more important.

2.3.1.3 *Dichotomy of the universal and the individual, between society and the unique person*

Anti-essentialism impacts heavily on the idea of human nature or the transcendental subject (Chagani, 1998). The world is imagined as radically heterogeneous, the past radically different from the present and all cultures radically different from one another. This also means that reality is in part culture dependent and changes over time (as cultures do) and varies from community to community, causing knowledge to be neither eternal nor universal (Beck, 1993).

There is an emphasis on the local, the personal and the particular (Bryant & Usher, 1997) that surpasses the modern polarity of the universal and the individual, of the objective and the subjective (Kvale, 1992). In modernity there was an effort to study humans out of context, to arrive at a universal truth. In postmodernism humans are studied in their social and cultural context. Local narratives become more important as do communal interaction and local knowledge (Kvale, 1992).

According to Bracken (2001), this post-modern theme impacts on the notion of self, as the self becomes the source of meaning of the world, while at the same time it becomes disconnected from that world. On one hand, it is viewed as the source of everything, while on the other it is experienced as weak and fragile. This view of the self is one of the most contentious issues in postmodernism and will probably have an influence on the analysis of discourses in this study.

2.3.1.4 *Language as a method of construction*

The distinction between fact and fiction is dissolved in postmodernism (Chagani, 1998). According to post-modernistic thinking, language and knowledge do not copy reality. Rather, reality is created by language. "In other words, meaning is arbitrary, relative and subjective. Language is, in its own way, reality" (Locher, 1999, p. 3). The focus in postmodernism is thus more on the linguistic and social construction of reality and on interpretation and negotiation of meaning in the lived world (Kvale, 1992). The locus of meaning is seen in language, not in the world, therefore meaning fluctuates and is inherently unstable (McKerrow, 1997).

2.3.1.5 *Pastiche*

Post-modernistic thinking is characterised by an increasing awareness that the world comprises an endless mosaic of competing realities, devoid of any central unifying narrative (Gemin, 1999) or pastiche. Austin (1997, p. 1) defines pastiche as a “jumble”, “a medley of various ingredients”, “a pot-pourri” or “a design made up of fragments pieced together or copied with modification from an original”. According to Rosenau (1992), it is a patchwork of ideas or views and includes elements of opposites such as old or new. It further denies regularity, logic or symmetry; it glories in contradiction and confusion.

Austin (1997) classifies the various definitions of pastiche into three categories, with the first attributing to pastiche either a duplicitous or deceitful intention or a lack of any intention whatsoever. The latter falls into the second category that views pastiche as superficial. The third category describes pastiche as an abundance of views or images.

Ménard (2000) underlines this eclectic dimension of postmodernism by mentioning that elements are borrowed from all sources to build elaborate collages, without any concern for their internal coherence. This is manifested in literature, for example, in collages of texts put together from other texts. The author’s individuality and originality are lost in a pervasive use of and references to other texts (Kvale, 1992).

2.3.1.6 *Anti-structuralism*

In addition to rejecting the idea that there can be an ultimate truth, post-modernist thinking also rejects structuralism – the idea that the world as we see it is the result of hidden structures (Burr, 1995). Chagani (1998) views this concept of poststructuralism as a reaction against structuralism, which claims that there are universal structures of language and that these structures are ultimately the determining factors in life and thought.

The post-modern attitude involves a refined sensibility to the surface and openness to the differences and nuances of what appears. It relates to what is given, rather

than to what has been or could be (Kvale, 1992). Ménard (2000) refers to this as “lightness” in the absence of dogmatic and moral stiffness.

2.3.1.7 *The intrinsic relation of power and knowledge*

Lyotard, one of the founding fathers of postmodernism in social science, focuses specifically on knowledge and defines the post-modern as the process of developing a new epistemology that responds to new conditions of knowledge (Locher, 1999). According to Roberts (1998), Lyotard argues that knowledge and power are two sides of the same question. This view has led to the reversal of the modern view of “knowledge is power” to “power is knowledge” in the post-modern idiom. Sarup (1993) calls the reason for this the mercantilization of knowledge, where decisions about what constitutes knowledge are made through the allocation of economic resources (Kvale, 1992).

Lyotard (1984, p. 46), in his seminal work “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge”, describes this issue as follows:

The production of proof, which is in principle only part of an argumentation process designed to win agreement from the addressees of scientific messages, thus falls under the control of another language game, in which the goal is no longer truth, but performativity – that is the best possible input/output equation. The state and/or organisation must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimisation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today’s financial backers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power.

Foucault (1979), in one of his last works, directly links knowledge and power by stating that power and knowledge directly imply one another. He believes there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. Foucault (1979) continues this line of reasoning by proposing that these power-knowledge relations are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a

subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system. Instead, they should be analysed on the basis of the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge.

2.3.1.8 *Open-ended and interdisciplinary*

“Postmodernists question any possibility of rigid disciplinary boundaries between the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, art and literature, between culture and life, fiction and theory, image and reality in nearly every field of human endeavour” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 6).

Irvine (1998) mentions that the term postmodern is also used to indicate the “global village” phenomenon where there is a redefinition of nation-state identities, dissemination of images and information across national boundaries, a sense of erosion or breakdown of national, linguistic, ethnic and cultural identities and, lastly, a sense of a global mixing of cultures.

2.3.1.9 *Difference*

Derrida (1976) developed the term “difference” during the early years of post-modern literature as a key term in post-modern thinking. It refers to the hidden way of seeing things that is deferred to awareness by a person’s distraction with the imagery that captures his/her attention (Shawver, 1996). Because it involves this particular way of viewing things Derrida (1976) defines difference as the formation of form. Difference is the play of other possible conceptions that are outside awareness, but that leave their trace even in consciousness (Shawver, 1996).

2.3.1.10 *Deconstruction*

Some researchers see deconstruction as a post-modern method of analysis (Bradshaw, 1996, Rosenau, 1992). Lye (1996, p. 1) sees it as “a poststructuralist theory, based largely but not exclusively on the writings of the Paris-based Jacques Derrida. It is in the first instance a philosophical theory and a theory directed towards the (re) reading of philosophical writings”.

Whether viewed as a philosophy or as a method of analysis, the goal of deconstruction is to undo all constructions. It tears a text apart to reveal its contradictions and assumptions, without the intent to improve, revise, or offer a better version of the text (Rosenau, 1992). Shawver (1996), however, views deconstruction as a way of freeing humans from the trap of ineffective language patterns. She describes her view by equating the deconstructionist with someone who shows that just because something looks like a door does not mean it can open and let a person into another room. Realising that, the person can set about to locate more effective doors.

2.3.1.11 Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a permanent condition in the post-modern paradigm. Bracken (2001) states that, in the move from modernity to postmodernity, disorder becomes an integral part of life. Meaning is systematically undermined in postmodernism and reality is experienced as fleeting and unstable. Coherence and predictability are seemingly destroyed by elements of everyday culture.

These post-modern themes are also integral features of the social constructionist paradigm – from objectivist to constructivist epistemology, from seeking a single truth to recognising multiple realities, from viewing goals and outcomes as valid or invalid, to evaluating them in terms of viability in contexts, and from the focus of the bounded self to a view of the self as socially constituted (Lyddon & Weill, 1997).

Burr (1995) describes postmodernism as the “backcloth” against which social constructionism has taken shape. As the social constructionist paradigm has an important influence on the method used to identify Transformative Learning elements in this research it is also necessary to look briefly at the tenets of social constructionism.

2.3.2 Social Constructionism

According to Terwee (1995), Kenneth Gergen introduced social constructionism in 1985 as a metatheory to mainstream psychology. Gergen (1985, 1994) identifies the following assumptions of social constructionism:

(1) A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge

Social constructionism invites one to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge (Gergen, 1985). It advocates the belief that what an individual knows of the world is determined by the conceptual and linguistic categories he/she possesses to define it (Lyddon & Weill, 1997). Gergen (1994, p. 49) describes this assumption as follows: "The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts".

(2) Historical and cultural specificity

The ways in which humans commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts that they use, are historically and culturally specific (Burr, 1995). Understanding or meaning structures are seen as social artefacts – products of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen, 1994).

(3) Knowledge is sustained by social processes

This assumption represents the view that the degree to which a particular belief or understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on its empirical validity, but on the vagaries of social processes (Gergen, 1994).

(4) Knowledge and social action go together

This is the notion that descriptions and explanations of the world are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally intertwined with the full gamut of activities in which people engage (Lyddon & Weill, 1997). "To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves" (Gergen, 1994, p. 53).

(5) Language does not act as signifier in isolation

Gergen (1994) also postulated that language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship.

Burr (1995) further examined these assumptions of social constructionism and identified some features that are in stark contrast to most traditional and social psychology. Features such as anti-essentialism and anti-realism stress that the social world is a product of social processes. Burr (1998) initially experienced the anti-essentialism as liberatory because she was attracted to the idea that there exists a potentially infinite number of alternative constructions of events. She later (Burr, 1998) stated that this feature might be problematic as it raises questions of how one is to decide between alternative perspectives. The notion of "agency" also becomes elusive.

The historical and cultural specificity of knowledge was another feature incorporated in the original tenets. Theories and explanations thus become time and culture bound and cannot be viewed as all-encompassing prescriptions. Two other features focus on language, namely, language as a precondition of thought and language as a form of social action (Burr, 1995). Language as a precondition of thought was deduced from Burr's (1995) interpretation that understanding of the world comes not from objective reality, but from other people, both past and present.

This feature also becomes problematic for Burr (1998) as she questions how a person could take a stance for or against a state of affairs without some notion of the material reality lying behind it. Collier's (1998) critical realism influenced her to consider an altered view of unity between discourse and materiality, making it possible to challenge or resist social reality through changes in discursive practices. "Language is not privileged but neither is it relegated to the status of an outcome or effect of social structure" (Burr, 1998, p. 20).

The last two features included in the basic tenets of social constructionism as identified by Burr (1995) are a focus on interaction and social practices and a focus on processes rather than structures. Although Burr (1998) welcomes this re-location of the centre of gravity away from the individual and into the interpersonal realm, she

questions the ability to harness such analytic work for the purposes of personal or social change and concludes with a plea for pragmatism.

The way in which learners and the process of learning are perceived will be influenced by the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms. These implications are important in the context of this research, as it aims to address management learning from a post-modern agenda. In the next section the influence of postmodernism and social constructionism on learning in general will be discussed briefly.

2.3.3 The nature of learning from a post-modern and social constructionist perspective

It stands to reason that postmodernism and social constructionism have influenced the concept of learning in various ways, as the nature of knowledge and meaning is central to the post-modern discussion. Many theorists have explored the impact of postmodernism on education (Peters, 1995; Garrick & Usher, 2000; Bryant & Usher, 1997) but less has been written on the nature of learning from these perspectives. Mezirow (1996) wrote an article on various paradigms and their impact on learning theory, but did not use the term postmodernism. Instead, he identified paradigms such as the Interpretist Paradigm and the Emancipatory or Strategic paradigm.

A closer examination of the descriptions of these paradigms indicates a similarity with post-modern thought. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) are two of the few researchers specifically examining postmodernism and adult learning. The post-modern themes discussed in 2.4.1 will now be used as a framework to discuss the influence of postmodernism on learning, with the focus on adult learning. As social constructionism endorses all of these post-modern themes, it will not be discussed separately.

(1) An anti-foundational stance and pluralism

This theme requires learners to become critically reflective, as universal stories can no longer be taken on trust. According to Bryant and Usher (1997), the status of these meta-narratives as discourses rather than "truths" is highlighted. This

emphasis allows a foregrounding of their enmeshment in the operations of power. The learner now has to ask of these universal stories – who is telling them? what power does speaking these discourses confer? who is being excluded as a consequence? (Bryant & Usher, 1997).

Although Mezirow (1996) is describing the Interpretist paradigm in the following, there are many similarities with post-modern thinking. It is argued that human beings are always and necessarily local, temporal, partial, embodied and purposive and cannot attain objectivity, neutrality or such universality as that which is commonly attributed to rationalism (Mezirow, 1996). This is in line with the post-modern emphasis on local and plural perspectives.

(2) Perspectival reality

The contemporary conceptions of learning in discourse communities, communities of practice, learning communities and knowledge-building communities (Jonasse, 2000) indicate the post-modern focus on the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality.

(3) Dichotomy of the universal and the individual, between society and the unique individual

This theme has had the greatest impact on the view of the personhood of learners. According to Steyn and Hay (1999), it is often found that teachers still hold a modern view of personhood, whereas learners have grown up in a post-modern society with another set of basic beliefs.

From the modern framework, the self is seen essentially as a bounded and autonomous entity that possesses a relatively coherent and consistent sense of identity across time and contexts (Lyddon & Weill, 1997). Boundedness, coherence and consistency are, however, impossible and irrelevant characteristics of the self from a post-modern framework (Lyddon & Weill, 1997). In the post-modern perception of the personhood of learners the preliminary and provisional nature thereof is stressed. Learners are viewed as open, incomplete, unfinished beings in the making (Steyn & Hay, 1999). Gergen (1991) describes the post-modern self as a teeming world of provisional possibilities that are enacted as performances in a

situated moment. In Kvale's (1992) opinion the post-modern "self" or person is no longer the absolute point of departure nor is it a self-contained entity, but rather a network or ensemble of relations. Gergen (1992a) states that the old Cartesian pronouncement, "I think, therefore I am", is replaced in post-modernism with "We communicate, therefore I am".

The nature of personhood with regard to the adult learner is specifically addressed by Usher (1992) in a post-modern critique of the emphasis on experience in many adult learning theories. Adults are viewed as experiencing and experienced subjects, where experience is both the foundation of and the most important resource for learning (Usher, 1992). Experience is even seen as the most important distinguishing factor between adult learning and juvenile learning (Knowles, 1978). Usher (1992) contests this emphasis on experience, as well as the ethics of personal empowerment and autonomy in adult education.

Usher (1992) is of the opinion that these modern discourses construct adults as abstract, decontextualised individuals. He further postulates that there is a common assumption that the subject, through self-consciousness, is both the source and shaper of its experience. As examples he discusses the work of Knowles (1978) and Jarvis (1987). Both writers emphasise the active, meaning-giving subject-as-learner. This is in contrast with the post-modern view of the self as decentred and the product of social construction (Steyn & Hay, 1999).

(4) Language as a method of construction

Again, the Interpretist Paradigm as described by Mezirow (1996) shows a post-modern stance to learning, where learning is viewed as a process of interaction creating a different understanding of the meaning of experiences. In this paradigm truth must be understood in the context of the language used and it becomes a contingent, exclusive formulation of local culture (Mezirow, 1996). Knowledge is therefore not viewed as necessarily conclusive and objective, but as tentative and constructed within the social context. This corresponds with the theme of the social constructive nature of truth in postmodernism.

In the post-modern and social constructionist idiom, learners will no longer seek to uncover a pre-existing reality. Rather, they are involved in an interactive process of knowledge creation (Beck, 1993). The relational nature of learning is stressed (Steyn & Hay, 1999) and has led some researchers, such as Marsick and Kasi (1997), to call for a pedagogy of group learning where the group itself is conceptualised as a learner.

Drawing on this theme, the facilitation of the learning process is no longer driven by pre-planned, orderly and logical principles, but rather by the dialogical situation and context of the learning situation. The trainer/teacher becomes a facilitator of dialogue. According to Steyn and Hay (1999), the purpose of the dialogical interplay is not to diagnose or assess but rather to co-construct new interpretations and to allow learners to construct themselves and their realities in the interactive moment.

(5) Pastiche

The concept of pastiche can be seen in the many possibilities available to learners to access information, and to interact with it and other learners without attending institutional centres of learning. This also leads to multi-disciplinarity, multi-literacies and the connection of information in new ways (Usher & Edwards, 1998). Diversity as a concept in adult learning is greatly valued (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

(6) Anti-structuralism

This aspect influences the issue of assessment of learning where the modern, objectified view has been replaced by a notion of subjectified assessment in which learners become subjects who learn the truth about themselves (Steyn & Hay, 1999). The movement to non-dogmatic practices (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) is also an indication of anti-structuralism.

(7) The intrinsic relation of power and knowledge

The intrinsic relation between knowledge and power has been examined in detail in the educational context. Lyotard (1984) noted that the miniaturisation and commercialisation of machines is changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available and exploited. In computerised societies knowledge is

becoming “exteriorised” from learners (Roberts, 1998) and is increasingly viewed as a commodity, indispensable to productive power (Lyotard, 1984).

Lyotard (1984, p. 6) also predicted the commodification of learning when he stated “It is not hard to visualize learning circulating along the same lines as money, instead of for its ‘educational’ value or political (administrative, diplomatic, military) importance”.

According to Roberts (1998), the commodification of education has changed the teacher-learner relationship from a pedagogical to a contractual relationship. This should have an impact on the power relationships in education. The teacher does not necessarily have the power in a learning relationship, but acts as a facilitator of learning rather than an “expert” (Steyn & Hay, 1999).

In the work situation knowledge has increasingly become commodified as part of employees’ human capital. Garrick and Usher (2000) draw on Foucault’s notions about the subject and power in arguing that there is a hidden “curriculum” in flexible workplace learning. They view organisational learning as a form of power that assists in governing employees in a culture that disapproves of force and coercion. “Subjectivity is shaped through the educating or teaching of individuals that would otherwise remain unorganised, or inappropriately organised, and therefore economically unproductive. It is in this way that learning becomes a technology of success” (Garrick & Usher, 2000, p. 11).

(8) Open-ended and interdisciplinary

The contemporary situation of privileging “learning” as the term preferred over “education” (Garrick & Usher, 2000) might be ascribed to the post-modern mood. There is a requirement for flexibility in terms of both what is learnt and how it is learnt. “This entails a reconfiguration of traditional educational principles of disciplines-based curricula, canonical texts, courses with fixed beginnings and ends, and face-to-face teaching” (Garrick & Usher, 2000, p. 3).

In the workplace this theme is played out in the context of work-based learning programmes. Learning programmes are shaped by work, rather than disciplinary

knowledge, with the goal of studies becoming the development of skills and knowledge required for successful performance in the workplace. These skills and this knowledge are regarded as flexible in terms of their content and mode of acquisition. There is a shift from disciplinary knowledge to problem-based know-how and learning content flows from productivity and work requirements rather than from subjects or disciplines (Garrick & Usher, 2000).

(9) Difference

Usher (1992) suggests that from a post-modern perspective, knowledge and understanding are not the product of a deliberate, conscious and methodical act of the ordinary subject, but an encounter and engagement with the world where pre-understanding constitutes a structure of intelligibility, an "absence" which is somehow the condition for knowing anything. From this "absence" interpretation or the projection of meaning, including the meaning of self and one's experience, is made possible. Pre-understandings constitute a situatedness or context of interpretation. Learning is thus a by-product of engaging in the world from a specific framework.

(10) Deconstruction

According to Steyn and Hay (1999), the regulatory and manipulative involvement of teachers in modern culture is replaced by a post-modern climate which allows space in which dualisms such as nature/culture, individual/society, masculine/feminine and rational/irrational, can be deconstructed and reconstructed.

In practice this means that learners become critically reflective. They will not automatically follow an expert's recipe for solving what has been defined for them as a problem, but will examine the values and assumptions that drive organisational goals and policies and explore new paradigms for self-awareness, learning and growth (Marsick, in Froman, 1994).

(11) Uncertainty

Beck (1993, p. 6) summarises the nature of knowledge in the post-modern framework as follows: "The knowledge arrived at, too, is more ambiguous and unstable than we had previously thought. It refers to probabilities, rather than

certainties, average effects, better rather than the best; and it is constantly changing as each individual or group gives a particular interpretation to it, reflecting distinctive needs and experiences". Within this uncertainty, the learner creates meaning that fulfils a particular function in his/her life-world. Pragmatism becomes important (Beck, 1993).

Edwards (1994, p. 429) summarises the implication of postmodernism for learning as follows:

In giving value to the different experiences and learning that we engage in, we are in essence saying there is no single point of judgement for what is right or wrong in learning; it will depend on the site a person occupies in the social formation and the sense a person brings to and takes from it. There is no single ordered view of the world to be imparted, but multiple realities to be experienced. Our knowledge and understanding of history and the present are relative and partial, depending upon the meanings we take which regulate and construct our experience.

According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999), postmodernism offers adult education a respect for diversity, a moving of previously marginalised groups into an equal position with other groups and a deconstruction of the categories by which adults have labelled aspects of their practice.

Postmodernism and social constructionism have a definite impact on the way in which learning and the learner are perceived. This in turn influences the role of the adult educator or trainer and learning in the workplace. The latter is of special importance in this research, as managerial learning in particular is examined. Issues of specific interest are discourse, reflexivity, power, the self and the nature of knowledge. In the next section the manner in which Transformative Learning Theory addresses these issues will be examined.

2.4 ALIGNMENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY WITH POSTMODERNISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

A post-modern environment, supported by social constructionism, creates space for alternative viewpoints on learning. In this section the alignment of Transformative Learning Theory with the post-modern and social constructionist themes will be discussed within the framework of the themes already identified.

(1) An anti-foundational stance and pluralism

Mezirow (2000) reinforces this post-modern theme by stating that because there are no fixed truths or any totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings. Mezirow does not necessarily take an anti-foundational stance himself, but he recognises the necessity to bring to awareness the assumptions of historical networks and their supporting ideologies that might constrain or enable learning (Mezirow, 2000).

(2) Perspectival reality

Mezirow (2000) is mindful of this post-modern theme when stressing the importance in adult learning of emphasising contextual understanding. He motivates this emphasis as follows:

The justification for much of what we know and believe, our values and our feelings, depends on the context – biographical, historical and cultural – in which they are embedded. We make meanings with different dimensions of awareness and understanding; in adulthood we may more clearly understand our experience when we know under what conditions an expressed idea is true or justified. In the absence of fixed truths and confronted with often rapid changes in circumstances, we cannot fully trust what we know or believe. Interpretations and opinions that may have worked for us as children often do not as adults (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3 - 4).

(3) Dichotomy of the universal and the individual, between society and the unique person

The issue of agency and subjectivity seems to be a contentious one in postmodernism. Lather (1992, p. 101) writes that, "A post-humanist theory of the subject combines Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence with a post-Althusserian focus on human agency. The result is a shift in cultural theory to seeing subjectivity both as socially produced in language, at conscious and unconscious levels, and as a site of struggle and potential change". According to Lather (1992), the focus on the relational nature of identity results in the subject being neither unified nor fixed.

One of the claims made by Transformative Theory is that discourse has a powerful role in facilitating agency: according to Mezirow (2000), a sense of agency implies that the person can understand perceptively. "Such understanding requires the ability and disposition to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions as well as those of others, engage fully and freely in discourse to validate one's beliefs, and effectively take reflective action to implement them" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 25).

Although there seems to be an emphasis on individual agency, Mezirow (1997) emphasises that Transformative Learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate and is a common learning experience, not exclusively concerned with significant personal transformations.

Despite his acknowledgement of the social dimension, Mezirow's interpretation has led him to neglect the social component of learning and to focus more on facilitating perspective transformation in the individual. Tennant (1993) suggests that the reason for this is the fact that Mezirow's theory is directed at the intersection of the individual and the social. According to Tennant (1993), Mezirow's concern is with the social within the individual, especially its capacity to generate dysfunctional meaning perspectives that distort or limit a person's understanding of experience.

(4) Language as a method of construction

Although language plays an important role, Transformative Learning views the role of the individual within the discourse as more authoritative and influential than the

extreme postmodernists. For this reason Transformative Learning's theoretical grounding comes under indirect attack from staunch postmodernists such as Lyotard, and direct attack from some researchers in the Transformative Learning domain (Taylor, 1998).

Mezirow (1991) mentions that Habermas's theory of communicative action provides the social theoretical context for Transformational Learning Theory. According to Sarup (1993), Lyotard's book "The Postmodern Condition" (1984) is on one level concerned with the status of science and technology, with technocracy and the control of information. "But on another level it is a thinly veiled polemic against Jurgen Habermas, who stands for a totalising and dialectical tradition. Habermas thinks that the totality of life has become splintered and argues that the cognitive, ethical and political discourses should become closer together. He wants, in short, to defend modernity against the neo-conservative postmodernists" (Sarup, 1993, p. 153).

In Sarup's (1993) opinion, Lyotard is scornful of Habermas's vision of a transparent, fully communicational society and sees language situations as an unstable exchange between speakers, as the taking of tricks, the trumping of an adversary. According to Sarup (1993), Lyotard repudiates Habermas's notion of a consensus society and instead views science and knowledge as a search for instabilities where the point is not to reach agreement, but to undermine from within the very framework in which the previous "normal science" had been conducted. Mezirow (1997, p.6) reiterates the notion of consensus as follows: "Communicative learning involves at least two persons striving to reach an understanding of the meaning of an interpretation or the justification for a belief. Ideally, communicative learning involves reaching a consensus".

Lyotard (1984) argues that the principle of consensus as a criterion of validation seems to be inadequate, because Habermas bases this conception on the validity of the narrative of emancipation, where consensus is viewed as an agreement between men, defined as knowing intellects and free wills, and is obtained through dialogue.

Transformative Learning Theory's specific acknowledgement of the role of communication in learning can be ascribed to the strong influence of the social constructionist paradigm on transformational learning. The social constructionist assumption that the degree to which a particular belief or understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on its empirical validity, but on the vagaries of social processes (Gergen, 1985), plays a major role in transformation theory.

Mezirow (1991) is of the opinion that a crucial dimension of adult learning involves the process of justifying or validating communicated ideas and the presuppositions of prior learning. Discourse is used by Mezirow (1997) to denote a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view. He is of the opinion that the more interpretations of a belief available, the greater the likelihood of finding a more dependable interpretation or synthesis (Mezirow, 1997).

Another social constructionist assumption influencing transformation theory is the idea that concepts and categories by which the world is comprehended are social artefacts – products of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen, 1985). Mezirow (1990, p. 11) acknowledges the situated nature of learning as follows: "The informed consensus we seek is provisional; it is the best we have at the moment. It may be changed with the addition of new evidence or new arguments based on a more inclusive paradigm or meaning perspective".

(5) Pastiche

Transformative Learning Theory does not display this theme. Pastiche indicates a multitude of views without necessarily being bound by a central discourse or element. Mezirow (2000) assumes an underlying meaning in discourse. He claims that understanding in communicative learning requires that individuals assess the meanings behind the words, as well as the coherence, truth and appropriateness of what is being communicated.

(6) Anti-structuralism

Transformative Learning Theory does not reflect anti-structuralist elements. On the contrary, it seems to display some structuralist ideas. It is not concerned with surface only and argues that the meaning of communication depends on underlying assumptions. It actively encourages searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. Reflective discourse in this context involves a critical assessment of assumptions (Mezirow, 2000).

(7) The intrinsic relation of power and knowledge

According to Taylor (1998), the most controversial issue concerning Transformative Learning Theory has been its relationship to social action and power. He believes that much of the problem begins with Mezirow's attempt to fuse Transformative Learning with the epistemology of Habermas' critical learning theory. Taylor (1998) highlights in particular the emphasis on social change framed within Habermas' epistemology of emancipatory knowing.

Collard and Law (1989, p.102) take issue with this and formulate it as "the lack of a coherent, comprehensive theory of social change, a lack diffused throughout the internal structure of this theory, evident in his selective interpretation and adaptation of Habermas, and partially dependent on problems within Habermas' own work". It seems that one of the major underlying principles of transformation theory, namely communicative action as defined by Habermas, is subject to criticism from both a post-modern theorist such as Lyotard and from Transformative Learning Theory generally. On another level however, Transformative Learning Theory recognises the intrinsic relationship between knowledge and power and, according to Brookfield (2000), the first purpose of critical reflection is externalising and investigating power relationships.

Mezirow (2000, p. 28) openly acknowledges the influence of power on learning by stating that "There are obvious inequities in the social structure reflecting asymmetrical power relationships and perpetuating inequalities that profoundly influence the way one understands experience. Learners need to become critically reflective of how these factors have shaped the ways they think and their beliefs so they may take collective action to ameliorate them".

Mezirow (2000, p. 28) states further that learners should ask, "Who is granted the opportunity to achieve autonomous thinking? Who is excluded, cast as the Other to be excluded and, by implication, dominated?" This is clearly an effort by Mezirow to deconstruct power relationships.

(8) Open-ended and interdisciplinary

Mezirow (1991) incorporates ideas from a wide range of writers in the fields of philosophy, psychology (developmental, cognitive, counselling and psychoanalytical), sociology, neurobiology, linguistics, religion and education in his writing. He would, however, like his ideas to be understood in relationship to one another and his readers' common experience rather than assessed for their fidelity to a particular intellectual tradition, theory or discipline (Mezirow, 1991).

(9) Difference

It is doubtful that this theme is consciously addressed in Transformative Learning. In practice, however, difference may play a role in reflective discourse. "Our option in the face of paradox is to bridge, through ongoing negotiations, the simultaneous existence of mutually exclusive internal, external, and relational realities" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 13).

Difference is the play of other possible conceptions that are outside awareness, but that leave a trace in consciousness (Shawver, 1996). Through these ongoing negotiations these possibilities may be surfaced.

(10) Deconstruction

According to Mezirow (1997), people transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on the validity of the assumptions upon which their interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or point of view are based. Although Mezirow does not always explain how the process of critical reflection takes place it probably involves an action similar to the post-modern analysis technique of deconstruction. As in deconstruction, critical reflection is not concerned with the how or the how-to of action, but with the why, the reasons for and consequences of what people do. The difference between critical reflection and the post-modern technique of deconstruction is that the latter does not necessarily want to change the text by

improving or revising or offering an alternative, while the former aims to stimulate change.

Mezirow (1990) describes this change as a paradigm shift that occurs as humans encounter new meaning perspectives that help them account for disturbing anomalies in the way they understand reality. These personal and/or scientific paradigm shifts could then redirect the way people engage in the world.

(11) Uncertainty

Transformative Learning Theory is very aware of this theme and its whole thrust is on equipping the individual to cope better within this framework of uncertainty – “to avoid the threat of chaos” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 3).

It is clear that although Transformative Theory is informed by certain elements of the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms, it represents a perhaps more generative and individualistic theory than suggested by these two paradigms. It is more generative in the sense that where postmodernism is not necessarily interested in changing the different constructions of a text once it is deconstructed, Transformation Theory views some of these constructions as distorted assumptions that should be changed (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformative Theory is more individual in the sense that it stresses personal perspective transformation, taking into account contextual influences. This can be seen from the following statement by Mezirow (1989, p. 172): “As learners come to be critically reflective of the presuppositions upon which their beliefs are predicated and learn about their sources and consequences, meaning transformation becomes possible. A part of the process is discovering that one is not alone in his or her problem, that there are social practices and institutions which also oppress others as well by legitimising and applying sanctions to support distorted belief systems”.

Transformative Learning does, however, have great potential to inform the process of adult learning continually (Taylor, 2000b) and specifically within the context of this research it could contribute to understanding managerial/leadership learning within the post-modern organisational context.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a broad outline of the transformational theories of adult learning, with specific emphasis on Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning. The contribution of the transformational theories to adult learning was explored and the ability of Transformative Learning Theory to explain learning from post-modern and social constructionist paradigms was investigated. In the next chapter management development and learning will be explored from the perspectives these two paradigms.

This concludes Step 1 of the literature overview.

CHAPTER 3

BEST PRACTICE IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AS SEEN FROM A POST-MODERN AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST FRAMEWORK

An integral part of this research is the investigation of a “non-traditional” management development intervention. In support of this the purpose of this chapter is firstly to provide an overview of current best practice in management development, followed by implications and critique from the post-modern and social constructionist viewpoints. The chapter will conclude with suggestions for the implementation of management development programmes from a post-modern and social constructionist viewpoint, as well as from Transformation Learning Theory.

3.1 CURRENT BEST PRACTICE IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

The term management development has several connotations and a variety of descriptions can be found in the literature (Gerber, Nel, & van Dyk, 1987, McClelland, 1994, Mumford, 1994). Current best practice does, however, emphasise the practice of management development as “strategic” (Bolt, 2000, McClelland, 1994).

This emphasis is in contrast to the initial acknowledgement and distinction between the process and the context of management development. “The process is primarily concerned with helping the individual manager to change his ways in such a way that there will immediately be a discernible improvement in his management skills – an improvement that will continue into the near future. The context of management development is concerned with an enterprise’s needs related to the achievement of its objectives” (Gerber et al, 1987, p. 253).

A trend to deliberately eliminate the distinction between process and context evolved and development activities are now more and more tied to the business (Bolt, 1997). The focus is thus shifted away from the individual towards the cultivation of collective managerial talents, capabilities and perspectives that will allow the organisation as a whole to cope with the future (Bolt, 2000).

Strategic Management Development seems to achieve this aim by ensuring that, as new products/services are anticipated and developed, the organisation has identified and mobilised competent and knowledgeable managers to perform the various tasks necessary to implement successfully the strategy in an efficient and timely manner. Strategic Management Development activities are then used to ensure maximum managerial performance and efficiency (McClelland, 1994, p. 4).

According to McClelland (1994), Strategic Management Development approximates the values of anticipatory learning. This assumes that as change naturally occurs and crises arise, the skills necessary to handle such circumstances competently have already been predicted and learning or training designed to address skills and/or knowledge deficiencies has been defined and implemented.

Current best practices in management development support the notion of Strategic Management Development. An example of this can be seen in the suggestions by Zenger, Ulrich and Smallwood (2000) to remedy (in their perception) the failure of traditional leadership development efforts. Some of the remedies proposed are (Zenger et al, 2000):

- clarifying the business outcome;
- putting leadership development into an organisational context;
- starting at the top management tier;
- building scorecards for results;
- linking competencies to results;
- changing the learning methodologies;
- creating accountability;
- transforming development from an event to a process;
- simplifying the complexity;
- training everyone to lead.

Bolt (2000) conducts regular research on best practice in management development and summarises the best practices as follows:

TABLE 3.1
CURRENT BEST PRACTICE IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

CATEGORY	ELEMENTS	DESCRIPTION
Direction/Focus	Strategy Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to strategic issues/challenges • Help achieve vision, live values, implement strategies and support change • Create clear compelling vision, values and strategies • Build strategic unity • Enhance competitiveness
	Top Management Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion • Provide overall direction • Senior level advisory board to ensure relevance, build ownership and credibility
	Long Range Plan and System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building block approach • Series and process versus stand-alone • Integrated development system
Design/Development	Front-end analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview cross section of target audience • Identify strategic objectives and challenges • Prioritise development needs • Ensure relevance • Commitment through involvement
	Customised design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, values and strategies-based • Address strategic issues/challenges • Practical, relevant and reflect culture • Not off the shelf • Design committees • Learning versus teaching model
	Leadership profiles (Competency-based)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine and articulate values and practices • Build consensus • Provide confidential feedback and coaching • Measure impact, progress and provide reinforcement • Identify development priorities • Glue for integrated development system
Implementation	Top first/critical mass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand/agree on content • Lead by example • Two-way communication • Demonstrate importance • Mass and accelerated implementation for strategic change: not catalogue
	Duration and frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter formal interventions • More frequent: annual learning experiences • Linkages/integration
	Action-oriented learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate learning and increase retention • Active versus passive: experiential • Action Learning: real business problems • The key: well facilitated/debriefed • Focus on back home application and follow-up, for example, executive coaches.

The best practices listed above in Table 3.1 will be used as a starting point when discussing various aspects constituting current best practice in management development. The aspects are reviewed in no particular order of importance.

3.1.1 A clear link to business strategy

There is an expectation that management development should have a positive impact on an organisation's performance. Broad and Newstrom (1992, p. ix) write, for example, that, "For these organizations to remain competitive in the global market-place, and to develop the highly skilled workforce that can contribute to solutions for the world's pressing problems, improving transfer of training must become HRD's top priority. Our multibillion-dollar training industry has to show that HRD investments pay off in improved performance on the job". Broad and Newstrom (1992) stress that, in order to achieve the transfer of HRD interventions to the workplace, it is important to link all development activities to the organisation's strategic direction. For this reason the link with business strategy is viewed as a critical success factor in any management development initiative (Yearout, Miles & Koonce, 2000).

According to Zenger, Ulrich and Smallwood (2000), the main reason for the failure of development programmes is that organisations start by trying to identify the appropriate competencies and then focus on the individual. To overcome this problem they suggest that organisations should start with business-based results and work backwards to attributes.

In a best practice benchmarking study, Olian, Durham, Kristof, Brown, Pierce and Kunder (1998) found that there is an intimate and structured link between the organisation's mission and the strategy and goals of the training and development programme. This is achieved by annually reviewing and updating the training and development goals according to the changing needs of the business units or organisational components, as well as by involving executives in the formulation, design and monitoring of the development process.

The strategy and goals of the organisation are also used during the needs analysis phase, the design of competency profiles, the techniques used, and the transfer of the development to the work situation and the evaluation of the interventions.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views on the link to strategy

The reason for this emphasis on the link with strategy lies in the need to prove the value of the development to the organisation and for management educators to prove that their actions make a difference to the “bottom-line”. It is also an effort to make the programmes more “credible” and the results more tangible (Broad & Newstrom, 1992).

From a post-modern point of view, the strategy could be seen as a dominant discourse, silencing other smaller discourses. In a way the linking of the development programme to the strategy is then an effort both to strengthen the dominant discourse and to provide “best answers”. On the other hand, and from a social constructionist point of view, it is an effort to localise development and to make it relevant for the particular organisation.

Linking development and learning with the strategy can also be seen as a form of shaping subjectivity in the organisation. Garrick and Usher (2000, p. 10) describe this as follows:

The management of subjectivity is now more than ever before the central task for organizations with employees actively wanting, thinking, feeling, doing and being and whose personal objectives are congruent with the objectives of the organisation. A ‘good’ employee is one who will continually adapt to its changing needs – and who therefore is sufficiently flexible with the capability to regulate themselves. Employees are constructed both as active learners and as self-regulating subjects – each the condition of the other and always found together.

This lends a panoptic colour to the whole management development intervention in an organisation, where empowerment is coupled with surveillance and regulation with subjects that are simultaneously active and shaped (Garrick & Usher, 2000). A

simplistic view of this situation would be to see the management development intervention purely as an instrument of oppression or manipulation on the part of management. A more complex view would be to view the link with strategy as a method of governmentality that involves a non-coercive power that works through infiltrating regulation into the very interior of the experience of subjects. This represents a process that involves subjects “developing” themselves into accepting, valuing and working to achieve a congruence of personal and organisational objectives (Garrick & Usher, 2000).

3.1.2 Contextual sensitivity

Temperley (1994) states that organisations should not follow too rigid an approach to management development. Organisations should be willing to deploy a variety of strategies on the premise that no overall strategy is going to be effective in such a dynamic and changing situation as currently experienced. Each framework for management development needs to be developed in the context of that specific organisation, its management team and the environmental context within which it operates.

Doyle (1995) is of the opinion that the impact of contextual influences such as structure, technology, culture and power are neither considered nor well understood, especially the extent to which they contribute to the success or otherwise of the development process.

This means that special care should be taken to identify and address influences, for example, organisational culture (external to individual) or self-concept (internal). This means that any management development intervention must be very open and flexible. The manner in which the contextual influences are dealt with will therefore determine the nature of the development process. Salaman and Butler (1994) are of the opinion that management structures and cultures could probably have serious implications for management learning. An implication of this is, for example, that the success of training and development programmes could be limited by the impact of the value/reward structures delegates come from. Management structures might

therefore not only define how managers learn, but also establish the managers' resistance to learning.

It is clear that culture and structure are influential contextual factors and will probably play an important role in this study. It is therefore necessary to expand the understanding of these two factors within the management development context.

3.1.2.1 *Culture*

Culture influences management development in several ways:

(1) It determines how effective managerial behaviour is defined, and consequently the content of the programme. If there is incongruence between the competencies a manager is taught during a management development intervention, and what is actually expected within that culture, this will lead to tension and conflict. This is the reason for multi-national organisations preparing their managers so well for work in foreign cultures.

(2) Culture determines the parameters of the management development intervention. Höpfl and Dawes (1995) cite case studies in which senior managers curtailed management development programmes when they perceived the programme as a threat to their prerogative to manage. These programmes were designed and developed, in conjunction with senior management, to achieve a change in management style, and a move away from a directing and controlling paradigm towards a supportive and trust-based programme. Senior managers were, however, not prepared to give up their power to define the context when the middle managers attempted to realise the power they had been offered.

"Transgressions of notional boundaries (of discretion and etiquette) are frequently encountered in management development, where the discrepancies between the organisation's expectations and those of individuals are thrown into focus. This often occurs when issues of self-development, personal autonomy or personal commitment are examined.... It is clear that activities which reinforce the legitimacy of the managerial prerogative are acceptable, while those which, by implication,

threaten the coherence of collective meaning, are not" (Höpfl and Dawes, 1995, p. 25).

A possible explanation could be offered by viewing a management development event as exposing delegates to the "naming" of certain managerial issues and the obtaining of "right answers". Blanter and Belcher (1994) state, however, that if (from a social constructionist paradigm) one can no longer put full weight behind the certainty of a universal structure, other than that apparent in the convention of "naming", there cannot be any packaged "right answers". "For meaning to emerge, these names must be reweaved, through relationship, back into any community or network – wrought, transformed or discarded to suit the purpose of the subscribers" (Blanter & Belcher, 1994, p. 112). It is further stated that a name without a story is empty and has no meaning. This might have the implication that all members of management would have to support the preferred management story in the organisation before it can be perpetuated by the management development practices.

(3) Culture influences the instructional design of the programme. The macro-culture plays a significant role in this respect. Hofstede (1993), a Dutch industrial psychologist and cross cultural researcher, determined that cultures differ along four work-related value dimensions, namely:

- individualism - collectivism;
- masculinity - femininity;
- power distance;
- uncertainty avoidance.

According to Francis (1995), the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions play an important role in training. Cultures with a small power distance value "learner-centred learning", placing a premium on learner initiative, while cultures with a large power distance value "trainer-centred learning", placing a premium on order. In cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance trainers are not expected to have all the answers and the participants can live with ambiguity. Cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance, however, expect the trainer to have all the answers.

This has an implication for the type of training techniques used in management development. Francis (1995) is of the opinion that certain training techniques will be more appropriate for a given culture group. Appropriate techniques are defined as those that might most effectively challenge the participants without eliciting a high level of resistance. Other cultural aspects that may influence the design of the programme are cross-cultural differences in learning styles, attitudes and expectations.

(4) Culture may enhance or inhibit the positive outcomes of the management development process. It seems that if the development process is not closely linked to all the elements of the organisational culture, it is bound to fail. According to Phillips (1993), management training has failed because it has no connection to real life in an organisation and is not linked specifically to strategies, challenges or problems in the organisation.

According to Salaman and Butler (1994), managers will probably only learn when they can see that what they are learning will be valuable and legitimate within their organisational setting and that it will help them to do what they are rewarded for. This supports the post-modern notion of local truths, knowledge and viability within context.

Culture is viewed as an important factor in personal and organisational change (Kotter, 1997) and is therefore an important consideration in the design of any management development programme.

3.1.2.2 *Structure*

Salaman and Butler (1994) identify the following structural elements of an organisation that have an impact on managerial learning:

- the hierarchic structure of rewards and values influences management learning. An example of this would be where a person is developed to become a highly placed, highly honoured, key figure in the organisation. Such a person would

probably learn more or better (achieve the desired behaviour) than in a situation where such a structural reward is not linked to the learning process.

- all organisational structures have a political element. This derives from the differentiation of organisations into specialisms, departments and sub-groups within a structure or hierarchy where power, resources, prestige and reward are differentially distributed. These divisions breed differences of perspective, priority and interest – and within structures of power individuals seek to defend and advance their interests. The consequence of this phenomenon is that information becomes a resource useful to protect or advance sectional interests and that change (which is often associated with learning) becomes potentially threatening.
- groupthink could lead to a condition in which the group becomes entirely unable to learn. Trompenaars (1997) indicates the influence of culture on structure where in an individualistic organisational culture, for example, each member performs a differentiated and specialised function and receives an extrinsic reward for doing so. In contrast, the collectivist cultures view an organisation as a social context which all members share and which gives meaning and purpose. It is expected that these types of differences will have an impact on this research and that differences will be identified in the participating organisations.

3.1.2.3 Post-modern and social constructionist views of contextual factors

Clearly, management structures and cultures have implications for management learning and can be explained by the post-modern theme of linking power with knowledge. In most of the situations mentioned people in power decide what should be knowledge and what not. These factors may not only define how managers learn, but may also establish managers' resistance to learning. The impact of these factors should therefore be determined and dealt with in the management development process. To try and change a specific culture is not part of a post-modern way of thinking. Lyotard (1984) views deliberate attempts to change culture as totalitarian, where those who are, or who wish to become dominant, want to provide all-encompassing worldviews that silence diversity of opinion.

The influence of culture on management development can also be explained from a constructionist paradigm, where culture is viewed as shared meaning, as well as

from the post-modern approach. "Perhaps the core of postmodern consciousness is the increasingly widespread awareness that the belief systems and apparent realities one indwells are socially constituted, rather than given, and hence can be constituted very differently in various cultures, (or subcultures), times and circumstances, although they might appear to carry the force of necessity to those who inhabit them" (Neimeyer, 1993, p. 221).

This does not mean that management development programmers should accept the status quo in an organisation, but rather that the difference between the present culture and the desired culture must be understood. Appropriate action can then be taken to align management development efforts with organisational vision and strategy and/or to develop strategies and skills for integrating the different narratives of management.

3.1.3 Competency-based

Allied to the best practice of linking management development to organisation strategy is the competency-based approach. Gxwala (1992, p. 31) is of the opinion that "by definition competency constitutes a basic purpose of management development". Foster (2000) posits that in order to understand strategic excellence it is necessary to see the organisation as a dynamic collection of competencies that are:

- value creating and organisation specific;
- continually altering through knowledge gains; and
- are built over time.

The competence based approach is followed by a large number of organisations today and can be attributed mainly to the desire to gain competitive advantage and to the paucity of degree-level qualifications among managers (Currie & Darby, 1995). In Britain the Management Charter Initiative and in South Africa the National Qualifications framework testify to the latter reason.

The shift in education and training towards the attainment of performance standards in job-related tasks has also contributed to the idea of competence. The use of

assessment centres has led naturally to the identification of aspects of job-related performance that could be observed in exercises (Hirsh & Strebler, 1994).

Yet there is no common definition of competence or competency. Woodruffe (1991) acknowledges this when he suggests that the term is used by different people to mean different things. Hirsh and Strebler (1994) classified the various definitions of competencies in the following categories:

- competence is what the manager can do: skills, competences;
- what the job involves: activities, tasks and roles;
- what the manager achieves: output, performance;
- what the manager is: intellect, personality, attitudes;
- what the manager knows: knowledge, experience.

Byham, Smith and Pease (2001) combine many of these factors in their view of competencies. They believe that competencies define clusters of behaviour, knowledge and motivations that are related to job success or failure and under which data on behaviour, knowledge and motivations can be reliably classified. In this definition competencies clearly relate to effective performance and are thus definable and measurable.

Sparrow and Bognanno (1994) classify competencies into four different categories to allow them to analyse the relevance of any competency in terms of organisational changes. Emerging competencies may not be particularly relevant to the organisation and its jobs at present, but the strategy of the organisation will place greater emphasis on them in the future. Maturing competencies formed an important part of the organisation, but will become less and less important in the future. Transitional competencies are not currently important and are merely implied by the strategic plan, yet the change can only be achieved or managed smoothly by focusing on these competencies.

Stable or core competencies will remain as important tomorrow as they are today. They lie at the heart of effective performance and are important in most settings, for example, analytical ability (Sparrow & Bognanno, 1994).

Most best-practice management development interventions today will be competency based and the competencies in turn will reflect the strategy of the organisation. A great deal of attention is therefore paid to the development of emerging and core competencies.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views on competencies

The difficulty researchers and authors experience in reaching consensus on a particular definition and view of competence is symptomatic of the modernist struggle to understand the world in terms of grand theories or meta-narratives. In practice the result is, however, a post-modern pastiche of ideas and views on competence. Those approaches that view competencies as underlying characteristics of a person are in contrast with the post-modern view of the fundamentally relational nature of identity. This results in the historically constituted and shifting self versus the static and essentialised self inherent in the concept of the free and self-determining individual.

Another feature of post-modern critique is the way in which the management competencies are determined. According to Neilson (1996), the database for determining generic management competencies is usually located in large, white, male-dominated corporate organisations, thereby potentially marginalising managerial abilities that might be especially relevant to small enterprises, or enterprises with greater diversity.

Most organisations limit the number of competencies that they use to profile the successful manager. According to Neilson (1996), this could be read as suggesting a universal taxonomy for describing effective managerial behaviour, thus submerging any number of other categories of ability, as well as multiple local knowledges whose potency might be situation specific.

Although most of the competence approaches do not have an underlying social constructionist framework, the intent of using a competency profile as basis for management development is social constructionist for the following reasons.

- (1) It allows each organisation to construct its own frame of reference in terms of “effective” managerial behaviour.
- (2) Managerial behaviour is not isolated from the organisational context.
- (3) Management knowledge is consensual and evaluated in terms of its viability – its functional and pragmatic value within the particular context that is also constantly changing.
- (4) The competency profile is ultimately constructed from the building blocks of the language and culture of a given organisation.
- (5) A competency profile can also be viewed as a “local” narrative (Lynch, 1997), which reflects truth as it is perceived in that particular context, displacing the universal “grand” narrative.

The abovementioned is only relevant if the specific organisation develops its own competency profile and does not use a generic profile. The use of a generic profile would be more in line with the modern notion of an objective reality outside context. Without realising the underlying paradigms, researchers have debated whether competencies are unique to a particular job or organisation or whether they are generic. Most of the writers cited by Currie and Darby (1995) reject the generic approach. It is viewed as trying to build an identikit manager and as creating a rather narrow view of managerial behaviour. They propose that organisations should define their own competencies for managers, not simply specific to that organisation in general, but peculiar to parts of the organisation (Kilcourse, 1994).

Constructing competency frameworks in smaller parts of the organisation corresponds with the post-modern notion of fragmentation and local knowledge. In a social constructionist framework, these competency frameworks will always be co-authored by all the parties involved.

3.1.4 Flexible development interventions and methodologies

Several researchers have found that a best practice in management development involves flexibility in terms of the delivery methodology that is used (Mumford, 1994, Olian et al., 1998, Zenger et al., 2000). Contextual issues such as organisational strategy, culture, values, development objectives and content, the profiles of

delegates and trainers, financial and technological resource availability, time, location and political constraints all influence the choice of delivery methods (Olian et al, 1998).

As this study is concerned with using narrative technique as a delivery method in management development, it is worthwhile examining the variety of techniques available to meet the above requirements for flexibility.

The techniques could be classified into the following categories (See Table 3.2 for more detail):

- (1) self development methods;
- (2) classroom delivery;
- (3) on-the-job development;
- (4) outdoor delivery.

TABLE 3.2
MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

Category	Techniques
Self Development Methods	Reading, e-learning, personal journal, distance learning, joining associations and professional bodies, writing for journals, teaching and training others, listening to audiotapes and viewing videos, self-assessment and self-testing instruments
Classroom delivery	Videotapes, lectures, role-plays, games/simulations, slides, case studies, video-conferencing, teleconferencing, computer conferencing
On-the-job development	Coaching, mentoring, action-learning, special job-assignments, 360 degree feedback, customer involvement, benchmarking studies
Outdoor delivery	Adventure learning, outdoor simulations/tasks

According to Bolt (1997) and Burke (1997), there is a decided trend towards new methodologies for the delivery of management development. Bolt (1997) mentions outdoor learning, feedback, customer involvement and business simulations as examples of the newer methods. Other developments he mentions are Socratic seminars, psychodrama and theatre experiences. Burke (1997) mentions action learning, assessment and feedback and leaders leading leaders as examples of the newer approaches. Leaders leading leaders involves, for example, managers telling their unique stories to direct reports and communicating and clarifying their "theory" of the part of the business they are responsible for and lead (Burke 1997).

Rothwell and Kazanas (1993) review three distinct methods which they believe are on the cutting edge of practice or are controversial, namely: adventure learning, New Age Training (NAT) and action learning. NAT is the application of new age beliefs and approaches to management development and includes widely accepted methods such as neurolinguistic programming (NLP), suggestology, visioning, meditation, yoga and imaging (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1993). Some of the least accepted and most controversial methods for management development are crystals, astrology, ESP, UFOs, certain abstruse Far Eastern philosophies of leadership and instruction based on religion in the workplace (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1993).

- Post-modern and social constructionist views on delivery methodologies

The vast array of delivery methods mentioned above is testament to the post-modern theme that favours the appearance and emergence of new, smaller and more fragmented myths, instead of the grand narrative (Ménard, 2000).

Binzagr and Manning (1996) find it difficult to recommend specific techniques for post-modern instruction because they believe that the methods must be born from the situation and cannot be clearly specified beforehand. "Of course, we do not advocate an attitude of anything goes because the methodological question will always be dependent upon ontological and epistemological dimensions that the instructor holds" (Binzagr & Manning, 1996, p. 253).

The choice of techniques from a social constructionist viewpoint would be influenced by the following themes (Adapted from Morrisson, 1997), listed below.

- The technique would have to allow for the acceptance of the co-existence of multiple realities and multiple truths. Thus there is no one right way to manage or to learn. It would have to avoid a prescriptive mode.
- The technique should accommodate a move away from the use of external authority. Within the use of the technique the management development practitioner is not viewed as an expert, but instead plays the role of "not-knower" and co-learner, allowing managers to teach about their meanings.

- The technique should maintain the highest respect for the strengths and competencies of the managers, rather than focussing only on their weaknesses and problems. Managers accustomed to taking a more passive role in learning need to be open to accepting greater responsibility for sharing their ideas and competencies and directing their own learning.
- The technique allows for a more collaborative process in which the role-players interact to create new meaning which holds more hope for the future.
- The management development practitioner plays an indispensable role in creating a trusting environment in which new stories can be told and lived. They create space for managers to experience new conversations that open up multiple realities and stories.
- The management development practitioner has to create multiple learning experiences to honour the many paths to learning.

Most of the conditions mentioned above can be addressed by a narrative approach to management development.

3.1.5 A thorough front-end or needs analysis

Bolt (2000) stresses the importance of conducting a thorough front-end analysis to plan the management development intervention. This will focus more on the organisational factors influencing the management development programme and entails the gathering of environmental, organisational, job and person information (Olian et al., 1998). In the benchmarking exercise to determine best practice, Olian et al (1998) found that although some information is derived from employee needs surveys, training and development needs assessment appears weighted toward information collected from top management.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views of the front-end analysis

The post-modern view depends on how the analysis is being done, for example, are traditionally marginalised groups involved and do the results show several interpretations, including alternatives to dominant interpretations. The fact that the

majority of best practice organisations seem to concentrate on gathering data from senior management implies that certain stories in organisations are being silenced.

3.1.6 Competence assessment

In addition to identifying the strategic objectives and challenges and analysing the job and its content, the individual and organisation should also be aware of the individual's present level of competence, as it is acting as input in the total management development process. Byham, Smith and Pease (2001) stress the importance of a comprehensive, holistic assessment to pinpoint specific areas related to executive success that need to be developed.

If a competence framework were used for defining managerial effectiveness, needs analysis would include the process of determining what competencies are needed in a specific situation, and assessing management competence levels against the required competencies. The techniques most often used to provide managers with information on their strengths and weaknesses are (Byham, Smith & Pease, 2001, Stewart, 1994):

- questionnaires that are completed by the manager and by his or her peers superiors, and/or subordinates (360 degree surveys);
- performance appraisal systems;
- assessment centres;
- structured interviews;
- content analysis (Stewart, 1994);
- behaviour analysis (Stewart, 1994);
- personality inventories (Byham et al, 2001).

Byham et al (2001) contend that, if used alone, these methods would not provide a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's strengths and development areas. They suggest that because each measure offers a different perspective, the secret lies in knowing how to assemble a battery of assessment tools to achieve maximum insight.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views on competency assessment

It seems that the whole concept of needs assessment, and specifically the use of competence frameworks for assessment purposes, rests heavily on modernist assumptions. Within a modern paradigm there would be objective criteria available against which another set of objective behaviour could be compared. However, according to Rosenau (1992), postmodernists never test because testing requires "evidence", a meaningless concept within a post-modern frame of reference. It is argued that the very idea of strict evaluative standards goes against the whole philosophy of post-modernism (Rosenau, 1992). Flemons, Green and Rambo (1996) also contend that supervisors cannot really evaluate their trainees if, as postmodernists assert, there is no privileged, expert position.

The modernist assumption of assessment expects people to be able to identify certain behaviour in isolation and use as a distinct reality to compare with some sort of objective criteria – there is an assumption of an objective truth "out there". From a post-modern and constructionist perspective this would not be possible. From these perspectives there is, instead of one truth, the question of "whose truth?" In the social constructionist paradigm reality consists of negotiated meanings in the ongoing flow of human linguistic interaction. Therefore there is no single standard of rational thought or any independent objective reality that can determine valid or correct beliefs (Lyddon, 1995).

In a modern paradigm there is an unequal power relationship at play during assessment, with the person being assessed being perceived as having less power than the assessor. Constructionism insists on sharing power. It encourages people to consider various views as "different" rather than "better" or "worse" and to see every view as partial, that is, incomplete and favoured by the individual who holds the view (Dean & Rhodes, 1998).

Another view on this is that the assessment centre supports the post-modern notion of power as self-regulation. Neilson (1996) describes the continuous, disciplined, anonymous surveillance that facilitates monitoring of, evaluation of, control of, and

experimentation with an organisation's members during an assessment centre, as a panoptic gaze.

Neilsen (1996) supports this by suggesting that privileged voice is given to the standardised assessment instruments. Although data is usually gathered from the manager's colleagues and from the person's own life experience, the message implicit in the administration of and feedback from the assessments is that the instrument's results have primacy.

Competence assessment displays the modernist notion of essentialism in the way in which behaviour is coded. According to Neilsen (1996), the coding process itself, with its mandate to observe behaviour and to find evidence of a certain kind of intent to confirm the presence of a certain ability, suggests an essential principle that may submerge more intuitive strategies.

Assessment in a post-modern and social construction paradigm would probably entail a collaborative and transparent process, during which all the participants would develop a common framework for evaluation. Discussions between the assessor and the person being assessed would then take place to discuss the viability of the person's approach in that particular context.

3.1.7 Measurement of results

Zenger, Ulrich and Smallwood (2000) stress the importance of measuring the results of the management development effort. The management development process should be continually assessed and the individual should also receive performance feedback and evaluation. Measuring the output of the management development process is one of the elements of evaluation that has received much theoretical attention over the last twenty years. "In the current climate of rising costs for labour and benefits and rising costs for energy and raw materials, operating executives justifiably demand estimates of expected costs and benefits of HRD programs" (Benabou, 1996. p. 91).

The most commonly used model for evaluation was developed by Kirkpatrick (1975) and focuses on measuring the outcomes of the development process on four levels:

- (1) reaction: were the trainees happy in the learning situation?
- (2) learning: does the training course teach the concepts required?
- (3) behaviour: has there been a behaviour change back on the job?
- (4) results: what is the effect of the training on the organisation?

According to Benabou (1996), very few organisations measure outcomes on the fourth level, especially the economic effects. There is, however, increased pressure to determine the ROI of development in organisations, but despite this heightened interest and greater understanding of ROI measurement it is still a controversial issue (Phillips & Pulliam, 1999). According to Benabou (1996) three factors can be blamed for this:

- the belief that measurement is effective only in production and financial areas, and not in human training, which appears to deal with intangible matters such as improving communication, motivation, and the organisational climate.
- the belief that training merely represents a cost rather than a sound financial investment.
- the difficulty of evaluating training programmes in terms of business and financial results.

Spitzer (1999) adds to this the belief that evaluation is seen as something that is done only *after* training has taken place, and a reluctance to recognise any sort of impact from training unless it can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that the change in performance was the result of the training programme and nothing else.

It is Spitzer's (1999) opinion, however, that evaluation is the best tool that a trainer has to turn training into a powerful force that is valuable both to the organisation and to employees.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views of measurement

Measurement as discussed here would be very difficult to motivate from a post-modern framework. It seems to perpetuate the modernist notion that there is an

expert opinion (the evaluation) and that there is one specific truth (the evaluation results).

From a social constructionist point of view it is, however, possible to develop a narrative of evaluation and to construct viable options of measurement for a specific, local entity.

3.1.8 Emphasis on experience and action

A further best practice in management development entails the identification of the most effective learning processes for ensuring success. There is also considerable support for using the workplace as the most effective venue for management development (Mailick & Stumpf, 1998) where the development methods are more action or work based, rather than knowledge based (Mumford, 1994, & Bolt, 1997). Bolt (2000), for example, emphasises the best practice of action learning in management development.

Mumford (1994, p. 8) also stresses the importance of learning through experience by stating: "Instead of giving emphasis to the provision of knowledge and asking managers to interpret and use that knowledge in subsequent action, it would be both more appropriate and more likely to be successful if we gave attention to issues of action, and only secondary attention to issues of the required knowledge"

Mumford (1994) adds that usually very little is done to make sure that effective learning occurs within the manager's practical experiences. Effective management development must embrace the ways in which managers learn to be effective – learning by experience, largely outside normal schemes.

Consequently, management development practitioners have started to pay more attention to the role of experience in the learning process. Mailick and Stumpf (1998) are of the opinion that many practitioners of management development do not believe that management can be taught in seminars and workshops, but rather that it must be learned by experience and by performing and taking the responsibility as a manager. Managerial competence is believed to be demonstrated by action, not talk. As a result there is a generally increased emphasis on experiential learning.

- *Post-modern and social constructionist views of emphasis on action and experience*

On one hand, the focus on action learning can be seen as a response to post-modern critique of traditional management development methods; on the other, it could be viewed as a perpetuation of modernist thinking in management development.

Willmott (1994) offers Action Learning as an alternative to traditional management education because it encourages participation in sharing knowledge and constructively criticising others' diagnoses and prescriptions. This process is directed at and by self-development rather than a concern to learn about theories or models merely as a means of passing examinations. According to Willmott (1994, p. 123), Action Learning thus "depends upon, and actively contributes towards, a process of maturation that allows ignorance, confusion and uncertainty to be openly acknowledged and shared". This approach reflects many of the post-modern themes, such as anti-foundationalism and uncertainty.

On the other hand, Action Learning is based on the modernist view of the individual as the locus of understanding where human agency is founded on a personal, subjective core of awareness in which actions and emotions are co-ordinated from a knowing "self" (Hassard, 1993). An example of this can be seen in the pitfall that some authors experience, namely focusing on the individual during action learning and ignoring collective learning (Kenney & Mae, 2000).

When examining the role of experience in management development one cannot ignore David Kolb, one of the most influential writers in the field of experiential learning and originator of one of the most widely used theories in management development (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe, 1997).

Of importance to this study is Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe's (1997) reassessment of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (KELT) from a social constructionist perspective. They argue firstly that the theory is based on strong cognitivist and

positivist assumptions, as can be seen in the five principles that are characteristic of KELT:

- there are four relatively independent stages in effective learning which can be represented as a learning cycle.
- the manager must select the appropriate set of learning abilities for any given situation and the skills to complete each stage effectively.
- the manager becomes free from formal learning systems, more autonomous and self-directed and better able to make and implement decisions at work.
- the manager proceeds through this adaptive process like a practical scientist.
- the person and external world exist in a transactional and reciprocal relationship.

Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe (1997, p. 139) summarise the cognitivist and positivist nature of KELT as follows:

Thinking is seen to be separate from experiencing and action; action follows thought and a new dualism is created – reflection and thinking. Schematically held referential knowledge resides separately from, and is fed into cognitive processes. The belief in decontextualised thinking processes being legitimised through the assumption that individuals are operating autonomously is the prime focus of learning, with social relationships taking a secondary role. As a consequence, our view is that the isolated individual quickly becomes divorced from their historical and social position and material existence. A dichotomy becomes established between organism and environment.

A rethinking of the nature of the principles of experiential learning from a social constructionist point of view as done by Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe (1997) is offered in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3

KELT PRINCIPLES FROM A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PARADIGM

KELT Principle	Social Constructionist perspective
There are four relatively independent stages in effective learning which can be represented as a learning cycle	Experiencing, reflecting and thinking are not separate and opposite processes, but different aspects of the same rhetorical, argumentative and mediated process
The manager must select the appropriate set of learning abilities for any given situation and the skills to complete each stage effectively	The construction of meaning is considered to be both an internal and external activity, and as such internal reflection is no more privileged than external argumentation and persuasion
The manager becomes free from formal learning systems, more autonomous and self-directed and better able to make and implement decisions at work	Learning is viewed as a responsive, rhetorical and argumentative process that has its origins in relationships with others. As such, learning cannot be located entirely within the individual. Argument and debate with oneself and in collaboration with others is the basis of learning
The manager proceeds through this adaptive process like a practical scientist	The manager is viewed as a practical author who reads complex situations and finds the hidden text or image within them. He/she then actively reframes the complexities within joint action
The person and external world exist in a transactional and reciprocal relationship	People create and are created by their social conditions, but not necessarily in a clear-cut, deliberate manner

It is clear that Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe (1997) emphasise the role of language within collaborative learning relationships, as well as the aspect of deconstruction as an important part of experiential learning. The way in which they align the KELT principles with the social constructionist perspective could assist in solving the post-modern dilemma with regards to experience, as stated by Bryant and Usher (1997, p. 80):

In supporting the learning of adults, we can accept the place of experience as local and particularistic, yet adult educators are also implicated in a discourse which forces them to discriminate between, and thus exclude or include, different claims originating in individual or collective experience as local, personal and particular seems to somehow need both affirming and transcending at the same time. We both value and devalue experience.

By viewing the construction of meaning as both an external and an internal process (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe, 1997), experience is viewed as a socially constructed phenomenon and as such is then open for debate. In a sense this provides the necessary affirmation and transcendation as mentioned by Bryant and Usher (1997).

3.1.9 Top management commitment

According to Olian et al. (1998), deliberation over and approval of the organisation's training and development objectives are among the Board of Directors' management

oversight priorities in best practice benchmarked organisations. Top management commitment is required for various reasons:

- to give credibility and prestige to the management development programme;
- to show interest and concern;
- to provide the overall organisational perspective;
- to ensure that management development efforts are aligned with organisational strategy;
- to mobilise resources where necessary.

Bolt (2000) adds the following reasons:

- to act as champion for the programme;
- to provide overall direction;
- to build ownership;
- to ensure a top-down approach;
- quality control;
- measurement of results;
- benchmarking best-practices;
- to provide governance for policy, processes and infrastructure of development within the organisation.

Human resource practitioners have long been aware that without top management's commitment, most development programmes are doomed to failure. It is currently a very common best practice strategy to establish a management development advisory board. Bolt (2000) describes the advisory board as a team of senior line and staff officers who guide the planning and implementation of the management/leadership development strategy and its major components. The team meets at regular intervals, initially to review and approve the strategy or designs of particular components and then to plan for their implementation.

Rynes and Rosen (1994) confirm the importance of top management commitment by stating that top management support (as is the case for most organisational change) is a most important predictor of training success – more so than any characteristic of the training itself.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views of top management commitment

The post-modern issue of silencing certain voices is obviously at play in the issue of top management commitment. Top management's point of view is privileged and constitutes the meaning of knowledge in the organisation. This also reflects the modernist emphasis on upward hierarchical obedience, stewardship with regard to husbanding organisational resources for the interest of hierarchical elites and the devotion to expediency guided by the organisational imperative (Gephart, 1996). Within the modernist organisation obedience is worth more than individuality and within the context of management development, the employees will then do as they are told by top management.

Kenney and Mae (2000, p. 506) describe an example of this phenomenon when participants in a certain organisation resisted attending a management development intervention: "To overcome the resistance, the authors contacted the CEO, their sponsor, to ask him to send a message: 'This is important to me and the organisation: do it'. That action learning programme resumed, and, in my opinion, all possibility of voluntary action learning had been destroyed".

The fact that human resources staff cannot achieve the goals of management development initiatives without the commitment of top management might also indicate that they are being used in a form of power play by top management. Kenney and Mae (2000) mention that an executive can control a line group through a staff group while appearing to be detached from the control. In a situation like this the risk to top management is minimal because they are under no pressure to behave differently, as they can approve or disapprove of the recommendations without many repercussions.

From a social constructionist point of view, the involvement and commitment of top management reflects the constructive nature of language, but with the drawback of marginalisation of certain voices within the organisation.

3.1.10 Customised content

Although current best practices in management development stress experience and action learning, with a reduction of theoretical content, many management development interventions still have some element of theoretical content. The development of customised content is linked to the best practices of doing a thorough front-end analysis, competency profiling, the link with strategy and contextual sensitivity.

Bolt (2000) lists the requirements for the development of content and states that content must:

- be based on vision, values and strategies;
- address strategic issues/challenges;
- be practical, relevant and reflect culture;
- not be off the shelf;
- be designed by committees.

This best practice reflects Willmott's (1994) prediction that the content of management education will shift gradually towards a more processual and perhaps even critical conceptualisation of management practice.

- Post-modern and social constructionist views on customised content

Depending on how the content is used during the intervention, this could be viewed as a modernist or post-modernist issue. From a modernist frame the content within the management development strategy could be viewed as the "expert" component, especially if it is accepted and taught without critical examination of its epistemic roots. Pedler (cited in Willmott, 1994) criticises this type of approach by arguing that management development is largely done to managers rather than done by them, socialising them into the existing norms, practices and values, and treating them very much like patients, rather than agents.

From a post-modern approach Binzagr and Manning (1996) suggest that theory becomes the target of instruction, not reality. Post-modern management education

will thus entail teaching students to deconstruct critically the traditional functions of management. From a social constructionist viewpoint the students will even go a step further and reconstruct new theories of organisation based on their values and desired outcomes (Binzagr & Manning, 1996).

Depending again on how it is used, content could become the “authority” in terms of management development in an organisation. Lyotard (1997) states that, in both the modern and the post-modern systems, authority is a matter for argument. It is never attributed or conceded to an individual or group, which may occupy the location of authority only for a limited time. According to Lyotard (1997), that location is in principle empty and authority is designated by a contract, for example legislation.

Lyotard (1997, p. 77) comments further on this issue:

Such is the paradox of democracy, that the supreme instance, the “foundation” of decisions affecting the community is instituted by a decision of the community. ... The vacating of the location of authority gives a perfect example of that “blank” or emptiness that the open system reserves in its core in order to make itself capable of criticising, correcting, and adjusting its own performance.

Within management development the content could become this “empty space” providing learners with the opportunity to criticise the ideology inherent in the content that they have constituted themselves.

Customised content as a best practice of management development could indicate that most management development practitioners are not working solely from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms and generally make use of a mixture of methods, combining modern and post-modern approaches.

In this section ten current best practices in management development were investigated from the perspective of the post-modern and social constructionist frameworks. The following practices were highlighted: a clear link to business strategy, contextual sensitivity, competency-based, flexible development interventions and methodologies, a thorough front-end or needs analysis,

competence assessment, measurement of results, emphasis on experience and action, top management commitment and customised content.

Most of these practices reflect a modernist stance and only a few show some post-modern and social constructionist influences. The various ways in which they are practically implemented do, however, reflect a post-modern pastiche of approaches and lead to the need addressed in the next section, namely to look at guidelines for the implementation of management development from post-modern and social constructionist frameworks.

3.2 POST-MODERN AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST GUIDELINES FOR THE DESIGN OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Although Willmott (1994) does not mention the post-modern situation specifically, his plea to review current approaches to teaching and learning in management development could well have come from a post-modern stance. He believes that management academics and trainers should find ways of developing alternative curricula, organisational cultures and modes of delivery that stimulate and facilitate a process of active and continuous learning. He also advocates an embracing of feelings of ignorance, uncertainty, confusion, ambiguity and even chaos to create an openness to the development of new forms of learning and action.

Rosile and Boje (1996) suggest that the rhetoric of change in management and organisation theory necessitates a critical questioning of classroom management approaches and pedagogical methods. According to them, post-modern teaching is characterised as self-reflexive, decentered, deconstructionist and non-totalising.

Rosile and Boje (1996) further suggest that from a post-modernist perspective, instructors and learners are structured and otherwise controlled by the disciplinary discourse of management theory, of the university, of business and capitalism. From this perspective management development becomes a modernist machine that can, fortunately, be dismantled by post-modern critique (Rosile & Boje, 1996). The creation of post-modern alternatives is, however, more difficult (Rosile & Boje, 1996).

In the next section the characteristics of post-modern teaching, as identified by Rosile and Boje (1996), will be used as the basis for a discussion of guidelines for management development from a post-modern and social constructionist perspective.

3.2.1 Reflexive

Edwards and Usher (2000) observe that reflection is not new to education and training and in some ways can be linked to the modernist project of education. From a modern perspective, reflexivity involves an action orientation to problems, with the aim of handling uncertainty and changes more effectively. Edwards and Usher (2000, p. 106) describe this as follows: "The process of reflecting on and analysing particular circumstances gives rise to the conception of the 'reflective practitioner', someone who is able to cope with and shape change and uncertainty by interpreting and responding to the particularities of the circumstances they find".

Rosile and Boje (1996) view self-reflexivity as one of the features of post-modern management teaching and propose the facilitation of self-reflexivity where participants examine every aspect of the teaching situation, including their own beliefs and values.

The design of a management development intervention should allow participants the opportunity for self-reflexivity. The use of journals, story-telling, reflective teams and personal coaches will assist with this.

3.2.2 Decentred

This involves the development of a post-modern learning community as a networking web, requiring the eroding of the power-knowledge hierarchy in traditional development. The post-modern strategy of decentring could challenge these traditional hierarchies (Rosile & Boje, 1996). A more decentred model where management learners and their instructors are viewed as stakeholders is suggested. According to Rosile and Boje (1996) this has several advantages:

- it facilitates a shift from the model of teacher/expert as manager/agent who controls one-to-one interactions in a series of bilateral contractual relationships and moves toward the creation of a community of voices.
- each learner enters into a relationship with each other (not just with the expert/instructor) giving importance to everybody's comments.
- in addition to being decentred, such relationships mirror the format of relationships between managers and stakeholders in a post-modern organisation.

Decentring in the management development context could be achieved by the use of syndicate groups, action learning groups, creation of chat rooms on the internet as part of the learning experience, group mentoring and team simulations.

3.2.3 Deconstructionist

Binzagr and Manning (1996) advocate the combination of post-modern and constructivist approaches in management development. This means that the requirements of scepticism and relativism embedded in postmodernism no longer lead to despair. Learners will use the information gained from deconstructing a text to create new meanings. Binzagr and Manning (1996) describe, for example, how learners deconstructed the traditional management functions and then reconstructed them into the following roles: invention, proactive organising, persuading, co-creating and co-validation.

Critical Action Learning, as a development method, with its critical stance to management and its inherent power relations (Willmott, 1994), could contribute in this regard. The role of the facilitator is an important element in deconstruction and reconstruction of management issues. It is doubtful whether enough time is or will be allocated to this aspect in the corporate environment. It might be viewed as too philosophical.

3.2.4 Nontotalising, nonuniversalising, nonessentialising

Rosile and Boje (1996) view totalism, universalism and essentialism as part of the unitary grand narrative that distorts, suppresses or ignores "local" differences, diverse perspectives and alternative interpretations. Doyle (1994) supports the issue of localisation by suggesting that development efforts should take into account the important variations and ambiguities in managerial jobs.

Management development interventions should allow learners to explore many different views on a particular topic and to develop alternative viewpoints. This can be done by exposing learners to different viewpoints such as community involvement, benchmarking visits, interdisciplinary exposure and discussion groups.

There are not many management development efforts in South Africa based totally on these guidelines of reflexivity, decentring, deconstructionism and nontotalism and it is probably not the ideal either. Neilson (1996) is of the opinion that a development programme featuring a multi-discourse of modernism and postmodernism will probably be more successful than staying within a single grand narrative (for example, postmodernism). The University of Cape Town Business School has developed an Executive MBA, based on a blend of post-modernist and constructivist themes. There might be similar non-intentional efforts in the private sector.

3.3 COMPARING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY AND THE GUIDELINES FOR POST-MODERN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

The generation of a few broad guidelines for post-modern management development practice raises a question about the role of Transformative Learning Theory within this domain. Issues of similarity or difference with regards to transformative learning and the guidelines for post-modern management development as set out in 3.2 will now be discussed.

3.3.1 Reflexive

Mezirow (2000) uses the term “reflective discourse” to indicate the reflexive nature of transformative learning. According to him it is the specialised use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. It involves the critical assessment of assumptions and the eventual making of a “best judgement” based on the broadest consensus possible (Mezirow, 2000). He does, however, concede that consensus is not always possible and that learners should then show the willingness to seek understanding and to come to a reasonable agreement.

The issue of consensus is not an explicit goal in management development from a post-modern framework, but clearly demonstrates its social constructionist intent in the sense that learners consensually co-create new realities.

Mezirow (2000) stresses the issue of self-reflexivity by observing that the most personally significant and emotionally exacting transformations involve a critique of previously unexamined premises regarding a learner’s self.

3.3.2 Decentred

Transformative learning presumes relations of equality among participants in reflective discourse, according to Belenky and Stanton (2000). The guideline for creating a network of relationships for learning is supported in Transformative Learning Theory. Daloz (2000) describes, for example, the role of a “mentoring community” in transformative learning. The community assists by valuing diversity and transformative discourse.

3.3.3 Deconstructionist

The term deconstruction is not generally used in Transformative Learning Theory, but the term “critical reflection” represents an important element of the theory. Brookfield (2000, p. 129) proposes critical reflection as ideology critique. “Understanding ideology means knowing how it’s embedded in the inclinations,

biases, hunches and apparent intuitive ways of experiencing reality that we think are unique to us". Critical reflection means that the person must engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which the learning is happening, as well as identify hegemonic assumptions (Brookfield, 2000).

3.3.4 Nontotalising, nonuniversalising, nonessentialising

Transformative Learning Theory seems to support these in that the new meaning that learners create as a result of perspective transformation is highly subjective, personal and changeable (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Mezirow (1991) also writes that meaning exists within the learner rather than in external forms such as books and that people's present interpretations of reality are always subject to revision or replacement. This implies that local differences, diverse perspectives and alternative presentations are accepted instead of the "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1984).

Transformative Learning Theory and its associated processes could be used to facilitate management development in a post-modern and social constructionist paradigm. The combination of post-modernist thinking and social constructionism seems to result in better outcomes from the management development intervention. According to Binzagr and Manning (1996), a constructivist post-modern perspective enables management learners to generate new ways of theorising about management and also allows them to become purposeful creators of future management processes that can be differentiated from management processes generated by a modern perspective.

Transformational learning within management development efforts is supported and facilitated by the trainers/facilitators, through discourse and critical reflection in particular (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). It is therefore possible to explore the extent to which transformative learning and, in particular, a perspective transformation could be facilitated in management development.

3.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter ten current best practices in management development were described and viewed from a post-modern as well as a social constructionist view. It was found that many of the best practices could be explained from a modern, as well as a post-modern frame of reference. Some guidelines for post-modern management development were discussed and further explored in terms of Transformative Learning Theory. In the next chapter narrative therapy as a management development technique will be discussed in more detail.

With this, Step 2 of the literature overview, namely the evaluation of current best practices in management development from a post-modern and social constructionist paradigm, is completed.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE THERAPY AS A MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

The third objective of the literature study focuses on a proposed design for a management development intervention based on narrative therapy. In pursuit of this in this chapter narrative therapy is firstly described and its goal examined. Thereafter the disciplines, theories and paradigms influencing narrative therapy are described. The key concepts in narrative therapy are then explored, after which the role of the therapist/facilitator is explained. The therapeutic process and techniques used in narrative therapy are described next. The application of the approach in a management development intervention is then described and the chapter concludes with some general considerations of the implementation of an intervention.

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF NARRATIVE THERAPY

There is no clear-cut definition of narrative therapy in the literature, but it is possible to identify many different themes that constitute narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000). Some researchers choose to refer to narrative practices rather than narrative therapy as they believe that the phrase “narrative therapy” is somewhat limiting of an endeavour that is constantly engaged with and changing in many different contexts (Dulwich Centre, 2001). For purposes of the discussion in this chapter the words “narrative therapy” will be used as the various narrative approaches in therapy have become known as narrative therapy in the literature (Morgan, 2000).

According to the Dulwich Centre (2001), narrative therapy is just one of the various schools of family therapy, which includes structural family therapy, systemic family therapy, constructivist family therapy, brief therapy, solution focused therapy and linguistic systems approach. Although narrative therapy is mainly used in the family context, some researchers, such as Boje (1999b) and Barry (1997), have recognised its relevance in the organisational context.

Morgan (2000, p. 4) summarises the most common themes of narrative therapy as follows:

- narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres on individuals as the experts in their own lives.
- it views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them in changing their relationship to problems in their lives.
- curiosity and a willingness to ask questions, to which the individual really does not know the answers, are important principles of this work.
- there are many possible directions that any conversation can take (there is no single correct direction).
- the person consulting the therapist plays a significant role in determining the directions that are taken.

The Dulwich Centre (2001) explains the emphasis that is placed upon the stories of people's lives and the differences that can be made through particular tellings and retellings of these stories: hence the use of the word "narrative". Narrative therapy is further described as ways of understanding the stories of people's lives, and ways of re-authoring these stories in collaboration with the therapist/community worker and the people whose lives are under discussion. As a way of working it is said to be interested in history, the broader context that is affecting people's lives and the ethics or politics of therapy (Dulwich Centre, 2001).

Narrative therapy is used in many contexts with individuals or with groups (usually a family unit). Some examples of where narrative therapy has been used in individual or group contexts are the treatment of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) by Epston, Freeman and Lobovits (1999), coming to terms with sexual abuse and violence (Draucker, 1998, Weingarten, 1998), addressing parent-child issues in a one-parent household (Paré, 1996), group therapy with gay men (Behan, 1999), preventative interventions for children of parents with affective disorder (Focht & Beardslee, 1996) and treatment of a woman with a panic disorder (Wetchler, 1999). In addition to this, Barry (1997) has also used it as an organisational development intervention in a small organisation. It is clear that the use of narrative therapy is varied and many other uses could possibly be explored.

Narrative therapy is approached in a variety of ways, but this research will mainly follow the narrative practices of Michael White and David Epston (1990). White and Epston are seen as the major proponents of narrative therapy, although scholars in the humanities and social sciences (for example, Bruner, 1986, Geertz, 1983) had been using narrative as an organising metaphor for a number of years before it began to be used by family therapists (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Narrative therapy with its inherent respect for the client and an acknowledgement of the importance of context, interaction, bonding and the social construction of meaning (Lax, 1995) seems to hold much promise for facilitating the change processes necessary in formal organisations, especially the perspective transformations needed in management development.

4.2 THE GOAL OF NARRATIVE THERAPY

The goal of narrative therapy is to free individuals from the influence of problematic stories (Morgan, 2000) through intentional co-authoring of new narratives by counsellors/therapists (Chen, Noosbond & Bruce, 1998). This stems from the belief that people with problems often develop what White and Epston (1990) call a “problem-saturated description” of their lives. They are constantly aware of the negative events in their lives and the negative aspects of their personalities. This makes them feel powerless and consequently, they become easy prey to problems (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). Narrative therapy helps people to locate, generate or resurrect alternative stories that offer a different sense of self and a different relationship to problems (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995).

White and Epston (1990) believe that clients close themselves off to other ways of resolving their problems by holding onto one set of beliefs. The term “dominant story” is used to refer to the worldview that a person erroneously considers the only reality. One of the goals of narrative therapy then is to help clients to realise that their dominant story is not the only reality, but simply one way of viewing the problem (Wetchler, 1999).

White (2000) is also aware of the role of power in all human relationships and has been particularly concerned with narratives that serve the dominant discourse and maintain the status quo of relationships among individuals (Terryll & Lyddon, 1996). According to White and Epston (1990), one of the main goals of narrative therapy is to give clients access to stories that have been subjugated by the dominant discourse of the family or culture. This goal involves firstly helping the clients to understand how they were recruited into this problematic view of themselves and secondly exploring novel outcomes that argue for different interpretations of the client's life events. The goal is achieved when therapist and client finally create new stories by which the client lives his/her life, using the questions generated from these new possible interpretations (Terrell & Lyddon, 1996).

The main goal of narrative therapy is therefore the development of alternative stories that reduce the influence of problems and create new possibilities for living (Morgan, 2000).

4.3 DISCIPLINES, THEORIES AND PARADIGMS INFLUENCING NARRATIVE THERAPY

Several disciplines, theories and paradigms have influenced (and are still influencing) the development of narrative therapy. The main influences will be discussed in this section.

4.3.1 Disciplines

Narrative therapy evolved from a number of disciplines, including psychoanalysis and family therapy, both of which emphasise the construction of meaning as a central concept and goal of therapy (Focht & Beardslee, 1996). The Dulwich Centre (2001) states that there have also been alternative sources that have informed narrative practices, for example anthropology, literary theory, post-structuralist philosophy, feminist writings and explorations and work with indigenous Australian communities.

4.3.2 Theoretical influences

Several theorists and theoretical concepts have influenced narrative therapy, such as cybernetics and the narrative metaphor. Both the Milan family therapy model and Tom Anderson's work on reflecting teams have also influenced narrative therapy (Dulwich Centre, 2001).

Initially, White's view of people and their problems drew heavily from Bateson and, more recently, the late philosopher Foucault (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). The model originally commenced within a systems framework, but as the work of White and Epston developed, the narrative metaphor (where the stories that people brought to therapy became the key area for work) received more emphasis (Vassallo, 1998).

Adopting Bateson's (1972) cybernetic theory at the time was a revolutionary step that involved several important theoretical and clinical shifts in family therapy. This included (1) a shift from linear to circular causality, (2) a focus on relationship or feedback loops between individuals instead of within them, and (3) therapists taking responsibility for developing interventions to interrupt symptom-supporting/causing patterns instead of the working-through process (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1994). In the early to mid-1980s many therapists began to situate their work in second-order cybernetics as described by Bateson (1979) in his later work.

According to Zimmerman and Dickerson (1994), the second-order approach has three important implications: (1) a clearer understanding of the implications of the cybernetic metaphor, namely a shift away from any kind of causality; (2) the shift from privileging the therapist's experience, based on the therapist's point of view (called theory), to acknowledging the client's experience, based on his/her point of view as equally privileged – which takes into account the feedback loop between the therapist and the client; and (3) the appreciation that what one has are only useful metaphors (for example, a cybernetic metaphor) and not competing versions of the truth.

Since the late 1980s many therapists have abandoned a systemic metaphor in favour of a narrative metaphor with which to organise and describe the work that

they do. Journals, books and conferences which describe the clinical and theoretical implications of this shift abound (Weingarten, 1998).

The narrative metaphor views people as organising their experience and constructing meaning from the experiences in the form of stories (Bruner, 1990). Throughout life, humans are engaged in a process of building up a resource of meanings, or stories, about themselves in their social worlds (Macready, 1997). The meanings or stories constitute a frame of intelligibility (White & Epston, 1990) that provides a context for the interpretation of experiences.

The narrative metaphor is used by White and Epston (1990) to reflect on people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling.

Morgan (2000) confirms the central role of stories in narrative practice and mentions that for narrative therapists, stories consist of events that are linked in sequence across time according to a plot. Bruner (1990) argues that a narrative can be real or imaginary without loss of its power as a story, and that stories achieve their meaning by explicating deviations from the ordinary in a comprehensible form.

Narrative also has a dramatic quality. Bruner (1990) highlights the essential elements of a well-formed story, namely: an actor, an action, a goal, a scene, an instrument plus trouble. Trouble consists of an imbalance between any of the first five elements.

Morgan (2000) explains that lives are multi-storied and that there are many stories occurring at the same time and different stories can be told about the same events. "No single story can be free of ambiguity or contradiction and no single story can encapsulate or handle all the contingencies of life" (Morgan, 2000, p. 8). Individual stories are also influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which the person lives.

Within the context of this research, with its focus on management learning within a post-modern spirit, the concept of storytelling as a way of learning is of importance.

Boje (1994) describes organisational learning as the reintroduction of the stories and voices of those excluded, marginalised and exploited by the pre-modern and modernist learning curriculum. He goes on to say that post-modern learning “constructs pluralistic participation through multi-voiced dialogue to question grand, totalising and essentialising claims”. Narrative therapy supports this type of learning as it allows people to confront the essentialisms in their stories (Boje, 1999b).

Nichols and Schwartz (1995) conclude that Michael White has constructed an approach that has much in common with the other emergent therapy models of the 1990s, and yet one that has greater appeal in the sense that he presents a unique and powerful view of (and language about) problems and people.

4.3.3 Paradigms

Wetchler (1999) describes narrative therapy as a social constructionist model that proposes that problems are maintained through language-based belief systems. The foundation of narrative therapy is thus the social constructionist principle that each individual's reality is constructed through interaction with others and with institutions (Draucker, 1998). Foucault's post-modern influence led White and Epston (1990) to suggest that individuals internalise the dominant, cultural narratives that shape and maintain the distribution of power in society (Draucker, 1998). This in turn influenced White to construct a model designed to free people from the oppression of their problems. Problems are viewed as related to the stories people have about themselves, which in turn often reflect oppressive cultural practices (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995).

It seems that narrative therapy has been linked from its onset to post-modern thought and social constructionism (Doan, 1998). According to Doan (1997), narrative subverts the notion of a “true self” with the suggestion that people are communities of selves, and that each person contains a multitude of voices with varying points of view. Doan (1997, p. 131) states further that narrative therapists especially share the philosophy that there is reason to be cautious of singular, totalizing accounts:

They are less interested in the relativistic, idealistic position of the radical constructivist. They do not espouse an anarchy of stories, but are interested in accounts that honour and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and how these accounts can be respected within a particular system. They are interested in helping individuals with stories that have gone awry or outlived their usefulness and families in which stories are in collision. They recognise the connection between all stories and that it is difficult for one story to go forward at the expense of all others without causing interpersonal conflict and misunderstanding. They are interested in deconstructing stories that dominate, marginalize, subjugate, objectify, and exclude people and in encouraging people to become their own authors while recognising the social nature of human life.

Some of the post-modern and social constructionist themes that can be identified as influencing narrative therapy are discussed below.

4.3.3.1 Language as a method of construction

Therapy is constructed as a linguistic event (a therapeutic conversation), in which new meanings are constantly evolving towards the “dis-solving” of problems. Meaning is never static, and the work of the therapist is to keep the conversation going until new meanings about the problem and possible solutions have been co-created by the participants in the session (Reed, 1993). The formative ability of language is also emphasised (Anderson, 1995).

4.3.3.2 An anti-foundational stance and pluralism

The notion of “objectivity” and the assumption that verifiable criteria exist for diagnosing problems is viewed differently. The role of the therapist is seen as creating a context in which change can occur rather than as assessing and “fixing” pathological or dysfunctional structures (Reed, 1993).

4.3.3.3 Deconstruction

Particular attention is given to the narratives about therapy, which inform therapeutic practice. White (2000) argues that the discourses that therapists (or trainers) choose will be influenced by their training experience, as well as by their life experience, gender, age, race and cultural background. In a sense the therapist also assists the client in deconstructing the dominant narratives in his/her life.

4.3.3.4 Perspectival reality

As an alternative to the modernist explanation of human life as stable and generalizable, Anderson (1995) offers that human beings are constantly shifting and adapting to various contexts, which in turn shift all the time. This allows for a person to be understood contextually at a given point in time (Anderson, 1995). According to Anderson (1995), such understanding of human beings is compatible with the concept of multiple realities. This means that the same person can be understood in many ways and it is not only the person who shifts (talks and acts differently) with shifting circumstances in different periods, but also the others who try to understand.

4.3.3.5 Dichotomy of the universal and the individual, between society and the unique person

An alternative assumption to the modernist idea that a person is governed from an inner core is the post-modern thinking that a person is not in the centre, but that the centre of the person is outside him/herself, in the collectivity with others (Anderson, 1995). Language is a significant aspect of the collectivity. This alternative assumption recognises the importance of the reflecting team's conversation in shaping the person's self.

The post-modern and social constructionist influences on narrative therapy make it worthwhile to explore its potential as a management development intervention from the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms. It is now necessary to explore some of the key concepts of narrative therapy in order to identify its usefulness in management development.

4.4 KEY CONCEPTS IN NARRATIVE THERAPY

Certain key concepts are inherent in narrative therapy and act as guidelines for practice. These concepts will be described in this section.

4.4.1 Problem-saturated stories

Clients in therapy are usually focused on the problem and its surrounding narrative and when they place a greater emphasis on what is going wrong, their stories become saturated by the problem. A problem-saturated story in turn exerts a powerful influence on perceptions. It results in selective attention and memory, leading clients to lose track of information that does not fit the dominant story, while noticing information that confirms and reinforces it (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997a).

Thin descriptions and thin conclusions are usually drawn from problem-saturated stories, which in turn often reflect oppressive cultural practices (White & Epston, 1990). A thin description is described as a story that allows little space for the complexities and contradictions of life. Consequently, it allows little space for people to articulate their own particular meaning of their actions and the context within which they occurred. A thin conclusion usually involves negative conclusions about people's identities (Morgan, 2000).

Rather than treating these problem-saturated stories as symptoms of underlying dysfunction, narrative therapy focuses on the life experiences that people would prefer to have. The problem-saturated story is viewed as a barrier to experiencing these preferred realities and its effects are examined (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997a). In this way the client's power and influence over the problem can be restored and energy can be provided for the development of preferred experiences. This is mainly achieved through externalisation.

4.4.2 Externalisation

Another important aspect of narrative therapy is that the therapists are interested in calling the problems the problem, rather than locating the problem inside a person. When the distinction of the problem can be clearly separated from the distinction of the person, it becomes possible to examine the dynamics and direction of the interaction between the person and problems (Rich, 2001). This process is called externalisation (Morgan, 2000).

According to Nichols and Schwartz (1995), White externalises the problem by speaking of it as if it were a separate entity, existing outside any family member – an entity with a will of its own, which dominates the person or family. “This externalisation helps family members see that it isn’t the person or the family relationships that are the problem. Rather, it’s the problem, or the person’s relationship with it, that’s the problem” (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995, p. 464).

The focus in externalisation is on expanding choice and possibility in the relationship between persons and problems (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997b). “In contrast to the common cultural and professional practice of identifying the person as the problem or the problem as within the person, this work depicts the problem as external to the person. It does so not in the conviction that the problem is objectively separate, but as a linguistic counter-practice that makes more freeing constructions available” (Roth & Epston, 1996, p.5). Externalisation thus acts as a catalyst for the generation of alternative (hopefully more functional) stories.

4.4.3 Unique outcomes

White and Epston (1990) call the times that an individual has some sort of control over the problem unique outcomes. Unique outcomes seem to contradict or stand outside of an individual’s problem-saturated stories and seem to stand against the problem’s influence (Morgan, 2000). Unique outcomes are instances/events that would seem improbable in the light of the problem. These resources or events are currently not given much weight or attention and are not taken seriously enough. They are also not storied in a way that allows them to come to speak for a person’s

identity and they remain isolated pockets in the client's consciousness (Winslade & Smith, 1997). They may involve a plan, action, feeling, statement, quality, desire, dream, thought, belief, ability or commitment. By identifying these unique outcomes an individual might start developing a rich description of an alternative story (Morgan, 2000).

Winslade and Smith (1997) view the exploration of unique outcomes as essential in the reclaiming of competence. This supports the view of human beings as having agency and the ability to construct preferred realities. The role of the therapist in the construction of preferred realities will now be discussed.

4.5 THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST/FACILITATOR

The term narrative therapist or therapist will be used during this chapter as it deals with narrative therapy per se. Where it is applied within the management development context, the term facilitator will be used, as the role is more to facilitate the group members in their search for their own personal insights (developmental change) rather than to bring about therapeutic change (Reber, 1995).

An important aspect of narrative therapy is that the therapist is not acting as an all-knowing expert, but as a co-constructor of the client's story. The narrative therapist does not tell the client how to solve his/her problem, but facilitates him/her in discovering his/her own solutions. Wetchler (1999, p.19) describes the reason for this as follows:

Placing therapist beliefs above client beliefs presents another dominant story that may prevent more effective solutions from evolving. After all, since clients have a greater knowledge about their lives than their therapists do, they are more likely to develop solutions that are more relevant to their unique experience. Through utilising their own solutions, clients not only resolve their problems, but also change their view of self from 'person-with-a-problem' to 'problem solver'.

This approach corresponds with the "not-knowing approach" to therapy as described by Anderson and Goolishian (1988). They describe the idea of a dialogical

therapeutic conversation in which the therapist assumes a position of not knowing and the client is viewed as the expert of his/her own life situations. This does not, however, imply that the therapist takes an "I don't know anything" position. The therapist knows the process of therapy, but does not claim to know the content and meaning of people's lives (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The role of the therapist is further not to co-construct stories that represent or describe experiences, but to co-construct stories through which the individual can live in preferred ways (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The story becomes transformative only in its performance (Bruner, 1986).

The notion that an individual can define his/her life in many ways is central to this model of therapy (Vassallo, 1998) and has specific implications for the role of the therapist. The therapist's role is not to define a unitary form, but to validate a diversity of views, taking into account the person in his/her social situation (Vassallo, 1998).

It is further the role of the therapist to ensure a collaborative relationship with the client where the client plays a significant part in mapping the direction of the therapeutic journey. The therapist strives to understand what is of interest to the client and whether the process suits his/her preferences by, for example, asking, "How is this conversation going for you?" (Morgan, 2000).

The role of the therapist is then more one of a collaborator with a specific curiosity and questioning technique to facilitate the development of alternative, more useful stories. In the next section the process through which an individual develops alternative stories will be explored.

4.6 THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

Therapy is viewed as a process in which people experience choice rather than settled certainties (Bruner, 1986). The Dulwich Centre (2001) views narrative therapy as an attitude towards therapy rather than the use of interventions. It is a kind of conversational questioning that leaves latitude for a client to tell his/her

stories, unchallenged by the therapist's preconceived notions. This does not, however, mean that narrative therapy entails a free flowing, non-directive conversation with a client, in the hope that a new and better story will emerge. Usually the therapist has a specific type of story that he/she wants the person to adopt. This story highlights the person's past, present and future agency over the course of his/her life and problems (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995).

Freedman and Combs (1996) include listening as an important component of the process of narrative therapy. This listening differs from listening in other therapies in the sense that its purpose is to understand the meaning of the individual's stories for him/her. "This means turning our backs on 'expert' filters: not listening for chief complaints; not gathering the pertinent-to-us-as-experts bits of diagnostic information interspersed in their stories; not hearing their anecdotes as matrices within which resources are embedded; not listening for surface hints about what the core problem 'really' is; and not comparing the selves they portray in their stories to normative standards" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 44). This results in the therapist's introduction to the specific realities that shape, and are shaped by, the personal narrative of the client by connecting with the individual's experience from his/her perspective.

There is diversity of thought and practice in narrative therapy (Dulwich Centre, 2001) and it is therefore not possible to generalise and state that the same process is followed in all narrative practices. The process described here corresponds with the basic process as introduced by White and Epston (1990) and variations will occur in different practices.

4.6.1 Externalising conversations

According to Morgan (2000), one of the first things that a narrative therapist tries to do is to separate the person's identity from the problem for which they are seeking assistance. As long as clients view themselves as "being" the problem, it is difficult for them to solve this problem (Wetchler, 1999).

Stacey (1997) divides externalisations in two basic categories, namely outer and inner externalisation, and argues that they can be used together. Outer externalisations are used when the problem is viewed as negative and as something that can be eliminated or defeated, while inner externalisations are tailored to work with problems that cannot easily be divorced from the person, for example chronic illness or learning disabilities (Stacey, 1997).

There are a variety of aspects within a conversation that can be externalised, such as feelings, problems between people, cultural and social practices and other metaphors. It is also important that the language chosen to externalise the conversation does not inadvertently reinforce dominant ideas that may be supporting the problem. Care should be taken to ensure that the externalisation opens up enough space for alternative considerations (Morgan, 2000).

The problem is sometimes also personified by giving it a name or identity. It is left to the client to name the problem and the therapist will only make very tentative suggestions if necessary (Morgan, 2000).

There are several reasons why externalisation is usually the first step in narrative therapy. One reason is that naming, as a labelling process, pathologizes the pathologizing pattern itself rather than the persons enacting it (Drewery & Winslade, 1997). Other reasons include the establishment of a context in which the person experiences himself/herself as separate from the problem and that problems appear less fixed and less restricting when spoken of in externalising ways. Externalising conversations open up space for alternative stories and can also decrease the degree of unproductive conflict between people (Morgan, 2000). Once this has been done the problem can be explored in more detail.

4.6.2 Exploration and personification of the problem

Once externalisation has taken place and the problem has been shifted from inside to outside the client, a thorough investigation of the problem is possible. Morgan (2000) suggests that a detailed examination of the problem's tricks and methods of operation results in the problem gradually developing its own persona. The problem

is identified as having its own way of living and its own motives, distinct from those of the client. This enables further externalisation and revision of the relationship between the client and the (named) problem. This phase can take place at any stage during the therapeutic process and is not limited to a specific phase during the discussion.

4.6.3 Revising relationships with problems

During this phase the client is assisted in describing the relationship between him/her and the problem. Once it has been described, the client is assisted in describing a relationship that will better suit him/her (Morgan, 2000). This is an important step in the process of re-authoring stories and bringing about possible change.

4.6.4 Tracing the history of the problem

Once a problem is named and separated from the person, the therapist explores the history of the problem. This is useful in the sense that it begins to open space for the consideration of other stories about the problem. Tracing the history of the problem can have the following benefits (Morgan, 2000):

- when a problem is placed in context over time, it is seen as changing and less static or fixed and moments of greater and lesser influence can be identified.
- tracing the history gives the therapist a sense of some of the meanings (thin conclusions) that the person may have reached during the problem's existence.
- placing it in context over time allows the therapist to discover how the person has been influential over the problem at particular times.
- some of the problem's tactics and methods of operation can be identified.

Once the history has been tracked, the effects of the problem should be fully explored.

4.6.5 Exploring the effects of the problem

By mapping the influence of the problem on the client's life and relationships, the therapist can form a clearer picture of the extent to which the client's experience has been affected by the problem and the preferred realities marginalised by it (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1996). This takes place relatively early on in therapeutic conversations and provides an understanding of the impact of the dominant story on the individual's life. It also emphasises the therapist's listening and understanding role. This step can also assist in the identification of unique outcomes and allows for an alternative story to emerge (Morgan, 2000).

Once the effects of the problem have been fully explored, the therapist asks the client to evaluate them to understand how each effect does or does not suit him/her. The person is also asked to justify his/her evaluation, leading to a sense of the person's reference for living. This in turn could lead to the creation of alternative stories (Morgan, 2000).

4.6.6 Situating the problem in context

According to Kelly (1999), the narrative therapist is actively involved from the outset in delving into the meanings of the client's life. This deconstruction involves taking apart the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives and that are serving to assist the problem and problem story (Morgan, 2000).

Freedman and Combs (1996) are of the opinion that deconstruction within the therapeutic process often unmask dominant stories that are politically oppressive. They believe that many power imbalances in relationships are coached and supported by power imbalances in the larger culture and these in turn are supported by the dominant stories about class, sexual orientation, race, gender, and so on.

Deconstruction allows for an array of outcomes within the therapeutic process such as:

- the person is assisted to further separate from the problem;

- the person unpacks dominant stories and views them from a different perspective;
- deconstruction assists in the identification of unique outcomes.

These results are then explored further to aid in the development of alternative stories.

4.6.7 Discovering unique outcomes

The client is helped by the therapist to note his/her (the client's) expert knowledge by recognising times when the problem did not interfere with his/her life. The therapist helps the client to look for small exceptions (the times when the problem has less, little or no influence over the person's life) to his/her negative experience (Hanna & Brown, 1999). These exceptions or unique outcomes provide the raw material or openings for new and different stories to be discovered. Morgan (2000) states that unique outcomes may be discovered during therapeutic conversations as well as between, before and after these conversations. These unique outcomes must then be explored further to facilitate the development of an alternative story.

4.6.8 Tracing the history and meaning of the unique outcome and naming an alternative story

"The therapist attempts to trace the history of the unique outcomes, firmly ground them, make them more visible, and link them in some way with an emerging new story. As more and more unique outcomes are traced, grounded, linked and given meaning, a new plot emerges and an alternative story becomes more richly described" (Morgan, 2000, p. 59). Nooney (2001) is of the opinion that in order for the plot of an alternative story to become prominent, examples that are consistent with the theme or themes must be remembered from the past and sought after in the future. And so there is an exploration of and an emphasis on unique outcomes.

This co-authoring of a new, anti-problem story brings forth the client's competencies and commitments and will presumably influence future actions (Morgan, 2000).

Once this alternative story has been identified and named, it must be developed further.

4.6.9 Story Development

The main purpose of narrative therapy is to find ways in which people can be invited to take the unique outcomes and transform them into preferred, satisfying stories that they can live (Freedman & Combs, 1996). An important factor in new stories making a difference in people's lives is that in telling them to other people, a "performance of meaning" (Bruner, 1986) occurs. According to Freedman and Combs (1996), the therapeutical conversation is made a ritual space in which the performance of meaning can occur through maintaining the kind of focused attention and mutual respect that will make it easy and natural for people to become experientially involved in the stories they are telling.

Freedman and Combs (1996) state that people can be invited to develop an alternative story by using the following methods:

- encouraging the development of a rich, detailed and meaningful counter-story that will get people more experientially involved. People will include more detail in their stories if the therapist inquires about multiple modalities of experience such as thinking, feeling and doing.
- bringing in different points of view, by looking through the eyes of another person, through one's own eyes at a different age, from a different time perspective or from a reflecting position.
- paying attention to the scene or setting of a story. An exploration of the various contexts of a person's life grounds stories in actual places and draws people into the performance of stories.
- exploring hypothetical or speculative experiences that can become the basis for actual present and future events.
- using metaphors.

Once an alternative story has been identified, the therapist tries to link that event to other preferred events across time, so that their meanings survive, and so that the

events and their meanings can thicken a person's narrative in preferred ways (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

It should be noted that the preferred story reflects the client's preference and not what the therapist assumes to be his/her preference (Morgan, 2000). For this reason, Freedman and Combs (1996) and Morgan (2000) also include preference questions during the development of an alternative story. The aim of these questions is to facilitate the clients in committing themselves to a direction in life by choosing a preference out loud and evaluating their responses (Roth & Epston, 1995). Once the client has stated his/her preference, Freedman and Combs (1996) follow it up with questions as to why he/she stated a preference. This allows the clients to justify their choices and describe their motivation and in doing so to clarify and elaborate on their preferred directions in life, identities and values.

From the above it seems that the therapeutic process does not happen in a linear fashion. The elements mentioned happen throughout the process, although one would assume that once an alternative story has been identified and agreed upon, the process will focus more on its further development. To facilitate this process, the narrative therapist utilises a few basic techniques that will be explained further in the next section.

4.7 BASIC TECHNIQUES IN NARRATIVE THERAPY

The narrative therapist utilises the following techniques in an integrated, non-mechanistic manner during the therapeutic process.

4.7.1 Deconstructive Listening

Listening is of particular importance in assisting the therapist to achieve the "not-knowing" position in therapy (as mentioned earlier). Listening assists in the movement toward what is not yet known (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988) and implies not asking questions from a position of pre-understanding and not listening for particular answers. Anderson (1997) describes this position as follows:

Not-knowing refers to a therapist's position – an attitude and belief – that a therapist does not have access to privileged information, can never fully understand another person, always needs to be in a state of being informed by the other, and always needs to learn more about what has been said or may not have been said. In *not-knowing* a therapist adopts an interpretive stance that relies on the continuing analysis of experience as it occurs in context and as it is related and narrated by a client.

According to Freedman and Combs (1996), the not-knowing position fosters an attitude of curiosity as the therapist is curious about people's unique answers and therefore encourages them to develop them more fully. They further state that just listening and asking facilitating and clarifying questions from a position of curiosity can be very therapeutic. It can assist in expanding and saying the "unsaid". Through this dialogue new themes and narratives are also developed (Anderson, 1997).

From a post-modern perspective the "unsaid" is not something that already exists, lying in the unconscious or in the cybernetic structures of interaction, waiting to be noticed and described. Rather, it is something that emerges and takes shape as people converse with each other (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Because the therapist is seen as a co-author of the individual's story, it matters what the therapist attends to as he/she listens. The therapist's own frame of reference might cause him/her to pay selective attention to the person's particular story. For example, if the therapist has a special interest in disempowerment as an issue, he/she might invite people to tell stories of how they have been deprived of power. This might cause the very things that people try to escape through therapy to become more real, vivid and oppressive (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

In order for the therapist to escape this trap, it is necessary to employ deconstructive listening. This involves listening for hidden meanings, spaces or gaps and evidence of conflicting stories (Drewery & Winslade, 1997). Deconstructive listening is guided by the belief that the client's story has many possible meanings and that the meaning the listener makes is often different from the meaning the speaker has intended. Freedman and Combs (1996) explain that therapists seek to capitalise on this by looking for gaps in their understanding and asking people to fill in details, or

by listening for ambiguities in meaning and then asking people how they are resolving or dealing with these ambiguities. The therapist also checks his/her perception with the client's intended meaning. Through this process new meanings and constructions emerge.

In the process of deconstructive listening the therapist listens with a deliberation about the new constructions that are emerging. Their usefulness and desirability are considered and pursued or left alone, depending on the client's preference (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

4.7.2 Deconstructive Questioning

Narrative therapy relies heavily on the use of questions as interventions (Hanna & Brown, 1999). The purpose of deconstructive listening as the first component in narrative therapy is to listen to people's narratives and to understand them, not to change them in major ways. The listening opens space for stories to shift as they are being told. If a major shift is necessary, the therapist will start to play a more active role in shifting the story. This is done through 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, p. 57).

Deconstructive questioning forms the essence of narrative therapy. Nichols and Schwartz (1995) describe the questions as rhetorical, designed to help people realise that:

- they are separate from their problems;
- they have power over their problems; and
- they are not who they thought they were.

This ultimately leads people to certain stories, liberating them from their previous stories and helping them to recognise a far greater range of alternatives (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). In narrative therapy, questions are used to generate experience, rather than to gather information (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Although not all

questions that are asked in narrative therapy will necessarily have a deconstructive purpose, it is difficult to separate those with a deconstructive aim from those without. For this reason the major categories of questions that are used in narrative therapy will be discussed as part of this section.

The major categories of questions can be classified as follows:

4.7.2.1 Externalising questions and relative influence questioning

Morgan (2000) is of the opinion that externalisation is the foundation from which many narrative conversations are built. She further states that it is an attitude and orientation in conversations and not simply a technique or skill. It usually involves a specific way of asking certain questions in order to name the problematic story (also called the "plot") and its associated narrative, to separate it from the client's identity (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Freedman and Combs (1996) further suggest that it sometimes works better to have two different names for the problem and the plot. For example, the problem might be called "uncertainty" and the plot named "getting immobilised by uncertainty". An example of a question to name the problem could be "I'm just wondering if there is a name you would give to this problem?" or "I was wondering about what you would call this problem, something like, the Depression or the Worry or the Guilt or Self-doubt? These were some of the things I was thinking whilst you were speaking. What do you think?" (Morgan, 2000, p. 20).

Once the problem is externalised, the therapist can ask questions regarding the client's relationship with it. White and Epston (1990) call these types of questions "relative influence questioning". This type of questioning comprises two sets of questions. The first set of questions helps the clients to map the influence of the problem insofar as it has taken control of their lives. According to Wetchler (1999), this shifts the problem from the self to an outside object. He further explains that it is only after clients are able to view the problem as an outside force that they can take a stand against it. An example of this type of question is: "How did this time waster influence your job as a manager?"

The second set of questions encourages people to map their own influence in the life of the problem. These questions are useful in challenging the notions of subjugation to the problem and contribute to reauthoring (Vassallo, 1998). "How would you measure the influence you had over this problem?" is an example of this type of question.

4.7.2.2 *Mapping the influence questions*

These questions explore the influence of the problem in the clients' lives and relationships in greater detail than the relative influence questions. They assist the client in identifying the problem's sphere of influence in the behavioural, emotional, physical, interactional and attitudinal domains (White & Epston, 1990). These questions open up a very broad field for the later search for unique outcomes and the possibilities of affirmative action because they identify the effect of the problem across various interfaces.

This usually entails a series of questions. For example, Freedman and Combs (1996) include the following questions which might help the client to map the influence of problematic beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes:

- the history of a person's relationship with the belief, practice, feeling or attitude, for example, "How were you recruited into this way of thinking?"
- contextual influences on the belief, practice, feeling or attitude, for example, "Who benefits from this way of doing things?"
- the effects or results of the belief, practice, feeling or attitude, for example, "How has pessimism influenced your relationship with yourself?"
- the interrelationship with other beliefs, practices, feelings or attitudes, for example, "What ideas, habits, and feelings feed the problem?"
- the tactics or strategies of the belief, practice, feeling or attitude, for example, "How does anger worm its way between the two of you?"

Another aspect of these questions is that once the problem's influence has been mapped, clients can be invited to map their influence and the influence of their relationships in the life of the problem. This is on a deeper level than the relative influence questioning because it covers many interfaces (Vassallo, 1998).

4.7.2.3 *Landscape of action/identity and unique outcome questions*

These questions are the prologue to the new narrative and provide the start of the reauthored story (Vassallo, 1998). These questions are aimed at constructing an “agentive self” in people, by enhancing those aspects of the emerging story that support personal agency (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Landscape of action questions assist clients in identifying unique outcomes, or occasions when they have control of their problem. White and Epston (1990) call these situations “sparkling events” that contradict a problem saturated narrative. As clients become aware of the situations where they successfully block their problems, they are encouraged to intensify those behaviours (Wetchler, 1999). Landscape of identity questions explore what the unique outcome means in terms of the client’s desires, intentions, preferences, beliefs, hopes, personal qualities, values, strengths, commitments, plans, characteristics, abilities and purposes (Morgan, 2000).

This type of question often leads to the client’s first awareness of his/her ability to control the problem and to change to a problem-solving focus. An example of such a question is: “Can you recall an occasion when you could have given in to the problem but didn’t?” Freedman and Combs (1996) also include “how” questions to invite stories of personal agency, for example, “How did you do that?” or “How did you notice this different way of perceiving the situation?”

According to Vassallo (1998), another role of this type of question is to focus the person on activity. Clients also have to start realising that part of therapy is “doing” and that they do not necessarily play a passive role (Vassallo, 1998). An example of a question that stimulates this focus is “What actions on your part made a difference?”

Roth and Epston (1995) identify some supporting questions in this category. They are:

- unique account questions. These questions invite the client to make sense of exceptions that may have not even registered as significant, and to hold them as part of an emerging coherent narrative, for example, “How were you able to defy the strict rules of bureaucracy?”

- unique redescription questions. They invite the client to develop meaning from the unique accounts he/she has identified as he/she re-describes him/herself, others and their relationships, for example, “What does this tell you about yourself that you otherwise would not have known?”
- unique possibility questions. These are described as next step questions and invite the client to speculate on the personal and relational futures that derive from their unique accounts and unique re-descriptions.
- unique circulation questions. These questions include others in the newly developing story to anchor it and to ensure further development of the alternative story, for example, “Is there any one you would like to tell about your new way of asking your direct reports what you want?”

4.7.2.4 *Landscape of consciousness questions*

These questions are asked once clients have successfully identified and implemented their solutions. Clients are asked to focus on their own positive aspects within the problem-solving process to help them to become aware of their competence as problem solvers (Wetchler, 1999). These questions represent the learning or self-reflexive component of therapy which encourage individuals to grow (Vassallo, 1998). These questions assist individuals in creating meaning of their experience by reflecting on the implications of experiences storied in the landscape of action (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Examples of these questions are: “How did you know that this was the right way for you to solve the problem?” or “What does the fact that you could solve the problem say about you as a person?” and “What does it mean to you that you have achieved so much despite all the difficulties?”

4.7.2.5 *Witnessing or audience questions*

This type of question addresses the person’s social context and encourages a focus on feedback (Vassallo, 1998). It entails the statements or feedback from those in close contact who help to cement the person’s new view of self and assist in changing the view of family and friends toward the client.

Examples are: "What did others notice about you?" or "How does your family view you now?" The therapist can also share his/her observations of the person's efficacy as a way of bearing witness to the change. All of this helps to bring the process of change and personal efficacy into greater consciousness (Wetchler, 1999).

4.7.2.6 *Future-Oriented questions*

The purpose of these questions is to cement a new personal narrative. Clients are asked to hypothesise, based on their new sense of self, how they might solve potential problems in future. These questions enhance the client's sense of personal efficacy by providing evidence that there will be problems in the future, irrespective of his/her competence. Clients can also deepen their change by projecting their sense of self into the future (Wetchler, 1999).

An example of a future-oriented question is: "How would you treat a difficult employee next time?"

4.7.2.7 *Preference questions*

These are asked throughout the discussion to allow the client to evaluate his/her responses. This guides the therapist with regard to further questions and also prevents the therapist from imposing his/her solutions (Roth & Epston, 1995). An example of this type of question is: "Is participative leadership your preference? Do you see it as a good or a bad thing for you?"

4.7.2.8 *Other questions*

From the description of the therapeutic process it is clear that the type of questions used during a session cannot all be clearly categorised and will be unique, depending on the context. Some questions that could also be used include the following (Vassallo, 1998):

- unravelling/exploratory questions. These questions provide a starting point for the problem-saturated account of the person's life. An example of such a

question is: "What restrictions did the lack of assertiveness place on your management style?"

- readiness questions. These questions assist in showing the person that change requires preparation and that he/she is an active participant in the process. An example of a readiness question is: "How did you prepare for dealing with the conflict with your manager?"
- experience of experience questions. These help the client to review his/her life audiences. The client then chooses someone who has the potential to promote the reauthored account of his/her life, for example, "Who could have predicted that you would handle the negotiation in this way?" These questions also provide a history to the alternative story and increase the likelihood that it will be carried into the future (Roth & Epston, 1995).

Deconstructive listening and deconstructive questioning leads the client to certain stories, with the belief that "rather than being constrained, they will be liberated from their previous stories and recognize a far greater range of alternatives" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995, p. 465). The use of these techniques establishes the role of the therapist as a collaborator in the plotting of an alternative story.

The therapeutic process and the techniques are applied in many different contexts and in many variations. The use of narrative technique in a specific application called the reflecting team and its possibilities for transformation learning within the context of management development will be investigated in the next section.

4.8 THE REFLECTING TEAM AS A NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

According to Morgan (2000), therapists sometimes create processes in which the audience acts as witnesses, in very particular ways, to the conversations between the therapist and the client. The audience to the conversation between the therapist and the client(s) is often called the outsider-witness group or the reflecting team when this group is made up of professional colleagues (Morgan, 2000). The reflecting team process is also called a definitional ceremony by some practitioners (White, 2000). In this study the word "reflecting team" will be used.

A further exploration of the reflecting team as narrative practice is necessary because of this study's focus on Transformative Learning Theory and management development. This need is supported by Boje's (1999b) observation that narrative therapy is increasingly being applied to organisational studies.

The reflecting team as narrative technique will be examined in more detail in the next section. There are many variations on the application of the reflecting team and this study will focus on the more structured application as originated by Anderson (1999).

4.8.1 Nature and format of the reflecting team process

The reflecting team process was introduced by Tom Anderson in 1985 and has since undergone many developments (Anderson, 1999). Initially Anderson and his colleagues used the process when working with families in which an impasse had been reached. Turner (1997, p. 17) describes the initial use by Anderson as follows:

A reflective team comprised a team of counselling professionals who observed a family therapy session behind a one-way screen. At a time of impasse in the session, the family and the therapist would watch as the team assumed the roles of the family members and acted out the conflicts that the team perceived to be the cause of the impasse. The emphasis was on creating a variety of ways of viewing the problem, thus shifting away from identifying any one position as right or wrong. The therapy session would then continue. Both the therapist and family benefited from the intervention, being able to move on in a fresh way.

Anderson (1995) describes this process as comprising shifts between listening and talking. He further describes talking to others as "outer talk". While listening to others talking, people talk to themselves in "inner talk". By passing a particular issue from "inner talk" to "outer talk" the issue is passed through the perspectives of various inner and outer talks, thus creating multiple perspectives.

Anderson (1995) is of the opinion that once the idea is grasped that the shifting between inner and outer talks is an important element of the reflecting team

process, these processes might be set up in many different ways in many different contexts. He cites the following examples:

- there could be a team in the next room behind a one-way screen, or only one room might be used with the team listening and talking from one corner.
- a therapist without a team could have one colleague present to talk to during “reflecting” intervals.
- if the therapist is alone without a team, he/she could speak with one member of the family (person X) while the other members of the family listen. Then the therapist talks with the others while person X listens., The therapist later turns to person X for comments and eventually further talk.
- if the therapist is alone with a client, they might talk about an issue from the perspective of one that is not present.
- if a workshop or conference consultation takes place in a large room with an audience listening , the whole audience might serve as a reflecting team.

Besides the family therapy context, Anderson (1995) lists the following examples:

- training of psychologists and social workers;
- staff meetings;
- management decisions;
- qualitative research.

In this study the reflecting team process will be used in the context of management development.

As described earlier, the reflecting team process can take many forms, depending on the goals and the context. In this particular study the focus will be on the way in which White (2000) has developed his own style of reflecting, as his adaptation of the narrative approach is used as the basis for the study.

White (2000) proposes three parts to a session: the tellings, retellings and retellings of retellings or, in other words, the therapist’s interview of the clients, the reflections, and the client’s responses to the reflections. A debriefing and deconstruction of the

therapy itself may be added. This is, however, only a guideline and might be adapted as the situation prescribes.

Although Anderson (1995) is hesitant to prescribe a particular format for the reflecting process, Lax (1995) is of the opinion that some guidelines are necessary. This opinion stems from his experience that reflections were not always useful.

He found that clients felt that reflections were too confusing, did not address their issues precisely, did not give them enough direction, were too long, or left them feeling misunderstood by the reflecting therapists. Reflections sometimes had a watered-down feel or pretence aspect with reflectors repeatedly using certain words like "struck" and then following this with an overly positive remark. In addition, therapists found that these comments were frequently not as rich as the later conversations they had among themselves (Lax, 1995, pp. 145-146).

It is therefore important in this study to ensure that uniform guidelines for the implementation of the reflecting team in a management development context are followed.

4.8.2 Goals of and rationale behind the reflecting team process

The main aim of the reflecting team process is to create multiple perspectives of a specific issue. To this end the diversity of opinions among team members is considered a strength of reflecting teams as it allows for multiple aspects of the problem to be identified, supported and questioned (Smith, Winton & Yoshioka, 1992).

The discussion of the client's dilemma by team members may also result in the development of new, previously unnoticed ideas, thus increasing the number of alternatives made available to the client (Smith, Winton & Yoshioka, 1992). Clients are enabled to move away from a dualistic perspective to a view that supports multiple approaches (Anderson, 1987).

The context created in the reflecting team may stimulate the creation of multiple viewpoints as a result of the following (Smith, Winton & Yoshioka, 1992):

- when clients are given an opportunity to hear team members endorse and criticise different aspects of their situation, they are less likely to feel victimised and may be open to more alternatives.
- the fact that team members are encouraged to use positive connotations avoids placing clients in defensive positions.
- sensitive topics that might have been avoided by the therapist for fear of jeopardising the relationship with the client can be introduced and/or discussed by the reflecting team. There is also no pressure on the client to accept any or all of the introduced perspectives.

In addition to this, Friedman, Brecher, and Mittelmeier (1995) mention more reasons for the reflecting team being able to change the way the group thinks about something:

- by generating metaphors and images that activate, intrigue and alter the other person's understanding of the problem;
- by noticing and commenting on exceptions to the other group's problem focused view of self and others;
- by authenticating change through comments that embody and embed the changes in observed behaviour;
- by generating alternative stories (different from the other group's problem saturated view) that open space for fresh perspectives;
- by identifying and commenting on aspects of self that are hidden, ignored or unnoticed.

Dominant stories often prevent clients in therapy or employees in organisations from generating alternative perspectives on a problem. In a sense the reflecting team assists with the deconstruction of the dominant story. For example, characterisations in dominant stories such as the role of women in the workplace and the rights of managers over workers do not always tell the complete story and may distort the individual's sense of self in debilitating ways (Boje, 1999b). Narrative therapy and its application in the reflecting team allows employees to address questions such as

“What has been silent in the organisation’s account of the role of the middle manager?” and “Could an alternative characterisation of the middle manager’s role be told?”

The reflecting team assists the participants in dialoging the organisation in new ways, consequently transforming the organisation and its environment. The reflecting team might therefore be a useful application of narrative therapy to facilitate management transformation in a post-modern framework.

4.8.3 The relationship between therapist and client

The chief advantage of the use of a reflecting team is that the language of the client is used and not “expert” language. Another aspect is that using the reflecting team process changes the traditional position of the therapist as “expert”, and the resulting oppressive effect on the client (Friedman, Brecher & Mittelmeier, 1995).

As a post-modern and collaborative approach, the reflecting team process emphasises a more egalitarian, heterarchical and transparent relationship between therapist and client. Heterarchy describes a relationship pattern in which the positions of the different participants in a session shift over time, in relation to particular activities or topics of discussion, without any one person permanently occupying the uppermost position (Reed, 1993). Hierarchy governs from the top and down, and heterarchy governs through the other (Anderson, 1995). In a heterarchical relationship all contributors are thus equally important. The method of reflection in a reflecting team supports the notion of an equal relationship and creates opportunities to co-create therapy, providing the client with a wider range of alternatives.

White (2000) achieves transparency in the reflecting team process by following an approach in which stories are shared between the reflecting team, the client(s) and the therapist. The team members are also encouraged to situate their comments and their curiosity about particular issues that are discussed in the context of their own experiences or intentions (Reed, 1993).

It is also a common fact that many reflecting teams consist of peers rather than psychology professionals (Behan, 1999). In the management development context the reflecting team would probably consist of peers which would create an even more unthreatening relationship within the learning context.

4.8.4 Applying the reflective team as a narrative technique in management development

In Chapter 3 the guidelines for management development from a post-modern and social constructionist perspective were identified as:

- reflexivity;
- decentering;
- deconstruction;
- nontotalising, nonuniversalising, nonessentialising.

The extent to which the reflecting team process adheres to these guidelines will now be discussed.

4.8.4.1 Reflexivity

According to Rosile and Boje (1996), post-modern management development involves ample opportunity for delegates to reflect on all aspects of the teaching situation, especially the assumptions underlying certain content. Brookfield (2000) is of the opinion that transformative learning cannot happen without critical reflection being involved at every stage. A management development intervention with the goal of facilitating a change in the delegates' frames of reference would thus have to offer ample opportunity for reflection. The reflecting team offers many opportunities for reflection – firstly during the discussions where the clients are exposed to each other's multiple views. The second opportunity is presented by listening to the reflecting team's conversation that might yield new perspectives. Lastly, during the response to the reflecting team the clients' own frames of reference are reflected back to the team.

The reflecting team seems to offer an opportunity to managers to reflect on their experiences of certain challenging situations in their organisations. It allows them to develop alternative stories to the problematic story that may be preventing them from managing in a preferred way. The macro, meso, and micro contexts define the preferred way. The macro context describes wider society, the meso context represents the specific organisation and the micro context represents the individual's immediate environment.

The reflecting team can facilitate a reflexive position by creating space for the learners in a management development intervention to consider, think over, explore and examine their own thinking (Janowsky, Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1995).

4.8.4.2 Decentring

A post-modern approach to management development would involve the building of a community of learners, eroding the hierarchical relationship between learner and instructor (Rosile & Boje, 1996). Cohen and Piper (2000) describe how transformation was effectively facilitated in a residential adult learning community and Daloz (2000) describes the importance of a mentoring community in perspective transformation. The mentoring community represents relationships with people who value diversity and transformative discourse.

According to Friedman, Brecher and Mittelmeier (1995), the reflecting team offers both clients and therapists an opportunity to connect and collaborate in ways that remove hierarchical barriers. The reflecting team therefore addresses the need for decentering in post-modern management development by creating a network of learners where the learners enter into a relationship with each other and give importance to everybody's comments.

4.8.4.3 Deconstruction

The next aspect of post-modern management development is the allowance for and the facilitation of the deconstruction of dominant cultural knowledge or discourses in management. This is a process of clarifying the underpinning belief systems,

practices of social control and assumptions in relation to gender, power, class and race as applied to management discourses (Kazan, Anderson, Law & Swan, 1993). It enables the participants to examine their own beliefs about the world and, in particular, their beliefs about management and the impact of those beliefs on the people they work with. These ideas are then judged in terms of their usefulness in dealing with the managerial challenges. The ultimate aim of the intervention is then to facilitate the transformation of initial perspectives, making the participants aware of alternative realities.

Mezirow's (2000) conception of critical reflection as objective reframing and subjective reframing corresponds with the concept of deconstruction. Objective reframing focuses on critical analysis by learners of the concepts, beliefs, feelings, or actions communicated to them, or their examination of the assumptions underlying the framing of problems (Brookfield, 2000). Subjective reframing involves critical self-reflection of the learner's own assumptions with regard to various issues, for example systems, feelings and interpersonal relations (Mezirow, 2000). This reframing is a critical part of phase three of a perspective transformation, namely the critical assessment of assumptions. Belenky and Stanton (2000, p. 71) describe this aspect as follows:

Mezirow provides us with a means of coping. We must, he says, develop the capacity to reflect critically on the lenses we use to filter, engage, and interpret the world. When our old ways of meaning-making no longer suffice, it forces us to engage with others in reflective discourse, assessing the assumptions and premises that guide our ways of constructing knowledge and revising those deemed inadequate.

Anderson (1995) mentions that being part of many reflecting processes has definitely contributed to his revisiting of certain of his own basic assumptions. The reflecting team assists in the deconstruction of the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which the client lives and that serve to sustain the problem and the problem story. Lax (1995) views the reflecting team as an opportunity for others to support clients' resistance to the dominant narratives of the culture under whose

influence they have fallen and to provide some external recognition of their development of alternative narratives in their lives.

In the management development context the reflecting team can assist the participants in deconstructing the many assumptions underlying management. The team will reflect on the participants' own assumptions, the organisation's, as well as the broader culture.

4.8.4.4 Nontotalising, nonuniversalising, nonessentialising

From a post-modern perspective management development should not enforce in the participants the notion of one "expert" way of knowing or performing the management role. The main aim of the management development intervention is to facilitate the participants in creating their own management knowledge. The aim is therefore not to prescribe one best way of managing, but to facilitate the awareness that there are many ways of managing a specific situation. The objective is to allow managers to use their own experiences and to facilitate the transformation of these experiences into preferred meaning and story performance for the individuals in the group.

Mezirow (2000) writes that transformative learning refers to transforming a problematic frame of reference and making it more dependable by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified. This implies that the usefulness of different frames of reference will vary from situation to situation and from person to person. There is not one "best" frame of reference relevant to all situations and persons.

Madigan and Epston (1995) mention that it was through the introduction of reflecting teams that therapists allowed themselves to make their opinions visible and audible and as a result accountable and contestable. The therapist also forsook any allegiance to grand traditions of truth and felt entitled to offer a variety of ideas and perhaps not correct interpretations to the clients. Points of view could be tentatively offered and not presented as rigid thoughts.

Within the management development context, the reflecting team can therefore provide the participant with many alternative interpretations and options with regards to management.

4.8.5 The advantages of using a narrative approach such as the reflecting team in management development

Using the reflecting team as a technique in management development can have certain benefits namely:

- narrative therapy allows one to implement the intervention from a social constructionist paradigm. As stated earlier, the main premise of social constructionism is that the beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labour and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Management as a socially constructed phenomenon can thus be deconstructed in a safe environment by using narrative therapy practices in the reflecting team.
- narrative therapy affords the managers an awareness of the stories that they are living out in their personal lives and the stories that are circulating in their cultures – both their local culture and the culture at large. They also become aware of how cultural stories influence the way they interpret their daily experience and how their daily actions influence the stories that circulate in the organisation. This makes the development of alternative stories easier.
- the integrity of the manager as the author of his/her own story is respected. The individual is seen as the “expert” of his/her own life and in narrative therapy the manager is merely assisted to author preferred stories in the fulfilling of the management task.
- in contrast with the traditional training intervention, the facilitator is not assumed to have expert knowledge of management or specific management skills to be imparted to the participants. It is not assumed that the participants come into the session devoid of skills or of any useful knowledge of management. It is furthermore not assumed that the knowledge that they are to acquire represents the truth in terms of current management theory. The aim is to elicit the

participant's own knowledge and skills in management and not to replicate the skills and knowledge of a trainer (Kazan et al, 1993).

- words in narrative practice are not intended to present a "true" reality and are always metaphors that take on meaning through social exchange (Lax, 1995). Narrative therapy does not enforce managerial "best practices", but allows participants to develop their own theory or knowledge.
- the questioning process in the reflecting team does not lead to a modernist reductionistic process, but allows for the emergence of different understandings to and the expression of novel thoughts (Lax, 1995). By using the reflective team process one capitalises on the diversity of viewpoints in the group. Participants also know that they are being heard and that their viewpoints count if the process is facilitated effectively.
- discussions of perceptions of differences allow rigidity to dissolve and provide an examination of the dialectics of phenomena (Smith, Winton, & Yoshioka, 1992). The support and challenge present during sessions provide the team with a method for understanding and accepting changes in their thinking (Smith, Winton, & Yoshioka, 1992).
- although it is not the aim of the intervention, the use of the reflecting team also promotes the development of listening skills, questioning ability and the linking of patterns between different ideas.
- the freedom of clients to also ask questions during the reflecting team process forces therapists to be more transparent and accountable in their thinking (Lax, 1995). Similarly, the reflecting team within the management development context will ensure that the learning process is transparent, as all ideas and beliefs can be questioned.

The narrative process seems to involve many principles that would facilitate transformative learning. Using narrative therapy, and the reflecting team in particular, seems to meet the considerations for management development in a post-modern context. This can be seen from the description of the features of post-modern management development practice and the way in which the reflecting team and Transformative Learning Theory address them. It is now necessary to identify how these features could be built into the design, delivery and evaluation of a management development intervention.

4.9 THE DESIGN, DELIVERY AND EVALUATION OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AS A MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

Various authors (Armstrong, 1992, Caffarella, 1994, McCoy, 1993, Van Dyk, Nel & Loedolff, 1992) have developed processes explaining the design, delivery and evaluation of training and development interventions. The process as described by them usually involves the following steps:

- the identification and definition of development needs;
- defining the objectives of the intervention;
- formulating evaluation plans, as well as plans to ensure the transfer of the learning to the workplace;
- designing the intervention, including the selection of content, developing of instructional plans, the selection of instructional strategies and media;
- planning the logistics of the intervention, for example who is going to facilitate, venues, time allocations, handouts, and so on;
- implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the intervention.

These phases have been identified from a modernist perspective and it will be difficult to map the narrative management development intervention planned for this study strictly according to these phases. Binzagr and Manning (1996) state that it is difficult to recommend specific techniques for post-modern instruction, explaining further that they believe that post-modern teaching methods should stem from the situation and cannot be clearly specified beforehand. It might, however, be useful to explore the phases as mentioned above within the context of this study. The relevant considerations will be explained in this section.

4.9.1 The identification and definition of development needs

This aspect has been covered in 3.1.5 and entails the gathering of environmental, organisational, job and person information (Olian et al, 1998). The aim of a needs analysis is to find a "gap" to ensure that training and development are be the correct remedy for the problem. It is very clear that this approach is largely modern and that the needs analysis in the proposed intervention for this study will differ from that of a post-modern framework.

In applying narrative technique within a management development context, the participants determine the need for development themselves. No obvious external yardstick is used to determine a “gap” between what is expected and what is happening. This is in line with the post-modern need to abandon paradigmatic models that test the client’s experience against some predetermined view of normality. Instead, an approach that acknowledges the client as an expert and which can facilitate any possible account of reality, provided that it makes sense in the client’s eyes, is proposed (Launer, 1999).

This does not, however, mean that the participants in a management development intervention will be totally isolated from organisational requirements, nor that they will determine development needs that are totally irrelevant within their current context. As Morgan (2000, p. 9) states: “The ways in which we understand our lives are influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which we live”. The organisational culture and structure, as well as experience and educational background, probably influence the participants’ stories.

The participants in the management development intervention are invited to share stories of their management experiences that could be classified as “thin descriptions”. Thin descriptions of stories allow little space for the complexities and contradictions within the management context. They also allow little space for the participants to articulate their own particular meanings of their actions and the context within which these occurred (Morgan, 2000). The invitation to the intervention explains to participants that they themselves will clarify their needs and objectives once they meet as a group.

4.9.2 Defining the objectives of the intervention

Caffarella (1994) states that educational programmes usually foster three types of change namely:

- individual change relating to acquisition of new knowledge, building of skills and examination of personal values and beliefs;
- organisational change resulting in new or revised policies, procedures and ways of working;

- community and societal change that allows different segments in society to respond to the world in alternative ways.

The aim of the intervention in this study is to facilitate individual change, based on an examination of personal values and beliefs relating to management. The type of change expected corresponds with Mezirow's (2000) definition of a perspective transformation, where the learner changes his/her frame of reference. In this study it is expected that the intervention will facilitate change in the learner's structure of assumptions and expectations through which they filter and make sense of managerial issues in the organisation. The need for this has been created by the changing nature of organisations with a post-modern framework and has been explained in Chapter 1.

As the intervention is taking place within a post-modern framework, its purpose is not based on a curriculum and agenda of topics set by the participating businesses (Rosile & Boje, 1996). Instead, it involves renewal and stories as generated by the participants. The major objective will be to facilitate the development of alternative stories with richer and thicker descriptions, instead of the thin descriptions and conclusions identified by the participants (Morgan, 2000). This will influence the design of the intervention.

4.9.3 Formulating evaluation plans, as well as plans to ensure the transfer of the learning to the workplace

Evaluation is a continuous process that begins in the planning phase and involves follow-up actions after an intervention. Its purpose is to determine whether the design and delivery of an intervention has been effective and whether the proposed outcomes have been met (Caffarella, 1994). The transfer of learning involves the effective application by participants of what they have learned as a result of attending the intervention (Caffarella, 1994).

The post-modern nature of the planned intervention results in a lack of formal evaluation processes. Discourse analysis is used to determine whether the participants have changed their frames of reference as a result of the intervention.

As the nature of the learning is uncertain, no formal plans to monitor the transfer of learning are made. As the outcome of this exploratory study becomes more defined, actions in this regard may be explored.

4.9.4 Designing the intervention, including the selection of content, developing of instructional plans, and selection of instructional strategies and media

The design of the intervention is based on the narrative process as described in 4.4 and the use of the techniques as described in 4.5. The reflecting team process, as described in 4.6.1, will form the framework within which the narrative therapy process and techniques will be applied. This means that the content cannot be identified beforehand and that the facilitator will work with the stories as identified and told by the participants.

As there is no instruction as such, the development of instructional plans and the selection of instructional strategies and media are not applicable during this intervention. The framework for a typical White/Epston type interview (Roth & Epston, 1995) is, however, used to design the intervention process in broad terms.

4.9.5 Planning the logistics of the intervention

The logistical arrangement for the proposed intervention involves the selection of a facilitator, venues, dates for the various sessions, invitations to the participants, copying of a handout with guidelines for the reflecting team and the selection of external members of the reflecting team. For this particular intervention it was necessary to secure a venue that would allow for the separation of the reflecting team and the discussion team. To allow time for reflection during sessions, the sessions took place at certain intervals.

Depending on the nature of an intervention, logistical arrangements could be very involved and the use of long checklists would be advisable in such cases.

4.9.6 Implementing, evaluating and monitoring of the intervention

The opening of the intervention is crucial in creating a positive environment for learning (Caffarella, 1994). This orientation at the start of an intervention usually includes staff and participant introductions, an explanation of the objectives of the intervention, clarification of intervention requirements (such as attendance, outside assignments, instructor and participant expectations) and basic administrative information (for example, start and finish times) (Caffarella, 1994). Constant monitoring and evaluation of the event is necessary to ensure that an optimal learning situation is maintained. This is usually done by obtaining constant feedback from the participants and making changes as needed. (<http://adulthood.about.com>).

The evaluation of interventions could be made at four levels (Kirkpatrick, 1975):

- reaction: were the participants happy in the learning situation?
- learning: did the training course teach the concepts required?
- behaviour: has there been a behaviour change back on the job?
- results: what is the effect of the training on the organisation?

It will be difficult to measure the effect of the proposed intervention on these four levels, as the participants will determine the outcomes. Every effort will, be made, however, to determine whether learning on a reaction level has taken place by questioning the participants at the end of the intervention. Change in transformative learning is indicated by a change in a person's frame of reference and in this study these changes will be tracked through discourse analysis.

It is clear that the proposed management intervention does not comfortably fit the mould of traditional interventions and as such it is difficult to apply the usual guidelines used in the planning, design and delivery of an intervention. Care will be taken, however, to ensure that the intervention follows the guidelines for the implementation of a narrative technique intervention.

4.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter narrative therapy was described and the goal of narrative therapy examined. Thereafter, the disciplines, theories and paradigms influencing narrative therapy were examined. The key concepts in narrative therapy were then explored, after which the role of the therapist/facilitator was explained. The therapeutic process and techniques used in narrative therapy were described next. The application of the approach in a management development intervention was investigated and the chapter concluded with some general considerations on the implementation of an intervention. In the next chapter the research design for this study will be explained.

With this, Step 3 of the literature overview, namely the proposal of a design for a management development intervention based on narrative therapy, is concluded.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In this chapter the qualitative empirical study is reported. Firstly, the participants in the study will be described. The Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI) will then be discussed in terms of its development, rationale, objectives, components, administration, interpretation, criteria for soundness and justification. Data gathering and processing will be explained and lastly, some issues for further exploration will be formulated.

5.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the MDNI include the client organisations, participating managers from these organisations, reflecting team members and the facilitator. More detail on the participants will be provided in this section.

5.1.1 The client organisations

The client organisations in this study are two large South African corporate organisations. One organisation is in the cellular communications industry and the other in the banking industry.

The two organisations were chosen on the assumption that they face different challenges as a result of the different industries they are part of. It was also assumed that the corporate cultures would be different and that the dominant stories in each culture would therefore be different. This could facilitate comparison.

A brief background sketch of both organisations is provided below.

(1) Organisation A

Organisation A operates in the cellular communications industry and is one of the major network providers in South Africa. The organisation was established in 1993

and is, in terms of the organisational life cycle, currently in the consolidation phase. The organisation has experienced phenomenal growth in terms of income and staff complement. From fewer than 50 employees in 1993 it now has a staff complement of approximately 1900. It has a flat organisational structure with only a few levels.

(2) Organisation B

Organisation B is one of the largest players in the South African banking industry. It went through a major merger exercise a few years ago and is still restructuring the organisation. It has approximately 35 000 employees and has a fairly deep hierarchical structure with many levels.

5.1.2 The client managers

As a result of the nature of qualitative studies, typical sampling of managers to participate in the study was not a consideration. Morton-Williams (1985) is of the opinion that a qualitative study can never cover the whole population in such a way that different sub-groups that may be important can all be investigated in detail. This does not mean that the group should be subjectively selected, but that the rigorous sampling procedures used in quantitative research are inappropriate to the nature and scale of qualitative work (Morton-Williams, 1985).

Decisions regarding the design of the sample for a qualitative study emerge from the objectives of the study and serve a specific purpose. This means that rather than taking a random cross section of the population to be studied, small numbers of people with specific characteristics, behaviour or experience are selected to facilitate broad comparisons between certain groups that the researcher judges to be important (Morton-Williams, 1985). In this study the emphasis is on managerial thinking and consequently a cross section of managers in both organisations was selected.

Another important consideration in this study was the diversity of the participants. It was assumed that diversity in the sample would facilitate perspective transformation.

Consequently, the most important criterion in compiling the experiential groups was that the groups be diverse in terms of:

- (1) managerial experience;
- (2) cultural backgrounds.

The method used to analyse the data also impacted on the size of the sample. Potter and Wetherell (1987) make the point that a large sample size can be detrimental to the quality of analysis in discourse analysis. Bozic, Leadbetter and Stringer (1998) are of the opinion that it is easy to be overwhelmed by textual data thus giving it only a cursory examination. That is why they suggest giving a more limited data set a more thorough analysis. It was decided to limit this study to two organisations and to use only one group per organisation over three sessions. Despite this attempt to limit the data the MDNI results still generated in excess of 200 pages of text.

As this study is focused only on identifying changes in discourses in the overall text, it was not seen as necessary to gather detailed biographical data. Consequently, only the information relevant to the indication of diversity will be reflected, namely race, gender and managerial level. The race composition of the groups is indicated in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1
RACE COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPANTS

Organisation	African	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
A	2	2	0	3	7
B	1	0	2	3	6
Total:	3	2	2	6	13

The gender composition of the participants is indicated in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2
GENDER COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPANTS

Organisation	Male	Female
A	3	4
B	3	3
Total	6	7

The level of managerial functioning is indicated in Table 5.3:

TABLE 5.3
MANAGERIAL LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS

Organisation	Senior Management	Middle Management	Junior Management	Total
A	1	3	1	7
B	0	1	5	6
Total:	1	4	8	13

The sample selected appears to satisfy the criterion of diversity in terms of cultural background and managerial level. Next, the participating individuals will be tabled in terms of the biographical detail (see Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4
DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Organisation	Race	Gender	Managerial Level
A	A	White	Male	Middle
B	A	Indian	Male	Senior
C	A	White	Male	Middle
D	A	Black	Female	Middle
E	A	Indian	Female	Middle
F	A	White	Female	Middle
G	A	Black	Female	Junior
H	B	White	Male	Junior
I	B	Coloured	Male	Junior
J	B	Black	Female	Junior
K	B	Coloured	Male	Middle
L	B	White	Female	Junior
M	B	White	Female	Junior

5.1.3 The reflecting team members

The reflecting team consisted of individuals who volunteered in each participant group (or who were asked by the facilitator) and one external person. The facilitator asked for volunteers or nominated participants from each group to form part of the reflecting team before each session. The members of the reflecting team therefore

varied from session to session. Behan (1999) found that using peers assists the group to become both a reflective team and a community of concern. He did not pick up any negative effects in his practice of rotating the reflecting team members and reported a better experience for participants by doing it this way.

The whole group of participants was informed of the role of the reflecting team and provided with some guidelines on what to do as a reflecting team member. Some issues on "how" to perform the role were also discussed with the facilitator who used the Appendix as a basis document. All the team members received the Appendix prior to the start of the first session, and after the first thorough discussion of the document, certain points were again highlighted at the subsequent sessions.

A registered psychologist (familiar with narrative therapy) also took part in all the sessions as a permanent member of the reflecting team. The reason for this was to have a constant role model in terms of what is expected of a reflecting team member, as well as to compensate for the inexperience of the other reflecting team members.

By informing the whole group of the guidelines for the reflecting team (see Appendix) and by including a permanent team member, the dependability and confirmability of the research was enhanced. In addition to credibility and transferability, dependability and confirmability are important criteria that indicate the soundness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

5.1.4 The facilitator

The same person facilitated all six sessions. The facilitator is a registered psychologist (category: industry) and an employee of Organisation A. The facilitator is also the researcher in this study.

With this the first step of the quantitative study, namely a description of the participants, is completed.

5.2 THE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE INTERVENTION (MDNI)

In this section the intervention that was implemented in this study, namely the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI), will be discussed.

5.2.1 Development

The Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI) is structured according to narrative therapy and reflecting team principles as described in Chapter 4. The MDNI was developed as a generic intervention as its design allows immediate applicability to any organisation and it is not necessary to customise the process based on the client organisation. According to Caffarella (1994), the development of instructional units involves the planning of the interaction between learners and facilitators/instructors and/or learners and resource material. According to these guidelines, issues such as learning objectives, content, instructional techniques, materials and equipment and evaluation procedures should be considered during the development of an intervention.

Most of these issues were not relevant in the development of this intervention as a result of the format. Learning objectives, for example, could not be determined beforehand, as they were identified by the learners themselves during the session. Macro issues as described in 5.2.2 were, however, taken into account. The content could also not be determined beforehand, as the design of the MDNI allows the generation of content during the session. Instructional techniques are not necessary, as the aim of the MDNI is not to instruct, but to facilitate the learners in creating their own knowledge. The materials and equipment used in the MDNI are minimal and evaluation of the impact will be discussed in more detail in 5.3.

5.2.2 Rationale

The two client organisations function in a context where environmental turbulence, organisational change and increasing complexity are dominant features. These have specific implications for these organisations and include particular elements, namely (McKenna, 1999):

- the need for organisational structures to be more flexible and adaptable;
- the need to manage diversity in all its forms;
- the need to be more proactive and to create the future by design;
- the need to manage intellectual capital and knowledge.

The managers in these organisations all have their own frames of reference for managing within this complex environment and some of them also feel somewhat helpless in the face of all these challenges. They feel the need to make new meaning from all these factors within a flexible and constantly changing environment. McKenna's (1999) general description of management development needs aptly describes the two client organisations' need for a management development intervention to achieve the above that goes beyond the traditional approach of menu-driven management development. According to McKenna, there is a need for an experience that challenges managers' assumptions and paradigms, that extends them beyond their comfort zones and brings enlightenment rather than refreshment (McKenna, 1999).

McKenna (1999) states further that challenging assumptions and paradigms can only be undertaken if the learning event has special meaning for the individual manager and the manager is helped in making sense of his/her specific situation. He also contends that an intervention aimed at assisting managers to deal with a complex environment should allow them to be the creators of their own sensemaking by focusing on their own experiences of reality. There are no universal truths to fall back on and managers produce their own truths through their sensemaking in the intervention. It is therefore necessary for the managers to create new frames of reference, or to state them differently,, to develop alternative stories of organisational and managerial life.

The MDNI is viewed as an intervention that meets the needs expressed above and that can assist managers in the client organisations to generate learning from the complexities and realities in their own organisations as well as assisting them in understanding it in a way that makes sense to them. The MDNI has three main characteristics that assist in meeting these needs.

Firstly, the MDNI is designed to facilitate a perspective transformation: managers transform their frames of reference (or perspectives) through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which their interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based (Mezirow, 1997).

Secondly, the MDNI follows a process of deconstructive questioning and story development. The deconstruction helps managers unpack their stories or see them from different perspectives, so that the way they have been constructed becomes apparent (Freedman & Combs, 1996). This opens up space for the development of alternative stories and may lead to the construction of new meaning. Lastly, the MDNI allows for shifts between talking and listening. Anderson (1995) describes talking to other(s) as 'outer talk' and listening to others as well as self-talk as 'inner talk'.

The MDNI allows a particular managerial and organisational issue to be passed from outer talks to inner talks and back to outer talks. The issue is therefore passed *through the perspectives of various inner and outer talks and this creates multiple perspectives*. The managers might understand the same issue differently in the various perspectives, and when these different ways of understanding are put together (as in the reflecting process) they might create new ideas about the issue in focus (Anderson, 1995).

The need for an intervention that will assist managers in the two client organisations to make sense of, create meaning and possibly change their frames of reference in an ever-changing, dynamic and complex environment seems to be addressed by the MDNI that is based on narrative therapy and the use of a reflecting team.

5.2.3 Aim of the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI)

The aim of the MDNI is to create a learning event and an opportunity for managers in the two client organisations to reflect on their experiences of certain challenging situations in their organisations and to develop alternative stories to the problematic story that is preventing them from managing in a preferred way.

5.2.4 Composition of the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI)

The MDNI is based on the basic principles of narrative technique and involves deconstructive listening, deconstructive questioning, story development and the use of a reflecting team (as described in the previous chapter). This particular intervention consists of three sessions (based purely on time constraints), each following more or less the same format, as explained in the following sections.

5.2.4.1 Preparation

The facilitator prepares an interview schedule for the intervention, based on a White/Epston type (Vassallo, 1998) intervention. The interview schedule for the MDNI can be viewed in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE MDNI

<p>UNRAVELLING/EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What aspect of your managerial task do you find most challenging? • How would you describe your own management style? • Do you have a different management style now, from 3... years ago? • Describe what works well in your style and what aspects you would like to change. <p>EXTERNALISING QUESTIONS AND MAPPING THE INFLUENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are certain aspects of the style working well and others not? • How have these (negative factors) influenced your job as a manager? • How has this challenge influenced the relationship with your manager, direct reports, colleagues, you? • Who has the most to gain from keeping the situation the same? <p>UNIQUE OUTCOME QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of a situation in which you challenged (this negative factor)? <p>READINESS QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you prepare yourself for this challenge? • What helped you to become ready? <p>LANDSCAPE OF ACTION QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions by you made a difference (during the challenge)? • Which seemed most effective? • How? • How did you take this step? <p>RELATIVE INFLUENCE QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you measure the influence you had over the problem? • How did you measure the influence the problem had over you? • What helped to tip the balance in your favour? <p>LANDSCAPE OF CONSCIOUSNESS QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you discover about yourself? • How did these discoveries grow and develop? • What were the defining characteristics? • What impact did the process have on you as you made more and more discoveries?
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(Adjusted from Vassallo, 1998)

The facilitator uses these questions as a basic framework and, depending on the issues emerging during the intervention, makes certain adjustments. The facilitator

also prepares guidelines for the reflecting team, to be used for the orientation of the participants during the first session.

The guidelines for the reflecting team are flexible and their use depends largely on the goals of the session. In this study the reflecting team serves as a springboard for new opinions and ideas for action. The team's goal is to maintain a collaborative, non-hierarchical and transparent stance by recognising the manager's expertise based on lived experience. The team members wish to invite the other group to an alternate performance of meaning. The main intention is to help the other group to establish a reflexive position in which they might be more likely to notice possibilities that could be useful and helpful to them.

For this reason, the guidelines for the reflecting team members, as explained by Janowsky et al. (1995), Lax (1995), Anderson (1995) and Turner (1997), are relevant to this study. The guidelines could be classified in terms of their relevance, to the conversation style, the conversation content, body language, the role of the therapist and logistical arrangements. These guidelines can be found in the Appendix.

5.2.4.2 Opening and orientation

The facilitator creates a positive climate for learning at the opening of the intervention by:

- welcoming the participants and thanking them for their participation;
- asking the participants to introduce themselves to the rest of the group;
- discussing the objectives of the session;
- providing some logistical details for example, start and ending times;
- providing basic background on narrative theory;
- explaining the process that is will be followed;
- discussing in detail the guidelines for the reflecting team (these guidelines can be viewed in the Appendix).

Once the orientation has been completed, the facilitator asks for volunteers for the reflecting team or nominates some of the participants. The discussion team and the reflecting teams are then separated and asked to sit at opposite ends of the room or table. The facilitator then moves on to the identification of the problem-saturated story.

5.2.4.3 Identifying the problem-saturated story

The facilitator assists the discussion group in identifying the major challenges facing them as managers. The facilitator does this by asking some unravelling/exploratory questions (see Table 5.5 for examples of these questions). The group then selects one management challenge that is most common to all.

An alternative story (with a rich and thick description) to this management challenge or problem-saturated story is then developed over the rest of the three sessions, by following the narrative therapy process and using the reflecting team process. The facilitator follows the narrative therapy process with the discussion group, while the reflecting team members follow their particular guidelines as in the Appendix.

5.2.4.4 The narrative therapy process

Once the management challenge has been identified the facilitator follows the narrative therapy process as described in Chapter 4. In broad terms, this entails the following phases and the use of the interview schedule in Table 5.5.

(1) Externalising and naming the challenge

In this phase the facilitator separates the problem from the managers by choosing his/her words and phrasing the questions carefully. The facilitator will, for example, discuss the “diversity issue” rather than “your problem with diversity”. The facilitator will also listen to the description of the managerial challenge, hoping to hear a word or phrase that might describe what is getting in the way of the preferred story (Morgan, 2000). This is done so that a tentative name for the challenge can be suggested, such as the “change monster”.

(2) Exploration and personification of the problem

Once the discussion group has agreed upon a way of referring to the management challenge and externalisation has taken place, a thorough investigation into the problem is possible. In the example of the “change monster”, the facilitator is interested in finding out and exposing as much as possible about the “change monster’s” tricks, tactics, way of operating, ways of speaking, intentions, beliefs and ideas, plans, likes and dislikes, rules, purposes, desires, motives, techniques, dreams, allies, deceits or lies (Morgan, 2000). The facilitator uses a lot of unravelling and externalising questions during this phase.

(3) Revising relationships with problems

During this phase the facilitator explores the relationship between the managers and the problem. The facilitator will, for example, ask the group members, “What words would you use to describe your relationship with the ‘change monster’?”

(4) Tracing the history of the problem

By tracing the history of the problem, the facilitator tries to trace the influence of the problem in the group’s life over a long period of time (Morgan, 2000). The facilitator will ask more “relative influence questions” during this phase, such as, “When did you notice the ‘change monster’ for the first time? How much of your managerial time did it eat into at that time?”

(5) Exploring the effects of the problem

In this phase the facilitator tries to understand the full impact of the problem on the group’s life. The impact on relationships outside the work situation is also investigated. According to Morgan (2000), these conversations act as an acknowledgement of the distress and/or worry that managers might be experiencing. The facilitator uses “relative influence questions” during this phase, for example, “Is the ‘change monster’ a good thing or a bad thing?”

(6) Situating the problem in context

During this phase the facilitator is interested in discovering, acknowledging and deconstructing the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture that is serving to assist the managerial challenge and the problem story (Morgan, 2000). The

facilitator may ask: "What are some of your beliefs about the manager's role in change?"

(7) Discovering unique outcomes

In this phase the facilitator will listen for and explore incidents or situations in which the problem had less of an influence and did not really fit in with the dominant story. The facilitator will use unique outcome questions to discover these instances, for example: "Can you think of a time when the 'change monster' could have ruined the productivity in your department but didn't?"

(8) Tracing the history and meaning of the unique outcome and naming an alternative story

During this phase the facilitator attempts to trace the history of the unique outcomes, to ground them firmly, to make them more visible and to link them in some way to an emerging new story (Morgan, 2000). The facilitator typically asks "landscape of action" and "landscape of identity" questions, for example, "What happened just before and just after you decided to discuss a change management plan with your line manager?" and "On what personal values did you base this decision?" The facilitator also asks readiness questions.

This exploration leads to a possible alternative story and it is important also to name this alternative story (Morgan, 2000). The facilitator does this by asking questions like: "What would you call this project that involves standing up to the effects of the 'change monster'?"

(9) Story Development

During this phase the facilitator is interested in developing a "richer and thicker" description of the alternative story (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/white.htm>). The reflecting team assists with this and the facilitator also uses landscape of consciousness questions, for example, "Can you think of someone who would know something about your preference for dealing with change in this manner?"

These phases are spread over the three sessions and do not necessarily follow a linear approach as explained here. The facilitator will probably use the full repertoire

of deconstructive questions as explained in Chapter 4. The reflecting team process works together with the process followed by the facilitator.

5.2.4.5 The reflecting team process

The reflecting team process is interwoven with the narrative therapy process and supports the process followed by the facilitator. The participation of the reflecting team is structured to follow on the initial deconstruction of the particular challenge and facilitates the development of alternative stories. When the facilitator feels that the discussion group is stuck on a specific issue, he/she gives the reflecting team a turn to discuss their insights into regards to the discussion. The reflecting team is reminded of the guidelines for the reflecting team (see the Appendix).

The reflecting team reflects for up to ten minutes. The facilitator then asks the group what the reflection has meant to them and starts with a new round of discussions, based on the narrative therapy process. The reflecting team then has the opportunity for a last reflection, and the group gets the opportunity to respond. The facilitator then assists in the debriefing of the session itself. The reflecting team sessions are conducted over three sessions of an hour each.

5.2.4.6 Closing

According to Caffarella (1994), the facilitator has three tasks in closing the intervention:

- to collect all data for evaluation purposes;
- to provide the participants with recognition for taking part, either formally through certification or informally through, for example, mementoes or a celebration ceremony;
- to thank participants for being part of the programme.

In the MDNI the facilitator evaluates the programme by asking for verbal feedback at the end of the programme. This could, however, be replaced by written feedback or by journal writing once the MDNI has been completely tested and developed. All the

participants receive a "thankyou gift" and the facilitator ends by thanking each participant individually.

5.2.5 Administration of the MDNI

The administration of the MDNI involves the following steps.

5.2.5.1 Inviting participants to the MDNI

The client organisations identify possible employees for participation and invite them to take part in the study. The invitations provide some background on the narrative approach and the fact that it is not commonly applied in a management development context. The employees have the opportunity to accept or to decline the invitation. As a result of the explorative nature of the study, no definite outcomes are promised to the participants. This could influence some to decline the invitation. Typically, respondents who accept attend three sessions of sixty minutes, once a week for three consecutive weeks.

5.2.5.2 Administering the MDNI

The MDNI consists of three sessions and is administered according the process discussed in the previous point. The major phases per session are described and then summarised as follows:

(1) Session 1

At the first session the facilitator welcomes the participants and explains the nature of the sessions. It is mentioned that it is basically a series of questions and reflections. The division of the group into a discussion team and a reflecting team is explained, as well as the fact that the teams will rotate. The role of the psychologist as a stable member of the reflecting team is also discussed. The group members then have the opportunity of introducing themselves. After this, the facilitator gives everybody some guidelines on the role and requirements of the reflecting team (see the Appendix for guidelines). The reason for this is that the first session is usually

the first time that participants have ever been exposed to a reflecting team as used in narrative therapy. For the reflecting team to be effective it must have at least some basic background. The group is then divided into the discussion team and the reflecting team.

The facilitator first asks the discussion group to identify the major challenges facing them as managers. The idea here is to identify a problem-saturated story, so that the group can deconstruct through narrative therapy the various aspects of the story and eventually develop alternative stories. The group then selects one challenge that is most common to all. The facilitator asks unravelling/exploratory questions about the particular issue in order to externalise the problem. After some time the reflecting team reflects for five to ten minutes. The facilitator then asks the group what the reflection has meant to them and starts with a new round of discussions. Once the facilitator has asked externalising questions, this is followed by mapping the influence questions. The reflecting team then has the opportunity for a last reflection, and the group is given the opportunity to respond. The facilitator then assists in the debriefing of the session itself.

The facilitator asks the group to reflect on a particular issue that was discussed and that will be used as the starting point for the next meeting. This process is summarised as follows:

- welcome by facilitator;
- group members introduce themselves;
- education in terms of role of reflecting team;
- selection of reflecting team;
- unravelling/exploratory questions by facilitator and discussion by group while reflecting team listens;
- reflecting team discussion;
- discussion group reacts to reflecting team;
- naming of problem by facilitator and discussion group;
- externalising questions and mapping the influence questions by facilitator and discussion by group;
- reflecting team discussion;

- reaction to reflecting team from discussion group;
- closing and request by facilitator to reflect on a particular issue for next session.

(2) Session 2

The facilitator welcomes the group to the second session and then highlights some more guidelines for the reflecting team. The facilitator and the psychologist in the reflecting team select the new reflecting team members or ask for volunteers. The point highlighted as the starting point at the previous session is used to get the group started for this session. The facilitator focuses more on unique outcome questions, readiness questions and landscape of action questions during this session. The aim of this is to assist the group in distinguishing particular beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes and to open up space for alternative stories. The reflecting team then has the opportunity to reflect and the discussion team is given the opportunity to respond.

The facilitator continues with deconstructive questioning and the reflecting team has another chance to respond. The discussion group reacts to the reflecting team and then the session is closed by the facilitator, again asking the group to reflect on a particular issue discussed during the session. Session 2 can be summarised as follows:

- welcome by facilitator;
- *further education in terms of reflecting team behaviour;*
- selection of reflecting team;
- summary by facilitator of what happened during previous session;
- unique outcome questions/landscape of action questions and relative influence questions by facilitator and discussion by group while reflecting team listens;
- reflecting team discussion;
- discussion group reacts to reflecting team;
- unique outcome questions/landscape of action questions and relative influence questions by facilitator and discussion by group while reflecting team listens;
- reflecting team discussion;
- reaction to reflecting team by discussion group;

- closing and request by facilitator to reflect on a particular issue for next session.

(3) Session 3

The facilitator again welcomes the participants and discusses a few guidelines for the reflecting team. If necessary the reflecting team is rotated again. The same format as in the previous two sessions is used and the facilitator focuses on relative influence questions, landscape of consciousness questions, audience questions and experience of experience questions to assist in the development of alternative stories.

The facilitator ends the session by asking the group what they have learnt during the sessions and whether there is anything in terms of the original issue that they selected that they now view differently. The flow of the third session is summarised as follows:

- welcome by facilitator;
- selection of reflecting team;
- summary by facilitator of what happened during previous session;
- landscape of consciousness questions/audience questions and experience of experience questions by facilitator and discussion by group while reflecting team listens;
- reflecting team discussion;
- discussion group reacts to reflecting team;
- landscape of consciousness questions/audience questions and experience of experience questions by facilitator and discussion by group while reflecting team listens;
- reflecting team discussion;
- reaction to reflecting team by discussion group;
- facilitator asks group whether they have learnt anything during the sessions and a discussion thereof;
- facilitator thanks participants for their contribution to the study.

The administration of the MDNI can be standardised only up to a certain point. As with all post-modern processes, the context and the constructions of the participants will guide the facilitator 's actions.

5.2.6 Recording and analysis of the MDNI results

As this study is conducted within a constructionist framework it would be preferable to interpret information that is collected in context and with minimal disturbance to the natural setting. This would result in unstructured, open-ended qualitative materials (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). However, the data collection for this study took place during facilitated sessions as described above. In this sense it could be said that the data collection did not take place in a "natural" setting, but in the context of this study there is no other place where data could have been collected. This could impact on the interpretation of the results. For this specific study it was decided to analyse the results of the intervention by doing a discourse analysis. Once the impact has been established, however, and the MDNI is administered in a broader context in future, its impact will probably be evaluated by using questionnaires and follow-up interviews.

Discourse analysis focuses on talk and text as social practices and on the resources that are drawn on to enable these practices (Potter, 1996). In discourse analysis text refers to written and spoken language, as well as images (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Consequently discourse analysis is defined as the analysis of any of these forms of discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Bozic, Leadbetter and Stringer (1998) state that discourse analysis is more than a purely linguistic discipline and that it explores how forms of communication actively create the way humans understand the social world. In this study, discourse analysis was used to explore how the participants in the MDNI used language to create their specific understanding of managerial challenges. According to Parker (1992), discourses provide frameworks for debating the value of one way of talking about reality over other ways. Discourse analysis, then, deliberately systematises different ways of talking so that they can be better understood (Parker, 1992).

The discussions that took place during the MDNI were tape-recorded and the content transcribed so that the information could be analysed for research purposes. According to Gee, Michaels and O'Connor (1992), the organisation of words on the page and the layout of dialogue (for example, in script format, in parallel columns) have ramifications for what the researcher notices and how he/she interprets the text. Gee, Michaels and O'Connor (1992) warn that it is especially important to be mindful that the transcript will inevitably leave out some information or, by its display, make certain features more salient than others. As such, the text as a written document may influence what the researcher is capable of seeing and understanding.

5.2.7 Criteria of soundness

It is necessary to examine whether this research conforms to the criteria of soundness expected in qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that all research must respond to canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. In the positivist paradigm these criteria would be internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These constructs are, however, not always appropriate for qualitative research and Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four alternative constructs that are more applicable.

5.2.7.1 *Credibility*

Here the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in a manner that ensured that the subject was accurately identified and described. Marshall and Rossman (1995) summarise this issue by stating that the strength of a qualitative study lies in its validity. Validity is achieved by embedding an in-depth description of the complexities of variables and interactions with data derived from the setting. Within the parameters of that setting, population, and theoretical framework, the research will be valid. It is thus important for the qualitative researcher to state those parameters adequately, thereby placing boundaries around the study.

In this study this was achieved by clearly defining both the paradigm from which the research was to be done, as well as the population and analysis method to be used. Thus, adequate boundaries were drawn.

5.2.7.2 Transferability

It stands to reason that a qualitative study's transferability or generalisability to other settings may be problematic. Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest two approaches to address this problem. Firstly, the researcher can refer back to the original theoretical framework to show how concepts and models will guide data collection and analysis. Others using the same parameters to determine whether or not the cases can be generalised and transferred to other settings can then use these parameters of research. This also allows the reader or user of specific research to see how research ties into a body of theory.

The second suggestion involves triangulating multiple sources of data, where data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research in question. This might involve the use of multiple cases, multiple informants or more than one data gathering method to strengthen the study's usefulness in other settings.

In this study the implementation of the intervention is linked to several theoretical models, namely perspective transformation, narrative theory and management development. This will ensure that the research can be used later in a variety of settings, and need not be limited to formal management development. It can, for example, be included in research about organisations; it can build a bridge to organisational theory.

5.2.7.3 Dependability

This issue concerns the researcher's attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study, as well as changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. Marshall and Rossman (1995) contrast this with the positivist notion of reliability that assumes an unchanging

universe where inquiry can be replicated. The qualitative assumption is that the world is continually being constructed and that the concept of replication is itself problematic. Dependability then involves describing the changing conditions.

In this particular study conditions were kept very much the same and there was an effort to standardise the framework within which discussion took place. Discourse analysis allows for detailed accounting of how the content of the discussions changed or differed.

5.2.7.4 Confirmability

The question here is whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another, for example, does the data help to confirm the general findings and lead to the implications? Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest several strategies for balancing bias in interpretation, which have influenced the following practices in this study:

- the use of a team to do the discourse analysis;
- the use of an objective third party to record the sessions and to transcribe them;
- checking and rechecking the data and purposeful examination of possible rival hypotheses;
- preservation of data for re-analysis.

In this study a team undertook the discourse analysis and an independent organisation recorded and transcribed the sessions. The data was made available for re-analysis in the form of typed transcriptions and the original recordings.

5.2.8 Justification for the inclusion of the MDNI in this study

The MDNI as developed for this study and set out above, seems to address many of the considerations of post-modern management development and transformative learning. Many management development efforts take place in a group context as most adult educators emphasise the group as a vehicle that supports the learning of individuals (Imel, 1996). There is also a long-standing recognition of the fact that adult learning is often a socially interactive activity and that groups can provide an

effective setting for facilitating learning (Yorks & Marsick, 2000). The MDNI consists mainly of social interaction.

This social element is also important in transformative learning as it “does not suggest a disengaged image of the individual learner, but of a learning process characterized by dialogical voices. The social dimension is central, but so are the historical and cultural dimensions of the process” (Mezirow, 1996, p.169). This is supported by the assumption in narrative therapy that each story is ideological and that representation of reality is ideological (Boje, 1999b).

The reflective team as a narrative practice involves contributions by an outsider group during the MDNI to “move people” (White, 2000). This movement or “transportation” could be equated to a perspective transformation as found in transformation learning.

The transformation of a problematic frame of reference in transformative learning could emancipate individual participants in the MDNI by making them aware of how psychological and socio-economic forces may have limited personal choice or been the source of dysfunctional constructed habits of mind in the managerial terrain (Yorks & Marsick, 2000). This corresponds with the goal of narrative therapy where clients are encouraged to re-author their own lives according to alternative and preferred stories of self-identity and preferred ways of life (Boje, 1999b). The preferred “new story” could be viewed as a perspective transformation. The narrative therapy process is used extensively during the MDNI to facilitate the development of “new stories” in the participants’ managerial lives.

The similarity between the outcome of narrative therapy and a perspective transformation is reinforced by White’s (2000, p. 75) statement that the retellings of the reflecting team are shaped by an appreciation of the poststructuralist sentiment of contributing to people’s options of becoming “other than who they were”. He is also of the opinion that the reflecting team is a practice which has the effect of transporting people elsewhere, into territories of life and identity in which they could never have predicted that they would find themselves.

The reflecting team makes this possible by allowing people to (White, 2000, p. 76):

- think beyond what they routinely think and to extend the limits of their understandings;
- stand in territories of their lives that are associated with their preferred claims about their identity;
- experience a multi-layered and multi-voiced sense of identity;
- engage with knowledges and skills of living that were previously barely perceived traces in their histories;
- take up options for action in their lives and relationships that would not have otherwise been available or even perceptible to them.

The use of the reflecting team in the MDNI is designed to invite an exchange of perspectives with the purpose of opening up alternative perspectives of a particular issue. The format is designed to give everybody concerned the opportunity to shift position on purpose, for example, from listening to participating, from talking to listening and back again (Katz, 1990).

One therefore forms at least two perspectives on a particular issue in one session. "In principle, extra depth in some metaphoric sense is to be expected whenever the information for the two descriptions is differently collected or differently coded" (Bateson in Katz, 1990, p. 109).

Katz (1990) argues that the format of the reflecting team is designed to realise this Batesonian notion. As it invites one perspective and then another, it becomes a way of embracing the possibility of both. "Each description becomes a point of comparison, an opportunity for new ideas, a different perspective on a problem. This subtle awareness of difference usually makes a difference of its own" (Katz, 1990, p. 109).

If these claims are true, the reflecting team could assist in meeting the need for transformational learning in an organisation, and in the management cadre specifically. Yorks and Marsick (2000) state that organisations seek to transform themselves along some combination of dimensions involving the changing nature of the organisation's

- task environment;
- vision;
- mission and/or strategy;
- products and services;
- production and distribution;
- structure;
- management processes (including management style.)
- conceptualisation of the roles played by members and the behaviours appropriate for carrying out these roles (including new ways of interacting that will contribute to team and consequently organisational learning).

Yorks and Marsick (2000) believe that these dimensions correspond to several of the kinds of habits of mind described by Mezirow. They highlight in particular the sociolinguistic, epistemic, psychological and philosophical habits of mind. The organisation's primary motive for wanting to change these habits of mind is usually to improve its performance, requiring communicative learning as organisation members develop new understandings of behaviour.

Organisation members are therefore encouraged to challenge their points of view and to become critically reflective of the assumptions held about the content and processes relevant to performance. "This process of learning often requires transformative learning in the communicative domain as behaviors associated with effective team learning processes – framing, reframing, experimenting, crossing boundaries, and integrating perspectives are developed and exhibited (Yorks & Marsick, 2000, p. 274).

The reflecting team is used throughout the MDNI and provides the opportunity for participants to engage in a communicative learning exercise and to act as a definitional ceremony. The reflecting team as a definitional ceremony links the participants' stories around shared beliefs, commitment and purposes (Behan, 1999). Meyerhoff (as quoted by Behan, 1999) describes how definitional ceremonies arouse great emotion and energy which is then redirected toward some commonalities, some deep symbols and shared stable norms. This would be

immensely useful in organisational transformation efforts where the organisation would like its members to commit themselves to a new set of values and behaviours. Management development efforts could also benefit from this in the sense that the transfer of the new insight back into the workplace would not be an issue, because of the personal commitment. The MDNI has the potential to facilitate this seamless transfer.

Another important consideration in using the reflective team for organisational and managerial transformation is the creation of a reflexive position where the participants find they have some space to consider, think over, examine and explore their own thinking in relation to something else. In particular, it allows them to consider multiple possibilities for understanding their experience (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1996). Yorks and Marsick (2000) state that transformative learning in organisations is usually fostered by a kind of guided or directed critical reflection. The organisation expects the learners to reflect on roles, certain business assumptions, responsibilities, and so on. The application of the reflecting team during the MDNI could assist the participating managers in reflecting critically on their managerial assumptions and existing knowledge, creating space for a perspective transformation or “thicker” story (Morgan, 2000) to emerge.

Mezirow (2000) states that a perspective transformation often follows some variation of phase during which meaning becomes clarified. The reflecting team allows space for some of these phases, in particular:

- a critical assessment of assumptions;
- recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
- exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions;
- planning a course of action.

The use of the narrative therapy process and the reflecting team during the MDNI does indeed seem to pull together many of the considerations for enabling a perspective transformation in management within a post-modern context.

With this Step 2 of the qualitative research, namely the description of the components of the MDNI, is concluded.

5.3 DATA GATHERING

In this section the method used to gather data will be explained.

5.3.1 Pilot MDNI

The components of the MDNI were tested by presenting two sessions that do not form part of this study, but served the purpose of helping to refine the design of the MDNI. Some of the major learning points from these sessions that influenced the components of the MDNI as discussed above were:

- (1) it is not possible for participants to become effective reflecting team members without intensive training. For this reason it was decided to include a trained psychologist in the reflecting team to model the required behaviour and to facilitate the discussions of the reflecting team.
- (2) the participants cannot grasp all the guidelines for effective reflecting team behaviour in one session. This led to the decision to spread the discussion of the guidelines over the three sessions.
- (3) not all participants have the capacity to act as reflecting team members. This necessitated the rotation of reflecting team members. If a member was not effective in a reflecting team role, someone else replaced him/her during the next session. Care was taken not to communicate this as a performance issue, but all members knew from the outset that the reflecting team would rotate.
- (4) the pilot group also showed resistance to what they perceived in the first session as lack of structure. The adherence to the format as explained in 5.2 and the sequencing of the narrative therapy questions in more or less the same order as explained in Table 5.1 put the participants more at ease.

5.3.2 Presentation of the MDNI

The MDNI (consisting of three sessions each) was presented at the two client organisations. At both organisations the first session took approximately two hours, as the first hour was spent informing participants of the content of the Appendix to prepare them for their role as reflecting team members. The remaining two sessions took approximately one hour.

The procedure for each session followed the same format as explained in 5.2.4 and entailed the following:

- preparation;
- opening and orientation;
- identifying (mainly during the the first session) the problem-saturated story;
- following the narrative therapy process, incorporating the reflecting team process (see 5.2.5.2 for a detailed description of the procedure);
- closing.

The presentation of the MDNI provided the data for recording and analysis.

5.3.3 Recording of data

Audio recordings were made of the discussions during the MDNI. Participants were informed that the discussions are being recorded, but that the information would not be used for anything else but the study. Detailed information on the study would also not be communicated to the client organisations and trends only would be highlighted.

The content of the audiotaped discussions in all six sessions was transcribed. These transcripts allowed this researcher to re-read sections of text immediately and compare passages, which the serial medium of tape does not permit (Bozic, Leadbetter & Stringer, 1998). At the same time it also enhances the validity of the research, as the text is also available to others to scrutinise.

In this study the transcripts were written in a normal dialogue format, reflecting the words and sentences of the participants in turn. The transcripts were complete in terms of each participant's verbal contribution, but did not indicate non-verbal issues such as intonation, pauses, pronunciation, voice quality or rhythm. The specific format chosen in this study allowed equal representation of all verbal behaviour.

The data gathering phase therefore had three distinct end-results:

- information on how to refine of MDNI;

- tape-recorded session content;
- transcriptions on paper.

With this Step 3 of the qualitative study, namely the gathering of data, is completed.

5.4 DATA PROCESSING

The transcriptions of the sessions were used to process the data. The data processing involved the following aspects:

5.4.1 Description of data-processing team

In an effort to establish the confirmability of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1985), a team was used for the analysis of the data. The team consisted of the researcher and two registered psychologists who were skilled in narrative technique and discourse analysis. The analytical process followed by the team will be discussed in the next point.

5.4.2 Analysing the data

As this study is conducted from a social constructionist point of view, the method used to analyse data was discourse analysis. In this study the discourses were analysed by following Terre Blanche and Durrheim's (1999) three-faceted approach to discourses analysis. This approach and how it was followed in this study are described as follows:

5.4.2.1 *Identify the discourses that operate in the text*

The data analysis team firstly read the text individually and concentrated on identifying the dominant discourses/stories in the text. The team focused on broad patterns of talk – systems of statements – that are taken up in particular speeches and conversations, not the speeches or conversations themselves (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Although there are no hard and fast rules for the discourse analyst to follow when identifying discourses, the team applied Terre Blanche and Durrheim's (1999) notion of cultural competence and critical distance in identifying the major discourses.

Cultural competence means that the analyst must have a thorough cultural background to the various discourses that might be present in the text. In this study the team of analysts had a fair background on organisational culture and its various components that might play a role in the discourses. Evidence that they focused on broad patterns of talk and used their cultural competence can be seen, for example, in the identification of the major discourse of the management meta-myth. This was never a point of discussion. The team achieved this by achieving critical distance by extracting themselves (to a degree) from living *in* culture and moving towards reflecting *on* culture (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Once the team had identified the major discourses individually, they joined in a discussion to share their tentative findings. The team then reached consensus on the major discourses by explaining the rationale for the identification. Once the major discourses had been identified the team also listed some secondary discourses.

The team used the following "tricks" suggested by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) in identifying the discourses in the text:

- identifying binary oppositions for example, love-hate and good-bad. Binary oppositions are not always explicit in the text and the one side of the opposition is usually implicit. Examples of the use of this "trick" in this text are the identification of issues such as diversity versus sameness and safety versus uncertainty. In the diversity versus sameness discourse, the issue of sameness was implicit and in the safety versus uncertainty discourse, the safety issue was implicit.
- identifying recurrent terms, phrases and metaphors. In this study words such as "functionality" and "different" are examples of recurring words that were identified and used to identify dominant and/or implicit discourses.

- identifying the human subjects (including the author and listener) who are spoken about in the text. In this study the team as an author in the text identified someone like the “maverick”.

5.4.2.2 *Determine how particular effects are achieved by these discourses in the text*

Once the processing team has reached consensus on the dominant and other secondary discourses in the text they investigate the effects of the discourses. The question in this step is not “what does the discourse say?” but “what does the discourse do?” The team examined, for example, the effect of the “effectiveness” discourse in the text by asking questions such as “what is silenced by this discourse, what is supported by this discourse, who is supporting this discourse and why, what beliefs and ideas are involved in this discourse?”

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) state that a text/discourse is often intended to achieve many things simultaneously, for example, to advance a particular ideology or to motivate the reader. These intentions can be implicit or explicit in the text. The team of analysts read the text sceptically, asking:

- why? (these oppositions, these recurrent terms, phrases and metaphors, these subjects);
- what? (other elements could have been used);
- how? (are the effects achieved).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) are of the opinion that the identification of the effects of discourse is an essential part of discourse analysis. On the one hand, these effects limit the opportunities for certain kinds of action and certain forms of subjectivity, while on the other they enable others.

The processing team first identified the effects of all the discourses individually and then discussed them with each other and reached consensus on the major effects.

5.4.2.3 *Explicate the broader context within which the text operates*

To enable the processing team to examine how the discourses operated in the text it was also necessary to show how the discourses related to other discourses, and how they functioned on different occasions. The reading of many texts thus assisted in showing patterns of variation and consistency in discourse. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) state that to do this the researcher should be sensitised to context. In this study the broader organisational context, management development literature as well as organisational literature, were drawn in to show how the dominant discourses related to other discourses.

Explicating the broader context within which a text operates is, however, not that easy. The reason for this is the difficulty of defining the boundaries of a text in constructionist research, as everything is part of everything else. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), isolating a text from its surroundings is of necessity already to misunderstand it.

The data processing team used Terre Blanche and Durrheim's (1999) three ways to look at context. It involved the following three steps.

(1) Firstly, contextualise the text in the micro-context of conversation and debate. At this level the team attends to the way in which each participant in the conversation talks into spaces opened up by the flow of conversation. "Context in this sense is the conversational (or dialogical) context, and we should understand the meaning of an utterance in terms of where the conversation has led, what opportunities it has opened up (what it has made possible to do), and what it has closed down (what it has made impossible)". (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 164).

An example of this in the text is when one of the discussion team members in Organisation B created space for action by introducing the topic of the "human element" and that "it is just human to get cross, especially if the person is influenced negatively". Another team member followed this by describing the importance of forgiveness. The processing team had to ask: "What is this participant doing?" Based on the possible answers to this question the

processing team could read this text as a “way of speaking” in a religious way to silence the notion that, because you are human, you do not have control over your behaviour.

- (2) Secondly, contextualise the text in a macro-context of institutions and ideologies. Analysis on this level is necessary, because it situates the micro-conversations and clarifies meaning. Institutional contexts allow certain conversations and prevent others, while other discourses can also serve ideological functions, transcending institutional contexts. This was necessary to be able to identify all the functions of the text and was done by asking questions such as “what inferences, attributions and implications did certain constructions imply?” The way in which the discussion on problems was constructed in Organisation B, for example, seemed to indicate that negative conversations about problems, without mentioning solutions, were not allowed within Organisation B. The construction of achievement in Organisation A might, for example, serve an ideological purpose of upholding the capitalist value of free competition.
- (3) Thirdly, identify other discourses with which the text dialogues in the macro-context. Here the team looked at the way in which discourses refer to each other and thereby provided contexts for each other. The team introduced, for example, the human relations discourse to act as a foil for the technological discourse.

5.4.2.4 *Identify changes in discourses*

It was also necessary for the data processing team to identify changes in the discourses to achieve the objectives of this study. This was done by comparing the dominant discourses from session to session and also within sessions to determine whether these discourses differed. The team examined the discourses that they had identified to discover what features they might share and how these features changed (or stayed the same) across all the sessions.

The processing team firstly analysed Organisation A’s text and then the text of Organisation B in terms of these four focus areas. In summary, the analysis or processing of the data involved firstly an identification of the major discourses in the

text through the examination of binary oppositions, the tracking of recurrent themes, phrases and metaphors and the identification of human subjects or actors in the text. Secondly, it involved an examination of the effects of the discourses in the text through asking specific questions, for example, “what voices are silenced by this discourse?” The context of the discourses was also examined by identifying the different ways of conversation, by contextualising the discourses within the macro-context and by identifying other discourses that were in a way dialoging with the dominant discourses that had been identified. Lastly, the team tracked possible changes in the dominant discourses.

The team did this by identifying shifts in the conversation. To the processing team, a shift in conversation indicated a shift in what the participants had paid attention to and consequently a shift in reality that could provide an opportunity for new actions and results to occur (Ford, 1999). This was noted as an indication of a possible perspective transformation.

Although the team followed all these steps in an effort to achieve all the research objectives as stated in Chapter 1, they did not necessarily generate results on all these issues mentioned. To achieve these objectives it is necessary at least to identify the major discourses and their functions, as well as any changes that might have occurred. This structure is followed in the reporting of the results in Chapter 6.

5.4.3 Common analytic errors

The team (analysing the data) and the researcher made an effort to avoid the common mistakes of discourse analysis. After each analysis session, care was taken to monitor whether these mistakes had occurred during the analysis or not. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) list the following mistakes that could be made during discourse analysis:

5.4.3.1 Summarising

The text should not be repeated in condensed form, but analysis should show what the text does and how it does this. The original text is quoted verbatim in Chapter 6

after which the effects of the discourse are discussed. The text is not summarised anywhere in this study.

5.4.3.2 Thematising

The identification of recurrent themes or categories can be useful in orientating the researchers toward the text. The aim of discourse analysis is, however, not simply to represent themes, but to indicate how subjects and objects are constructed in the text. These constructions are then interrogated. Care was taken by the processing team to identify the dominant discourses and their implications, and not merely to list themes.

5.4.3.3 Contesting

The role of the researcher is not to establish whether a text is true or not, but rather to indicate how it achieves its “truth” effect. The data processing team did not judge the various discourses but merely reported them, as can be seen in Chapter 6.

5.4.3.4 Methodolatry

Cluttering an analysis with technical detail, trying to “prove” that the analysis has been done according to some sort of methodology, can lead to fragmentation of the analysis. The main focus should be on presenting the eventual understanding of the text in a meaningful way. Discussions of method in this study are kept to a minimum and more attention is paid to providing interpretations of the text in Chapter 6.

5.4.3.5 Psychologising

Although the data processing team sometimes started to analyse the author behind the text, rather than the text itself, these discussions were not reported for inclusion in this study. Again, the aim of the analysis was to find out more about the discourse that spoke through the text, rather than to find out what the author really meant.

5.4.3.6 Stating the obvious

Rather than laboriously spelling out everything that is obviously happening in a text, it is more useful to make a few incisive comments. In this study the focus was on the main discourses and not on the many other, smaller discourses inherent in the text.

5.4.3.7 Flights of fancy

The data processing team tried to avoid making far-fetched claims and made sure that all interpretations could be substantiated from the text.

5.4.4 Ethics and analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) outline recurring ethical issues in qualitative studies as they relate to analysis and also suggest how to deal with them. The issues relevant to this study will now be highlighted:

5.4.4.1 Informed consent

This issue concerns the information available to the participants in the study. Participants should have adequate information at their disposal so that they can make an informed decision on whether they should give consent or not. Weak consent usually leads to poorer data because respondents will try to protect themselves in a relationship of mistrust and ambiguity. This can also influence the quality of the study at a later stage.

In this particular study participants received an invitation with a full explanation of the focus of the study. They were free to decline or accept. At the first session the process was explained further, for example, the role of the participants, data gathering techniques, confidentiality of the information, how the study results would be released and how the participants had been selected was explained. Although no reasons were given, one of the participants in the pilot group chose to withdraw from the study at that stage. Generally all the participants gave their full consent to the use of the discourses as the focus for the study.

5.4.4.2 Honesty and trust

This issue concerns the researcher's relationship with the participants and its authenticity. The researcher must make sure that promises to the participants are kept and that the perception of researchers in general is not harmed. In this study the participants were promised access to the results of the study and care will be taken to ensure that they receive it.

5.4.4.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Here the researcher has to answer questions such as, "In what way will the study intrude, or come closer to people than they want?" "How will information be guarded?" "How identifiable are the individuals and organisations being studied?" In this particular case the participants were assured that responses would not be linked to any individual in an identifiable way. Unfortunately, the organisations taking part could be easily identified, but they all gave consent to the study. They did, however, request a limit on the widespread publication of results.

The analysis of the data with the discourse analysis technique concluded Step 4 of the qualitative research.

5.5 ISSUES FOR EXPLORATION

The descriptive and somewhat exploratory nature of this research does not allow for a precisely delimited problem statement or precise hypotheses. It does, however, allow for the discovery of important questions, processes, and relationships (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Although Marshall and Rossman (1995) admit that it is difficult to state a traditional/positivist hypothesis in qualitative research, they still think that it is possible to formulate a set of guiding hypotheses. Guiding hypotheses are merely tools used to generate questions and to search for patterns, and may be discarded when the researcher finds other exciting patterns. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), this approach retains the flexibility needed to allow the precise

focus of the research to evolve during the research process itself. Initially the following guiding hypotheses for this study could be stated.

5.5.1 Guiding Hypothesis One

The use of the MDNI would cause the participants to alter the initial nature of their discourse and would lead to a richer discourse, allowing for alternate views.

Here the input of Mezirow (1989, p. 171) in terms of a "richer" discourse would be used: "A superior perspective is more inclusive, discriminative and integrative of experience, is based on fuller information, is freer from coercion or distorting self-deception, more open to other perspectives and points of view, more accepting of others as equal participants in discourse, more rational in assessing contending arguments and evidence, more critically reflective and more willing to accept an informed and rational consensus as the authority for adjudicating conflicting validity claims".

5.6.2 Guiding Hypothesis Two

The use of the MDNI would allow for perspective transformation.

5.6.3 Guiding Hypothesis Three

The different organisational cultures would result in different discourses and perspective transformations in each group.

These guiding hypotheses lead to the research questions stated earlier in point 1.2.

- (1) To what extent does Transformative Learning Theory explain adult learning from the post-modern as well as social constructionist paradigms?
- (2) Are current best practices in management development meeting the needs of post-modern management development?
- (3) Would it be possible to develop a management development intervention based on narrative therapy with the intent to facilitate managers to develop an "alternative" view of managerial issues?

- (4) Would the application of narrative therapy in a management development intervention facilitate transformational learning, with specific emphasis on a perspective transformation?
- (5) What lessons could be learned from such an application and how could the resulting recommendations benefit industrial psychology as a discipline?

With this Step 5 of the qualitative research, namely the formulation of issues for further exploration, is concluded.

5.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter the participants in the study were described. Secondly, the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI) was discussed in terms of its development, rationale, objectives, components, administration, interpretation, criteria for soundness and justification. Data gathering and processing was then explained and lastly, some issues for further exploration were formulated. The results of the data analysis will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of the study, as well as the interpretation thereof. The discussion themes are stated to provide background to the discourses identified. The results from the discourse analysis are then presented in three categories, namely the major discourses that were present in both organisations, the organisation-specific discourses and finally moments of change. In the discussion of each discourse the elements from the text indicating the discourse will first be addressed, after which the function of the discourse in the text will be discussed. After a discussion of the moments of change in the discourses, the impact of the reflecting team on the discourses will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the results. It is important to note that the readings of the text offered here are not presented as “truths”, but as possible interpretations (amongst many other possibilities).

6.1 DISCUSSION THEMES

Both groups were asked to identify a specific management challenge. Organisation A selected the management of diversity as a management challenge. Organisation B selected the challenge of keeping their staff positive. These issues only provided the surface content of the discussions, however, and by doing a discourse analysis it was possible to isolate some major as well as some smaller discourses.

6.2 MAJOR DISCOURSES

The major discourses in the text as identified by the data processing team are reflected and discussed in more detail in this section. An overview of the discourse is firstly provided and then substantiated with examples from the text. The function (or effects) of the discourse in the text is also discussed. Some of the original text was in Afrikaans. For the purposes of this study it was translated, but the original text is also provided in brackets to ensure authenticity.

6.2.1 The managerial meta-myth

The culture of most organisations is fundamentally modern and the modernism is characterised by technical rationality (Ingersoll & Adams, 1989). According to Ingersoll and Adams (1989), technical rationality is the convergence of the scientific-analytical mindset and technological progress. They explain technical rationality as a set of beliefs found in management and organisations and refer to it as the managerial meta-myth. According to these researchers (Ingersoll & Adams, 1989), the managerial meta-myth includes the belief that eventually all work processes can and should be rationalised, i.e. broken into their constituent parts and so understood thoroughly so that they can be completely controlled.

It also includes the belief that the means for attaining organisational objectives or ends deserve maximum attention, with the result that the end quickly becomes subordinated to those means, even to the extent that the end becomes lost or forgotten. Lastly, it includes the belief that efficiency and predictability are more important than any other consideration in managing an organisation.

This discourse could be read in both organisations, but it was more evident in Organisation A. The discourse of the managerial meta-myth in the two organisations will now be highlighted.

6.2.1.1 Organisation A

There are many instances of the discourse of the managerial meta-myth in the text of the sessions with Organisation A, but the following phrases suffice to illustrate this:

When asked by the facilitator what they had done to manage diversity in the team they responded as follows:

PARTICIPANT C: What I did basically if I may? First and foremost, set rules from the start. The rules being what is acceptable in terms of team behaviour and what is

unacceptable, make sure those rules are accepted unilaterally, not just by one person, so there has to be consensus and from there on you start looking for common ground.

PARTICIPANT A: Ja, it is like a game, you set the playing field, these are the parameters, these are the rules and regulations and then that is it, you do not change it. I cannot think of a specific example, but that is basically how I will do it.

These phrases underline the belief that efficiency and predictability are very important. The objective of setting the rules and specifying what is acceptable and what is not seems to be an attempt by the respondents to make things more predictable and more controllable within the organisation. Diversity could be associated with unpredictability and the need on the part of the participants to set the rules and regulations might reflect an effort to seek co-workers who are predictable and who are more like them (the discussion group). The rules and regulations create a common meaning system and provide a sense of security. The managerial meta-myth is also characterised by the notion of “instrumental reason” (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986), as illustrated in the following:

PARTICIPANT G: I cannot think of a specific example, but what I have observed is that in our own team, if there are differing opinions or point of view, at the end, because we know that we have an objective to meet, people tend to compromise their standpoints and sort of surrender just to, for the sake of progress.

FACILITATOR: Okay, so they surrender?

PARTICIPANT G: They move from their positions if it is not taking us anywhere, you know, even if they felt strongly about it, for the sake of achieving goals.

This might indicate instrumental reasoning as the narrow application of human reasoning solely in the service of instrumental aims (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986). In this example the aim is the achievement of objectives and if some of the organisation members’ reasoning does not support this, they silence themselves for the sake of achieving it.

The managerial meta-myth is also closely related to modern bureaucracy that is viewed as technically superior to other forms of organisation because organisation members execute their tasks in a dispassionate or depersonalised manner, based

on the application of impersonal rules, using their technical knowledge and expertise (Gephart, 1996). In the above example the organisation members might be acting according to an implicit rule that own points of view should not impede the achievement of objectives and should therefore be subordinate to the greater goal. Another example of the individual being seen as a depersonalised and subordinate part in the achievement of objectives is in the following:

PARTICIPANT C: . It is all about aligning personalities and to align the personalities for certain functions within the group. That is difficult and the reason why it is difficult is because I have an idea and I have got a goal, I need to achieve that goal and I need to utilise all these different personalities within the group to achieve that goal.

The choice of a word such as utilisation seems to indicate that personalities are viewed as a means to attaining organisational objectives. "Personalities" in this example are viewed as a means to achieving the goal. Although the choice of the word "personalities" could be interpreted as an effort to depersonalise the human element to a mechanism for goal achievement, it does, however, also carry some recognition for the uniqueness of the individual. This uniqueness seems to be viewed as problematic as it might not be easy to control all these "personalities" and to make them more predictable as a means to the end. The presence of "personalities" (or people with their own ideas) seems to counteract the key belief in the managerial meta-myth that there is overriding good in the rationalised ordering of activities and people (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986).

The presence of the managerial meta-myth can also be seen in the use of words such as efficiency, control, model, performance and issues of accountability and responsibility, as is evident in the following examples:

PARTICIPANT D: ... then looking on new ways to do things more efficiently, more control obviously,...

PARTICIPANT B: So you need to have a fairly loosely based approach in terms of defining the business model for an organisation.

PARTICIPANT A: But shouldn't there be somebody within the organisation to actually educate, because otherwise you are talking about how many teams within an organisation? And each team is going to have its own little education.

PARTICIPANT A: I tried to get involvement, try and get them to actually take part and take ownership of certain issues, not just let them have the input in the overall picture. So they had their own responsibility and had to table that and just get them, get them by and give them that responsibility.

PARTICIPANT C: Ja, but he still needs an understanding of that there is a non-performance of a specific action, he needs to understand what is going to happen.

It could be suggested that the social construction of the concept of effectiveness is culturally relative to the aims of the modernist world (Farmer, 1995). Although Farmer (1995) deconstructs the concept of efficiency, the same comments could be made of the concept of effectiveness. He states, for example, that efficiency was valued in premodernity, but it is even more useful in a society organised in the relatively freewheeling manner of market enterprise.

Efficiency becomes a valued activity for purposes of control in circumstances where the market is structured in terms of decentralised decision making (Farmer, 1995). It seems as if the participants from Organisation A espouse this belief. There is some evidence from the text that the managerial meta-myth seems to be a dominant discourse and therefore plays a role in the discussion group's problem-saturated story.

6.2.1.2 Organisation B

References to support the presence of this set of beliefs in this organisation are scarce, but a case could be made that the "happiness" of employees in Organisation B is viewed as a means of achieving organisational goals. As in the managerial meta-myth, all the energy of the managers in Organisation B seems to be focused on the means (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986), and in this case the means are the employees (who should ideally be happy). Some of the following phrases might indicate this.

PARTICIPANT I: The quicker they know the work, the quicker they can get into the system, the quicker they know what to do, the quicker they will be happy and enable the whole stream to move.

[PARTICIPANT I: Hoe vinniger hulle die werk ken, hoe vinniger hulle in die stelsel kom, hoe vinniger hulle weet wat om te doen, hoe vinniger gaan hulle dan ook gelukkig wees wat dan die hele stroom laat beweeg].

PARTICIPANT K: Positive people give better performance. Better performance gives better financial results. Better financial results give happy stakeholders. So it is important, not only for me, but also for the organisation in the bigger frame.

[PARTICIPANT K: Positiewe mense gee better performance. Better performance gee better financial results. Better financial results gee happy stakeholders. So dit is belangrik. Nie net vir my nie, maar dit raak ook vir (Organisation B) in die groter frame].

PARTICIPANT J: You know the thing is, as soon as you doubt yourself, as soon as you are negative about something, you will never be able to be productive.

PARTICIPANT I: As Gayton said, at the end of the day, if people are positive, the work gets done.

[PARTICIPANT I: Soos Gayton gesê het, aan die einde van die dag as die mense positief is kom die werk gedoen].

These are examples of where the means (a happy worker) become paramount and the objectives become secondary. In this particular organisation the overarching goal of the managers was to keep the workers happy, to such an extent that the bigger ultimate goal was vague and as in the first phrase, expressed in emotional terms – “happy” stakeholders.

6.2.1.3 The function of the managerial meta-myth

Adams and Ingersoll (1989) note that there is no suggestion that the management meta-myth is the way things actually work, but rather that it represents a set of shared beliefs about how things ought to be, and about what is good and worthwhile. As such, the managerial meta-myth tends to be used as a guide for organisational action and in the process takes on the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. In Organisation A it seems that this underlying belief shaped the

respondents' views of how diversity should be managed. According to them, diversity causes unpredictability that could impact negatively on the attainment of organisational objectives and should as such be rationalised and understood in order to make its effect predictable and controllable.

Adams and Ingersoll (1989) argue that the presence of the managerial meta-myth in many organisations seems to indicate that there is one stream of cultural content that transcends organisational boundaries and that informs the culture of many organisational groups. They substantiate their view that the managerial meta-myth is part of a culture that transcends particular organisations by referring to the widespread acceptance of a specific managerial language. Those accepting this language – replete with words such as accountability, planning, evaluation, performance review, and efficiency – typically state that this is what management is about, and that the words represent an essential approach to the successful operation of large, complex organisations.

The two client organisations function within a larger culture that seems to espouse the managerial meta-myth. According to Ingersoll and Adams (1986), the rational-technical myth system is ubiquitous in Western culture, and therefore in the South African business culture. The way in which managers in client organisations understand their managerial role is influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which they live (Morgan, 2000), of which the managerial meta-myth is one. Morgan (2000) believes that some stories will have a positive impact, while others will have a negative effect on life in the past, present and future. In this case it seems that the influence of the managerial meta-myth has helped to shape a story in which the managers in the two organisations are under pressure to ensure the survival of this very meta-myth.

6.2.2 The modern narrative of progress and universal design

The grand narrative of progress (characteristic of the modern paradigm) is a prominent discourse in organisation A and is also, to a lesser extent, visible in the text from Organisation B. Gergen (1992b) describes this faith in progress and universal design as an assurance of a steadily improving future because of the

obvious gains in knowledge or understanding of fundamentals. As humans succeed in mastering fundamental knowledge of energy, biological systems, psychological mechanisms, social structures and the like, they can move toward utopian societies. As knowledge of essentials is also universal knowledge, humans allow themselves to have faith in rationally derived, large-scale designs for society. The following text could be used to explore this discourse in the various organisations.

6.2.2.1 Organisation A

Various references to goal achievement, success and winning were made in Organisation A's discussions. A few of these examples will now be discussed.

PARTICIPANT E: I think it is also similar to what she has mentioned in the sense that we have got a team of diverse people, we have got people that are functioning at a certain level and you have got the others that are sort of way ahead and to try and keep your team together taking into account that forward vision that some of the members have and to try and keep them focused in terms of going together in terms of achieving what they need to achieve.

This exchange seems to indicate that not all the organisation members share the same vision and that there is some inequality in the situation. The position of the manager in this equation is problematic, as he/she has to take both positions into account, but has eventually to ensure progress towards the set goals. This leaves questions as to who decides on these goals, how the setting of these goals is linked to power and who is marginalised in the goal setting process. The assumption could be made that this vision of progress has not been derived through a participative process, but that the discussion team members view a participative process as a preferable alternative, as in the following example:

PARTICIPANT C: We have our own differences, we have got our feelings and ideas. It should be for the good of the team, that is why I call participative management is all about working together for a common goal but for the team and that is when also coming more to the point of unity, that is why I find that people will find a feeling of unity and belonging. As soon as a team becomes successful and you become part of a

successful team, you know, it creates a strong unity. So individuality ... (indistinct) those are excellent from time to time. The other point which I also heard, there was a ... (indistinct) when you talked about rules and the ... (indistinct) immediately ... (indistinct) no, rules, you know, no, you know. I feel discipline for me in a team is essential. You cannot have like a free for all.

The grand narrative of progress (or the achievement of goals) is viewed as a possible unifying factor in this text. The impression is also created that individuality is only allowed from time to time and is not always welcomed. This account also seems to support the idea that there is a universal design for team effectiveness. If one follows this design, progress could be achieved. This is typical of the modern organisation as a managerial system, using behavioural science and technology to integrate people into mutually reinforcing and co-operative relationships (Gephart, 1996). The modernist assumption of the organisation as a major source of human unity and progress seems to be supported (Gergen & Joseph, 1996). The narrative of progress could also be deduced from the emphasis in the text on winning, as is evident in the following examples.

PARTICIPANT C: If the team keeps on winning, you know, it improves your self esteem and it improves basically a lot about yourself and you start in the context of the team as well.

PARTICIPANT E: I think just one last point in terms of the strong allusion (?) towards, using a sports team in terms of explaining how teams function within (the organisation) that ultimate goal of (the organisation) is to win in whatever they do and whatever new goals they achieve they want to be number one and I think that cascades down to even your individual teams, that whatever you do you want to be number one, even if it is a small project that you do. How you achieve it, ... (indistinct), all of that, contributes to being number one and I think that is the thing that holds strong within the whole organisation is that being number one which is the aim and the goal of any sports team be it soccer, basketball or whatever.

PARTICIPANT B: Therefore you are not a group, you are a team and that is the problem with diversity, is that at the end of the day the more the diversity, the more difficult it is to try and achieve the same goal and that is the whole reason why we all are in this organisation – is to achieve a single goal, and that is to make this

organisation successful and to a large degree in my opinion diversity actually acts against that goal.

The last three accounts emphasise the modern narrative of performance and progress assumptions (Boje, Fitzgibbens & Steingard, 1996) in the sense that it highlights goal achievement. Goal achievement is expressed in terms of winning, success and being number one. The emphasis on winning is not surprising in this organisation as its vision statement reads "To Win". The text shows that this vision has been internalised to a large extent and that it acts as a yardstick in measuring the extent of progress or goal achievement. "Being number one" would probably be regarded as an acceptable measure of achievement while being "number two" would be unacceptable.

The concept of "team" also seems to be important in the achievement of goals. Walker (1992) states that the idea of a team is that people cooperate in working together to ensure each other's success, for example, in this text "it improves your self esteem". According to Walker (1992, p. 266) this "does not require altruism, but rather a sense of common purpose and a feeling that their individual goals are compatible with this purpose". The issue of a common, unifying goal is stressed in this text and the team becomes part of the means to ensure progress.

The emphasis on the "team" could also be linked to the current emphasis on organisational culture in understanding the nature and productivity of organisations (Siegel, 2001). Organisational culture concerns groups of people collectively building a picture of what the organisation is about and how it undertakes its purpose (<http://www.managingchange.com/bpr/bprcult/3culture.htm>). In this text the collective is viewed as important in achieving the organisation's goals and thus in ensuring progress.

Another aspect of progress that could be inferred from the text is that progress means sacrifice. The individual has to surrender his/her autonomy. The following response alludes to this.

PARTICIPANT G: I cannot think of a specific example, but what I have observed is that in our own team, if there are differing opinions or point of view, at the end, because we know that we have an objective to meet, people tend to compromise their standpoints and sort of surrender just to, for the sake of progress.

FACILITATOR: Okay, so they surrender?

PARTICIPANT G: They move from their positions if it is not taking us anywhere, you know, even if they felt strongly about it, for the sake of achieving goals.

The word surrender is particularly strong in this context, implying the great force of progress and that nothing could or should stand in its way.

The following is another example of sacrifice being linked to the narrative of progress.

PARTICIPANT A: They come here they do the necessary and that's it. They don't feel the need to actually go overboard and work half an hour later...

The construction created by the word "overboard" implies that employees must be willing to drown their own needs and desires for this cause – to ensure progress. To be able to perform one has to sacrifice, and sacrifice is perceived as performance. Adequate behaviour is not adequate anymore in this context. The employee is caught in a "catch 22" situation: if they go overboard, they die, if they do not they are left out.

This could be linked to the characteristics of fiefdom-style management that emerges in the hybrid bureaucracy that is characteristic of late modernism (Gephart, 1996). In fiefdom-style management being seen as a team player is important. "Team players are interchangeable with others, do not hold strong convictions, and are flexible in taking perspectives. Furthermore, team players put in long hours at work, are 'good members', align with the dominant ideology of the moment, and display a happy, upbeat, can-do attitude – the 'right' style" (Gephart, 1996, p. 30). Part of the managers' problem-saturated story is the perception that their direct reports do not understand and act according to this institutional logic. It is problematic to the manager because the fate of the manager is based on

accomplishing goals in accordance with the prevailing institutional logic of the organisation (Gephart, 1996) that seems to require “sacrifice” or “team players”.

6.2.2.2 Organisation B

The modern narrative of progress is not explicitly present and the closest reference could be in the text already reflected in 6.1.1.2.

6.2.2.3 The function of the narrative of progress and universal design

These narratives in Organisations A and B serve as the ultimate guiding principle for behaviour. The narrative of progress balances on all the other tensions in the discourse, namely: sameness versus diversity, free-flowing diversity versus contained diversity, the beast of technology versus the human touch, and autonomy versus organisational control. Progress is the ultimate goal and there is a universal plan to get there. Issues such as diversity, autonomy and the human touch are not part of the plan, because these are viewed as hampering the achievement of progress. Part of the design is teamwork, contained diversity, technology and control. The following response from Organisation A illustrates the underlying resistance when this universal design or plan is challenged.

PARTICIPANT C: Actually I am very surprised, because in my mind alignment is synonym with cohesion and in my mind that was one of the biggest problems when we started. There was no cohesion, there was not a team spirit, everybody was for himself and I think the strength lies in unity and alignment for me means aligning the positive aspects of all the persons in the team and getting the best out of them and let the team then work towards a common goal.

It seems from this text the modern idea of progress is accepted as a value base and that discussion in the group is evaluated from this perspective, hence the emphasis on alignment. The notion of systematic progress is clearly evident in most management literature and the view is that with the consistent application of reason and empirical observation, there should be steady increments in the organisation's capacity for control and positive innovation (Gergen & Joseph, 1996). Rationality

and empiricism play an important role in the machine metaphor that is discussed in the next section.

6.2.3 The machine metaphor

The use of the machine metaphor is very common in modernism and was also prevalent in the text from Organisation A and B. According to Gergen (1992b), the following factors contribute to the absorption in the machine metaphor:

- the enormous social consequences of the industrial revolution;
- the efficiency of lifestyles increasingly engendered by the machine;
- the prevailing Enlightenment vision in science of the world as one great machine.

The machine metaphor stresses the systematic relationships between or among basic elements. Thus, if one understands the machine's internal functioning, and has control over the inputs, one can depend on a reliable product (Gergen, 1992b). In this discourse the worker is designed to act as a computer as well as a machine (Murray in Forrester, Payne & Ward, 1995).

The use of the words functioning, functionality, functions and utilise in the text creates the image of the machine and strengthens the metaphor. Examples of this in the two organisations will now be discussed.

6.2.3.2 Organisation A

In the discourse of Organisation A the machine metaphor is used in support of the grand narrative of progress and the managerial meta-myth. Some of the machine-related words that are used in the text can be seen in the following examples:

FACILITATOR: ... at the same time you would like to utilise the diversity to get them to be more creative to do things better every day.

PARTICIPANT E: ... We have people who are functioning at a certain level ...

PARTICIPANT C: It is all about aligning personalities and align the personalities for certain functions within the group. That is difficult and the reason why it is difficult is

because I have got an idea and I have got a goal, I need to achieve that goal and I need to utilise all these different personalities within the group to achieve that goal.

The conception of the human as a mechanical device to achieve goals is supported by the use of words such as utilise and even align. This perspective is typical of the rational-mechanical school of thought, typical of Max Weber, Henry Fayol and Frederick Taylor, who developed their organisation theories early in the nineteenth hundreds (Robbins, 1990).

Although Herbst (1974) said it in another context, the way in which the machine metaphor is constructed here reminds one of human beings who are willing to act as substitutes for machines and to subordinate themselves to the requirements of authoritarian and hierarchical work organisations. The players in this discourse (the employees of Organisation A) seem to experience a situation where they perceive that they have no choice. According to them they must become part of the machine and its hierarchy to ensure survival. This is illustrated in the following excerpts.

PARTICIPANT A: ... So it is not per game and if somebody does not perform, the team will only win if the whole team works as a team. If somebody does not perform in one game, he might be replaced. So you have to stick to the team, you have to stick together.

The threat of exclusion seems always to be present and one must make sure that one performs one's function in this machine for the sake of progress. The emphasis on unity ("sticking together") might also indicate the employee's reliance on others to understand the total process and to ensure that expertise is available in the team. Boje (1999c, p. 6) describes this as follows: "As science builds more mechanical systems of organisation, the average worker understands little of the total process and is dependent upon a few experts who understand the system as a whole. To keep the fiction of progress alive, the labor statisticians and sociologists cleverly redefined 'unskilled', 'semi-skilled' and 'skilled' occupations – to make it appear that with more technology and science, that skills were being 'upgraded'".

The choice of the word “replaced” could also play on the “replacing of parts in a machine”. The impression is that the team members know that they are expendable within this machine and therefore have to create unity to strengthen their individual positions. This view corresponds with Taylor’s (1856 – 1915) modelling of the organisation on the machine with its cheap, interchangeable parts (Wertheim, 2002).

6.2.3.2 Organisation B

This discourse was an ever-present, though silent discourse, in this text. The emphasis was on counteracting negativity as a response to the presence of this metaphor in the organisation. Whereas the group in organisation A allowed the machine metaphor in the text, Organisation B only dealt with its effects. The reason for this might be that the system (machine) in Organisation B seems to be more intangible and fragmented, but still dehumanised and omnipresent. Although negativity was called the monster in the text, in actual fact the system is the monster and negativity the consequence of becoming vulnerable to this monster (system). In most instances there was a strong emphasis on the humanist discourse in response to the dehumanised machine metaphor, for example:

PARTICIPANT H: Yes, just that loftiness of his, brought him down to realise that he is still working with humans. It is people working with him, not robots.

[PARTICIPANT H: Ja, net daardie verhewenheid van hom het hom afgebring om te weet kyk hy werk nog saam met mense. Dit is mense wat saam met hom werk, nie robotte nie].

The perception that one cannot escape this machine is evident in the following text:

PARTICIPANT I: I will say, make the statement, the monster is just locked up every now and then, or something like that. In general it is not something that can disappear totally.

[PARTICIPANT I: Ek sal sê, die stelling gemaak het nou, die monster word elke keer net nou en dan toegesluit of iets van die aard. Oor die algemeen is dit nie iets wat heeltmal kan verdwyn nie].

Boje (1999d) mentions that there is a tendency for every working organisation to revert to a mechanistic system, since this persists as the dominant model of organisation. This dominance is recognised in the text from Organisation B.

6.2.3.3 Function of the machine metaphor

In this text the metaphor serves as a supporting principle for the progress narrative. In a sense it is viewed as the mechanism through which progress will be achieved. In Organisation A particularly, the discourse reduces the human element to a mere cog in the wheel, a part of the machine. As soon as the machine metaphor is present, it allows for a minimising discourse, dehumanising the human element. Examples are:

PARTICIPANT A: You find people are a little bit lazy. They may be in a comfort zone and they feel they don't really need to do anything else. They come, here they do the necessary and that's it. They don't feel the need to go overboard and work half an hour later or longer or do anything other than is expected of them.

FACILITATOR: So they stay in their boxes?

In this section the text allows the voice of the manager to be raised on the subject. The manager has to drive this machine and ensure output, but it seems as if the parts of the machine do not always function optimally (they are "lazy" and only do what is necessary). This illustrates the dilemma of order and agency. Styhre (2000, p. 3) asks "How is order possible in a society of accountable, autonomous subjects?"

According to Styhre (2000), this question highlights two opposing forces, namely the centripetal force (individualism) and the centrifugal force (the request for order). He states further that in much organisational theory the actor (employee) is postulated to be either willing to accept being part of a structure and developing a collective conscience, or being more or less aggressively subjugated by social structures. Both perspectives imply an agency problem (Styhre, 2000), because the employee is not a free agent in either perspectives, but conforms to a certain framework and set of

expectations. In this text it appears that the managerial voice would ideally like to see the implementation of the first perspective.

By putting the employees in “boxes”, the facilitator contributes to the dehumanising discourse. Another example of the minimising of the human element in the text is:

PARTICIPANT D: It is not going to work to have all those skills running around.

In this example humans are reduced to skills, indicating their level of importance in this machine. Boje (1999c) is of the opinion that humans are actually deskilled within the machine metaphor and that what used to be craft mastery has become the skill of tending, watching, oiling or feeding a machine. The skills “running around” in this example are probably viewed as instruments within the larger mechanistic system.

A further function of the machine metaphor is to enable people to deal with change and the unknown. Koss (1989) explains that human beings yearn for certainty and that they would like to know precisely what tomorrow is going to bring so that they can prepare themselves sufficiently to profit from this knowledge. At a macro level, the quantitative paths taken by most academic disciplines are indicative of this desire for certainty. According to Koss (1989), on a personal level, when people's risk-taking propensity is diminished and their ability to deal with change and the unknown seriously threatened, they look for answers instead of engaging in the rigour of thinking for themselves and developing their intuition. On the organisational level, this type of response has given rise to many systems, structure designs and ways of managing that promise “success”. In turn, this has created an environment in which the system and not the people are responsible for the successes and failures within and of organisations (Koss, 1989). Organisation A functions in a rapidly changing technological environment and this may account for the strength of the machine metaphor in this text.

Another possible function of the machine metaphor that is not necessarily explicit in this text, but is worth exploring, is the issue of immortality. Sievers (1989) states that a crucial difference between human and non-human systems is the fact that non-human systems or things are immortal. Although they may be consumed, worn out

or destroyed, they lack the ability to die or to be aware of their potential death as a precondition of life. This might be offered as a hypothesis in general for the pervasiveness of the machine metaphor – it allows people to think that they can escape mortality.

Sievers (1989, p. 87) describes it as follows: “Collectively we have got used to such an extent to the conviction that death will occur neither at the work place nor during work life, that human mortality no longer can be perceived and related as a constituent part of the human system in the work context”. In an organisation such as Organisation A, where most employees have an average age of no more than 35, this is worth noting. By associating with the machine metaphor the employees could postpone realisation of their own mortality and become part of the big, indestructible machine.

The machine metaphor also allows for a more geometric construction of relationships as suggested by the words “silos, boxes, alignment, level, boundaries, cohesion, hierarchy and comparison”. This geometric construction of relationships developed predominantly during Taylorism and involved breaking down each task to its smallest unit to work out the one best way to do each job (Wertheim, 2002).

“Taylor attempted to make a science for each element of work and restrict behavioral alternatives facing workers. Taylor looked at interaction of human characteristics, social environment, task, and physical environment, capacity, speed, durability, and cost. The overall goal was to remove human variability” (Wertheim, 2002, p. 2). The machine metaphor’s major role seems therefore to be one of control and of keeping human behaviour at a manageable level within the organisation (machine).

6.2.4 The human relations discourse

The Human Relations Movement in organisational theory resulted from the criticism of scientific management, as evident in the machine metaphor. According to Wertheim (2002), a number of researchers began to examine the discrepancy between how an organisation was supposed to work as opposed to how the workers

actually behaved. The Hawthorne studies are the most famous in this field and found that workers did not necessarily respond to classical motivational approaches as suggested by the Scientific Management and Taylor approaches (Wertheim, 2002).

Wertheim (2002) and Boylan (2001) identify the following basic assumptions of the human relations discourse:

- organisations are social systems, not just technical-economic systems;
- work satisfaction and hence performance is basically not economic and depends more on working conditions and attitudes, for example communication, positive management response and encouragement;
- employees are interdependent and their behaviour is often shaped by the social context, for example, the peer group plays an influential role and acts as a social control mechanism over the work habits and attitudes of the employee as individual;
- the need for recognition, security and a sense of belonging is more important in determining a worker's morale and productivity than the physical working conditions;
- there is no automatic correlation between organisational and individual needs
- communication channels cover both logical/economic aspects of an organisation and feelings of people;
- teamwork is essential for co-operation and sound technical decisions;
- leadership should be modified to include concepts of human relations;
- job satisfaction will lead to higher job productivity;
- management requires effective social skills, not just technical skills.

The basic premises of the human relations discourse in the two organisations will now be discussed.

6.2.4.1 Organisation A

When the human relations discourse is present in Organisation A, it is usually subordinate to the rational/technical/machine metaphor. For example:

PARTICIPANT A: If I may be specific about facilities, it is a fact that people don't get recognition. I mean I can give them a pat on the back, but that is not enough. We are always doing crisis management, it is always we never, we are never pro-active, we can't catch up, there's too much to do and it is recognition, people would say why, why do more, why work later, why do this. Nobody sees it, nobody recognises it.

FACILITATOR: So you feel that, let's say, as a manager of that team your recognition is not enough for the team?

PARTICIPANT A: No, no I mean I don't write the guy's cheque, I don't give him a bonus. I can recommend; how far it goes is out of my control.

The discourse initially seemed to be about the notion in the Human Relations Movement that better human relations (in the form of better recognition) would increase satisfaction and thus output (Stuart-Kotze, 2002). Further explanation showed, however, that the discourse is about financial recognition. This discourse is in contrast to the human relations emphasis on power, status and group coherence as the determinants of worker performance and shows a strong correlation with the scientific management school that stresses the centrality of cash (Resheff, 2002).

Although the Human Relations Movement argued that financial incentives are less important, Silver (1987) states that the Hawthorne studies have not stood up well to critical analysis and that the classical motivators such as money and stringent, tough supervision are much more important than interpreters of the Hawthorne studies allowed. Silver (1987) mentions that the importance of financial incentives was confirmed by interviews with women who took part in the experiment, and that figures quoted confirmed that they made more money. The example in this text therefore highlights the controversies in the human relations discourse.

The voice of the manager in this text also indicates a feeling of powerlessness and lack of bargaining power with which to provide the employees with the financial incentives needed to improve their performance. One has a sense of the machine metaphor overpowering the socio-psychological factors in the employee motivation initially alluded to in the text. The manager as actor therefore finds it difficult to influence the machine (to provide more money) as well as the humans ("parts of") in

the machine. One of the basic premises of the Human Relations Movement is that employees are motivated by many needs (Wertheim, 2002), for example, social affiliation needs and the quest for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968). In this text, however, these needs are not allowed to overpower the hierarchical discourse that is necessary to support the machine metaphor. This can be seen in the following text:

PARTICIPANT E: I think in terms of the way HR is structured in the organisation, you have a group of graduates, some post-graduates who have aspirations and an academic thing they do and the functionality that you have does not meet with their expectations in terms of having that ability to do a lot more to contribute to the HR field and when you have that restriction where you're bogged down with more sort of less challenging work in the team, you have a team of people who are specialised in the field, but are not allowed to in terms of the structure to deliver more.

The human relations premise that people work in a humane context where their unique natures are expressed, is not allowed for in this machine discourse. The employee is robbed of his/her uniqueness and his/her own subjective experience has no meaning. The human element is to a certain extent pathologised in Organisation A. The following piece of text on the need for recognition is constructed in such a way as to indicate that if an employee is externally motivated, he/she is not healthy and is unreasonably needy. The word "need" is used to create this impression:

PARTICIPANT B: Yes. One of the comments that was made was also about the need for receiving recognition and, as they said, credit. In my mind there is always this debate about are you an externally driven person or an internally driven person and if you are an externally driven person then you have this need for acknowledgement on a constant basis. If you are an internally driven man it is a question of achievement, question of satisfaction, you know you don't need somebody to come and pat you on the back and say thank you every day or every week to say you have done a good job, but in your heart of hearts you know you have actually done well for yourself.

The function of this is to imply that the employee cannot achieve if he/she needs the human touch. The machine is not capable of providing the employee with this human element, and if the employee has a strong need for external recognition, he/she cannot be part of the machine. The pathologising of the need for recognition is achieved by making use of a device called the "extreme case formulation" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The need for recognition is formulated in the extreme by implying that externally motivated people would like to be thanked and patted on the back constantly and every day.

In one instance, however, the silent voice of the human relations discourse was raised in some (but not total) resistance to the machine metaphor:

PARTICIPANT D: ...I think we as managers probably, this is my belief that as you move up the rank there is less required in terms of experience in the field and more required with the human relations and I don't know, I don't, whether get to a (inaudible) but in a more efficient way, that there is always the gap between the fields and the human factor, human relations, and obviously it makes it difficult to do with people. You are less experienced in terms of human relations and handling diversity with humans. You are more in the field than with human relations and I think that's what makes it difficult, you try.

This discourse corresponds closely with the discourse about the manager's role in the Human Relations Movement. According to Mayo (as quoted in Reshef, 2002), a major preoccupation of management must be the organisation of teamwork or, put differently,, the development and sustaining of co-operation. Managers need social skills to be able to do this, for example, they have to be patient with their workers, listen to them and avoid creating emotional upsets. A good manager is seen as one who is able to blend technical expertise with social capabilities (Resheff, 2002). In this text the view is that the managers do not have the social skills necessary to ensure co-operation and that there is more emphasis on the technical aspects.

6.2.4.2 Organisation B

The human relations discourse is the main discourse in this text. Resheff (2002, p. 5) describes the essence of this discourse as follows: “The Human Relations movement emphasized emotional aspects in human behavior, yet still maintained the division of labor between those who planned and those who executed. Being intellectually conservative, Human Relations advocates worked from assumptions of underlying employee-employer harmony. They attributed restriction of output to the poor communication between workers and managers, and inadequate attention to the human side of the worker”.

Douglas McGregor is also viewed as one of the proponents of the Human Relations school of thought and one of his premises is that work is as natural as play or rest. He believes the average worker does not inherently dislike work and whether work is a source of pleasure or a punishment depends on the nature of the work and its management (Boylan, 2001). These assumptions can be identified in the following text, where the participants focus on a discourse in which their direct reports are perceived to have a basic need for a positive environment and the managerial challenge is to provide them with this.

PARTICIPANT I: With me it is definitely the case. I am with the customer service department and have fifteen people reporting to me. To keep those people positive the whole time is a major task.

[PARTICIPANT I: Met my is dit definitief die geval. Ek is by die klientediens afdeling en ek het vyftien mense wat aan my rapporteer. Om daardie mense positief te hou die heeldyd is 'n helse job].

FACILITATOR: And for you, what is your biggest challenge?

PARTICIPANT K: As Sammy has said, in general to keep the people positive. But to keep the people positive you have to make the work environment and type of work comfortable and acceptable. You will not get a guy positive if he does not understand the work. So he has to physically understand the work that he is doing. He must enjoy the work. So he must physically know what he is doing and there must be some way or a structure to make it more attractive for him. That is what I physically try every now and then, as a type, as I have already said, if there is a way

of doing things and I am a bit stiff, as I have already said. You realise this guy, then you make a change, or get somebody in, do the necessary changes and as soon as you see there is a smile or something, then you know that you are on the right track.

[FASILITEERDER: En vir jou, wat is jou grootste uitdaging?]

[PARTICIPANT K: Soos wat Sammy daar gesê het, oor die algemeen is om die mense positief te hou, maar om die mense positief te hou moet jy die werksomgewing, die tipe werk wat hy doen en die omgewing wat hy doen, vir hom baie gemaklik maak en aanvaarbaar maak. Jy gaan nie 'n ou positief kry as hy nie die werk verstaan wat hy doen nie. So hy moet die werk fisies verstaan wat hy doen. Dit moet vir hom lekker wees. So hy moet fisies weet wat hy doen en daar moet 'n tipe van 'n manier of 'n struktuur wees wat dit vir hom aantrekliker maak. Dit is wat ek nou fisies poog elke nou en dan poog, as 'n tipe, soos wat ek reeds gesê het, as daar 'n tipe manier is van dinge doen en ek is 'n bietjie styf, soos wat ek reeds gesê het. Jy kom agter die ou, dan doen jy 'n verandering. Dan maak jy nou en dan 'n aanpassing, of kry iemand in, doen die nodige aanpassings en sodra jy sien daar is 'n glimlag of iets, dan weet jy jy is op die regte pad].

The Human Relations assumption that happy people make an effective organisation – the contented cow approach (Stuart-Kotze, 2002) – is evident from this example. The participants also clearly differentiate the manager's role from that of the employees. It is the manager's role to use his/her social skills to secure the employees' co-operation. The view is also that good human relations can only be established if the needs of the employees are satisfied and their will to work stimulated. In this text the managers are of the opinion that if they make certain adjustments, help the person to understand what he/she is doing and create pleasurable working relationships, they could ensure a positive working environment. As managers they gain their sense of achievement from the feelings of their team (“when you see a smile, you know you are on the right track”).

The Human Relations assumption that motivation occurs at affiliation, esteem and self-actualisation levels, not just security and physiological levels (Wertheim, 2002) is evident in the following text:

PARTICIPANT J: Another fact is that there is not any growth for the people. They are just working and they will get nowhere. It demotivates you. If you know you are going to work till at the age of fifty and you are not going to go anywhere, then you are going to work like the old people here. They are just working towards their pension and that is it.

PARTICIPANT I: ...in most cases the scale weighs heavily on the side of work and the person's social life is ignored totally and as many of us know, you spend most of your life at work and I think that is where we can see the monster. It is where we neglect ourselves. Because we concentrate a lot more, look we have to work, but we concentrate more, we allow the weight to be there too much and we forget that we have to be happy and breathe and enjoy life. Not only on a Saturday, because that is the only time that I have noticed people enjoying life. From Friday evening till Sunday. Probably only till Sunday at four o'clock. From then you have to prepare again for the week. Then you have to fit in again and I don't think that is how it is supposed to be. It should be a balanced thing right through.

[PARTICIPANT I]: ...'n groot persentasie van die mense is dat jy kry 'n weegskaal en in die meeste gevalle lê die skaal baie swaar by die werk en die ou se sosiale lewe word heeltemal geïgnoreer en soos wat baie van ons weet en sê die oorgrote meerderheid van die lewe spandeer jy by jou werk en ek dink dit is waar ons die monster kan sien. Dit is waar ons onself afskeep. Want ons konsentreer baie meer, kyk ons moet werk, maar ons konsentreer ons laat die gewig te veel daar lê en ons vergeet ons lewe en ons moet gelukkig wees, asemhaal en ons moet die lewe geniet. Nie net op 'n Saterdag, want dit is die enigste tyd wat ek agterkom wanneer die meeste mense hulle lewe geniet. Van Vrydagaand tot Sondag. Seker net tot Sondagmiddag vier uur. Van daar af moet jy voorberei vir die week. Dan moet jy heeltemal weer inskakel en ek dink dit is nie hoe dit eintlik, dit moet eintlik nie so wees nie. Dit moet 'n gebalanseerde ding reg deur wees].

This represent' makes a strong plea for the humane aspects not to be overwhelmed by the work/technological discourse. It is also in line with the assumption of the Human Relations Movement that the worker is a person whose attitudes and effectiveness are conditioned by social demand from both inside and outside the workplace (Boylan, 2001).

The human element in Organisation B's text is so strong that it cannot be totally masked by seemingly technical language, for example:

PARTICIPANT I: I have now again got two new fax machines. I had a big fight to get those things. I got that, every month I get those film carriers, the MGF machine but that I get as a result of the fact that the stuff costs R80 000 per machine and that there is no money currently to do anything. We are expecting a new budget. To address my problems they said to me yes, hire machines for the time being. So it seems as if I am going to get a solution. Then I am going to do some measurement or research between the people to see what the feeling is. I will see whether anything else comes out.

[PARTICIPANT I: Ek het nou weer twee faksmasjiene gekry. So ek het 'n helse baklei gehad om daardie goed te kry. Ek het dit gekry, ek kry elke maand van die film carriers, die MGF masjien maar dit kry ek as gevolg van die feit dat die goed R80000 'n masjien kos en daar is op die huidige stadium nie geld om nou dit te kan doen nie. Ons verwag 'n nuwe begroting. Om my probleme te oorbrug het hulle vir my gesê yes, huur masjiene vir tyd en wyl. So dit lyk my daar gaan ek bietjie 'n oplossing kry. Dan gaan ek maar weer meting doen of research doen tussen die mense om te kyk wat die gevoel dan is. Sal ek sien of daar enigiets anders uit dit uitkom].

Although technical/rational words such as research and measurement are used, these are linked to assessing "feeling", which is not usually part of such a rational approach. Reshef (2002) is, however, of the opinion that like Taylor, the Human Relations Movement advocates wanted to rationalise management in order to increase the worker's effort at work. This is thus a good example of the human relations discourse with its seemingly contradictory elements.

The human relations discourse is operationalised as collectiveness and belonging, as illustrated in the following text:

PARTICIPANT I: You feel like you have achieved something and as Happy said, then Happy's feeling of being like a family, comes in again.

[PARTICIPANT I: Jy voel jy het iets bereik en soos Happy sê, dan kom Happy se gevoel weer in van you feel like a family].

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: I think that I have heard that people also ask how you make it possible for people to belong? How do you make people feel that they belong? What I have heard what you have said is that if people are negative, it might be because they feel that they do not belong ... Some of the people used words like family and kingdom.

[PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Ek dink iets wat ek gehoor het wat mense ook vra is hoe maak jy dit moontlik vir mense om te voel dat hulle behoort. How do you make people feel that they belong? Want wat ek hoor wat jy gesê het is dat as mense dan negatief is, miskien is dit omdat hulle voel dat hulle nie behoort nie. ... Van die mense het woorde gebruik soos familie of koninkryk...].

The metaphor of a “family” in this text corresponds with the notion of the peer group or informal work group in the Human Relations Movement. The informal group or organisation is made up of the relationships which develop between the individuals at work and represents a strong base for perceptions about the organisation, the job, leadership and so on. It also acts as a powerful controlling force over the behaviour of its members (Stuart-Kotze, 2002).

It is the manager’s role to facilitate the formation of this “family” and to be accepted as figure of authority (Reshef, 2002). Again, the manager’s sense of achievement is gained from the ability to create this “family”. Mayo (as quoted in Reshef, 2002, p. 5) stated that “the age-old human desire for persistence of human association will seriously complicate the development of an adaptive society if we cannot devise systematic methods of easing individuals from one group of associates to another”. Based on this the manager’s role could be seen as facilitating an affiliation with the goals of management, instead of with the union.

In the Human Relations Movement a successful manager is one who listens to his/her employees, introduces them to their companions and tries to find them congenial work associates. This enables them to facilitate the formation of informal work groups and to gain the co-operation of their employees. In this text the managers experience the same feeling of success from achieving this and creating a sense of belonging in their employees.

6.2.4.3 Function of the human relations discourse

From the rest of the text in Organisation B it is evident that there is an awareness of an omnipresent, dehumanised, fragmented and insensitive bigger system. Within this system, people's needs are suppressed and the effect of the human relations discourse is to counteract that component. The following phrases allude to the presence of this bigger, non-caring system:

PARTICIPANT I: I think initially they were positive. Now it is an issue of them having the idea that the systems are working against them,

[PARTICIPANT I: Ek dink aan die begin was hulle positief gewees. Nou is dit 'n kwessie van hulle kry die idee dat, of hulle het die gevoel dat die stelsels werk teen hulle].

PARTICIPANT I: When a person is working in a situation, you get used to that atmosphere and all of a sudden you are transferred to another section.

[PARTICIPANT I: As 'n persoon werk in 'n situasie is jy gewoond aan daardie atmosfeer en all of a sudden word jy verplaas na 'n ander afdeling].

The use of the words "all of a sudden" could indicate an action by a powerful, but not clearly visible entity, as its actions are surprising. The use of the word "they" in the next example also indicates a separate, vague entity that in this case acts in an unpredictable way, rendering the employees powerless.

PARTICIPANT H: ... We give everything outstanding to headquarters. Then when you report it they say to you, sorry, you can't. It is reported in a cluster. They will pay attention to it in their own time.

[PARTICIPANT H: Ons gee alles deur aan hoofkantoor wat uitstaande is. Dan as jy dit rapporteer, dan sê hulle vir jou sorry, jy kan nie. Dit is in 'n cluster gerapporteer. Hulle sal op hulle tyd daaraan aandag gee].

This also illustrates the tenet in the Human Relations Movement that there is no automatic correlation between individual and organisational needs. In this example the needs of the individual employee (although work related) are not met by the

system's need to do things according to its own rules. Another example illustrating this faceless, powerful thing is the following:

PARTICIPANT L: Those people work in poor conditions, but they work. Three-quarters of them smoke. Now the smoking is taken away from them.

[PARTICIPANT L: Daardie mense werk in goor omstandighede, maar hulle werk. Driekwart van hulle rook. Nou is die rook weggevat van hulle].

It is never mentioned who prohibited the smoking, so the entity remains invisible, but ever present. The Human Relations Movement was established in reaction to some of the effects of Scientific Management. These factors included severe labour/management conflict, apathy, boredom and wasted human resources (Wertheim, 2002). According to Reshef (2002), the labour/management adversarial relationship stems from employees' misunderstanding and distrust of management. Management in turn contributes to this situation by being more concerned with economic efficiency, alienating workers and forcing them to seek security in informal groups. These groups then try to undermine management.

Management in this text accepts human relations thinking as the answer to this problem and tries to use employees't social skills to secure their co-operation. According to Reshef (2002), the primary vehicle for achieving this is informal groups (or the "family" in this text). He further states that the nurturing manager can adjust workers to bureaucratic life by aligning the employees' interests with those of management through the use of informal groups.

Employees then become convinced that managers are on their side and that the organisation is a community of producers. "This should result in workers having a sense of participation, a feeling of release from constraint, and a desire to advance the organization's (i.e. management's) interests" (Resheff, 2002, p. 6). The major role of human relations discourse in this text, then, is to act as a mechanism for the achievement of the managers' desire to achieve the goals of the organisation through their employees. Rational/mechanistic discourse could be seen as the impetus for human relations discourse.

6.2.5 The change discourse

Although change discourse was present in both organisations, it was often masked by other discourses. The change discourse in the client organisations concerned the personal impact of change on the participants but never the formal organisation's reasons for change. According to Stevenson and Greenberg (1998), an organisational change is a process by which an organisational entity alters its form, state, or function over time. They describe the process underlying an organisational change as a sequence of events that unfolds during an organisational entity's existence that relates to a specific type of change, for example, the development of new products, organisational innovations, the movement from a bureaucratic structure to team-based management, and the resolution of critical decisions. The type of change (or change intention) was not part of this text, and this created a sense of change without reason or meaning for the participants.

According to Folger and Skarlicki (1999), one of management's important roles during change is providing employees with an explanation of the rationale for and details of the change. In this text this responsibility was either not fulfilled or was rendered ineffective by several factors. The nature of the change discourse in the two organisations will now be examined in more detail.

6.2.5.1 Organisation A

Change was not a major discourse in this organisation as it was probably inherent in the major discourse of progress. There were, however, examples of the participants having the experience of change being "done to them" (Kyle, 1993) and that led to feelings of helplessness in the participants. The following is an example:

PARTICIPANT A: My challenge is actually specific to my function to stay in line with my manager's way of thinking and changing. They keep on changing their minds, it is like a moving target. At times I can adapt, but to get the people below me to also just follow and understand what people are thinking is not easy.

FACILITATOR: So it is that sort of change, managing the constant change and the people in it?

PARTICIPANT A: I am talking specifically, for instance my project. Alan might change his mind daily. I am used to it now, but people below me don't understand it, they, one battles, it is a challenge to get them to actually work with one.

A passive resistance to change is picked up in the behaviour of the employees reporting to this participant. This corresponds with research on organisational justice that indicates that when organisational decisions and managerial actions are deemed unfair, the affected employees experience feelings of anger, outrage and a desire for retribution (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). It is also proposed that when the individual is less powerful than the source of the perceived injustice (such as the boss or the corporation) attempts to restore justice will be largely indirect (Homans as quoted in Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). In this example the person changing his mind on a daily basis is the ultimate power in the organisation. Because the participant's employees and, in most instances, the participant himself are not working closely with this person, they probably do not have any background on the reasons for the changes. The employees' resistance is, however, very direct in the sense that they do not want to do as they are told or to "also just follow" as their manager is doing.

Most changes are associated with uncertainty. Employees feel confused about their changed roles and their managers feel confused about how to evaluate their direct reports' performance and contributions within these roles (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). In this example the feeling of uncertainty is probably compounded by the perception that changes take place on a daily basis.

It appears also that employees are not provided with any real reasons for the changes and this might indicate an experience of interactional injustice. By providing the most perfunctory of explanations – or none at all – for the changes, the person in power implies that the employees are insignificant and unworthy of respect (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). This leads to a perception of interactional injustice. Interactional justice, in contrast, would entail the provision of explanations to the employees in a sensitive and complete manner (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999).

Where change discourse is explicit in Organisation B, it is one of unfair and unjust change resisted by the employees, rendering their manager helpless. This

helplessness then becomes a major issue in the participant's problem-saturated story.

6.2.5.2 Organisation B

Change in this organisation seems to entail the movement of people from one department to the other, eliciting a strong discourse of adjustment. People must constantly adjust to the changing circumstances. The new circumstances and the resulting uncertainty are viewed as uncomfortable, causing negativity. There are some examples in the following:

PARTICIPANT I: ...it is the small group who just came in, who still has to adjust. The one who still has to work out a structure for himself, must settle.

PARTICIPANT I: are they negative because of the fact that they are a bit frustrated because they have a new job, new adjustments, new criteria?

[PARTICIPANT I: ... maar dit is die groepie wat so pas ingekom het wat nog moet aanpas. Wat nog 'n struktuur moet uitwerk vir homself, moet vestig.

PARTICIPANT I: ...is hulle negatief bloot die feit omdat hulle 'n bietjie gefrustreerd is omdat hulle 'n nuwe werk het, nuwe aanpassings, nuwe kriteria?]

PARTICIPANT K: I tend to agree with Heidi. I am one of those guys who was identified not to stay for longer than six months in a department, so as to bring change, so yes, it is difficult if you have first to adjust to the department and to fit in with those guys' things, yes it has a definite influence on how you work. You are a bit lost when you still don't know the work. You are not certain. Should you step here? I don't know the rules, I don't know where the line is. So it is a question of getting to know the work and the people better before you can go further, so that you can be more comfortable.

[PARTICIPANT K: I tend to agree with Heidie. Ek is een van die ouens wat geidentifiseer is om nie meer as ses maande op 'n afdeling te gaan om verandering te bring, so yes, dit is 'n moeilike ding as jy eers op die afdeling kom om aan te pas en by hierdie ouens se dingetjies in te skakel en die tipe van ding so, yes, dit het 'n definitiewe invloed op hoe jy werk. As jy nog nie die werk ken nie, is jy 'n bietjie verlore. Jy is nie seker nie. Moet ek hierso trap? Ek weet nie wat die reëls is nie, ek weet nie waar die lyn is nie. So dit is 'n kwessie van jy moet eers die werk beter leer

ken en die mense beter leer ken voor jy kan verder stap en dan beter kan inpas, dat jy meer gemaklik wees].

The purpose of moving this person between various departments on a regular basis is to stimulate change, yet this person only feels confident about stimulating change once he feels that he fits in and is comfortable – once everything is familiar. The unfamiliar in this text is aggravated by a lack of clarity in the organisational boundaries and rules that are not clear. There is not an overarching set of rules and each new environment brings its own rules and regulations that must be learnt first. The moving of people and the resulting change also seem to be unpredictable, “all of a sudden”, and immediate, leaving the employees feeling unsettled and at the mercy of an unknown, faceless system. This is highlighted in a discussion of the reflecting team:

PARTICIPANT H: So the bottom line is that the changes make people negative?

[PARTICIPANT H: So die bottom line is die veranderinge maak mense negatief?]

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: It is a question

[PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Dit is 'n vraag]

PARTICIPANT H: Is that what you are also saying, Heidi?

[PARTICIPANT H: Is dit wat jy ook sê Heidi?]

PARTICIPANT M: It could be that they are not adaptable. Yes, it will also throw me if I am in one department for two months and then the following month I move to a new one.

[PARTICIPANT M: Dit kan wees dat hulle nie aanpasbaar is nie. Ja dit sal my ook gooi as ek twee maande op een afdeling is en dan die volgende maand skuif ek na 'n ander een toe.]

PARTICIPANT H: But what happened to multi-skilling now? That is one of the big things in (Organisation B).

[PARTICIPANT H: Maar wat het nou geword van multi-vaardigheid? Dit is mos een van die groot dinge by die (Organisasie B)?]

It seems as if the organisation expects all its employees to be able to deal with displacement and uses multi-skilling as the banner for these actions. The employee cannot really complain, because on the one hand the organisation is multi-skilling

him/her to make future movement easier, and complaint could be read as an indication that they are not multi-skilled and therefore not living up to expectations. There is a discrepancy between the experience of employees and the expectation of the organisation. The employees experience the constant movement as disruptive, while the organisation expects them to be able to deal with it constructively and as part of normal organisational life. This expectation is verbalised in the following:

PARTICIPANT K: We received the message very early on that we should not get too comfortable in the chair that we are sitting in. Today you could be here, tomorrow you won't be there any more. So you have to do your work so well today, that it won't be a problem for you tomorrow. That is the message that we received early on.

[PARTICIPANT K: Ons het die boodskap al vroeg gekry dat moenie te gemaklik raak op die stoel waar jy sit nie. Vandag kan jy daar wees, môre kan jy nie daar wees nie. So jy moet jou werk so goed doen vandag, dat dit môre nie 'n probleem gaan wees vir jou nie. Dit is die boodskap wat ons gekry het vroeg alreeds].

From the organisation's side there seems to be a power discourse at play. Gore (1998) notes that Foucault argues that the distribution of bodies in space – arranging, isolating, separating, ranking – contributes to the function of disciplinary power. The exercise of power via techniques of distribution is evident in the examples above, but also in the following:

PARTICIPANT K: One of the things on us, the guys who just went through the M-level...

[PARTICIPANT K: Een van die dinge op ons, die outjies wat nou deur die M-Vlak gegaan het.....]

PARTICIPANT L: I mean it is a cash centre, there are no windows, you don't know when it is raining. They work with cash, bulk cash the whole time and it is all that they do all day.

PARTICIPANT I: When a person is working in a situation, you get used to that atmosphere and all of a sudden you are transferred to another section.

PARTICIPANT I: As 'n persoon werk in 'n situasie is jy gewoond aan daardie atmosfeer en all of a sudden word jy verplaas na 'n ander afdeling.

PARTICIPANT I: When a person is working in a situation, you get used to that atmosphere and all of a sudden you are transferred to another section.

[PARTICIPANT I: As 'n persoon werk in 'n situasie is jy gewoon aan daardie atmosfeer en all of a sudden word jy verplaas na 'n ander afdeling.]

In the first example the employees are ranked according to level and in the second the employees are placed in a building that isolates them physically. In the third example the employee is separated from a division where he/she feels comfortable. The discourse of interactional injustice is also evident in this text through the silent voice of senior management. There is not a sense of reason for the changes and it seems as if senior management feels no obligation to give an explanation to the employees because they are so insignificant that management does not mind what they think (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). The voices in this text deal with the discomfort of distribution and injustice by stressing inclusion into the system and the bigger collective, for example:

PARTICIPANT I: That is how things are done so that they can get into the system more quickly.

[PARTICIPANT I: Dit is hoe die dinge gedoen word sodat hulle vinniger in die stelsel inkom.]

The striving to become part of the system could be interpreted as a way of ensuring "voice" (Stephens & Cobb, 1999). "Voice – the ability to make known one's views and have them seriously considered by decision makers – is one of the most important antecedents of procedural justice perceptions" (Stephens & Cobb, 1999, p. 25). According to Folger and Skarlicki (1999), procedural and substantive justice, as well as interactional justice, are important in ensuring successful change initiatives. It is doubtful, however, whether becoming part of the system in Organisation B results in the employees having "voice".

This is deduced from the impression that there was no attempt from this group to try and change the bigger system. When asked how they would counteract negativity, none of them suggested changes in terms of the bigger picture, but focussed mainly on the immediate work environment. The actions in the work environment entailed

pulling the teams closer together through more social activity (whether it be a get-together with drinks or a prayer group). This introduces a discourse of transcending versus transformation. There is an acceptance that they cannot change this bigger, faceless system and that they have to go beyond that. This particular discourse is part of a humanist-existential discourse where people have to go beyond their perceived limitations in the quest for self-actualisation. Beneath is one example of the transcending discourse:

PARTICIPANT J: I started doing it this morning with my group. I decided that we will come together in the morning, even if it is once a week or twice a week and pray together, because this lady asked me yesterday. We had a problem with one of the ladies in the department and she said why don't we pray for her. So we did pray this morning together with her and she feels really better.

There is no expectation of change in their circumstances and therefore they start to transcend it by addressing their issues on a spiritual level. According to Rutte (1996), Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett and Condemi (1999) and Biberman and Whitty (1997), there is an increasing interest in spirituality in the workplace. According to Rutte (1996), this trend is related to fear and insecurity in the workplace. He motivates this as follows: "The security we thought we got from the corporation is a myth. Real security comes from a connection to that which is truly secure – the spirit. We are in the process moving from 'dependent children' at work, with the parental organisation looking after us, to really coming into our full adult selfhood" (Rutte, 1996, p. 2).

The change discourse in Organisation B has a strong sense of "dispiritedness" and detachment. The movement to spirituality could be seen as an effort to change this discourse and to create a community where a feeling of partnership with other employees and a connection to something larger than themselves (and the organisation) could be established (Milliman et al, 1999).

6.2.5.3 The function of the change discourse

The change discourse in the text serves to illustrate the power of the system. Change in this text is usually initiated by higher powers in the organisation, which do

not bother to explain the reasons for the change. Although the employees mostly do not know why things should change, they have to go along with this. Although some examples of resistance against change can be seen in the text, there is a sense that the employees have no choice and that they allow themselves to be moved, like puppets, from one place to another. The change discourse is thus mainly about maintaining control by keeping the employees in their place and thus ensuring order.

The change discourse in Organisation B also serves as a motivation for the collective discourse. As a result of the change discourse, it is expected of people to fit in and to get to know the smaller system in which they have to work. Change is the visible effect of the faceless system and collectivity and a spiritual community provide protection against it. Change is viewed as part of institutional life and serves as a background for all the coping strategies and as a justification for the employee's behaviour.

6.2.6 The manager as rescuer/protector/provider

This discourse was prominent in Organisation B. In this organisation the managers positioned themselves as the rescuers, providers and protectors. This discourse has also been identified in other organisations in Western industry by, for example Gustafsson (1984), who pointed out how Western organisations expect their managers to be heroic figures. However, the hero myths associated with management stress a dual figure: on the one hand concerned with the daring individualist entrepreneur (like the maverick in Organisation A) and on the other the more Weberian figure of the prudent caretaker, the diligent bureaucrat (Turner, 1986).

The following pieces of text show how the managers of Organisation B take upon themselves the responsibility of providing for their teams:

PARTICIPANT I: To keep those people positive the whole time is a big job.

[PARTICIPANT I: Om daardie mense positief te hou die heelyd is 'n helse job]

PARTICIPANT I: I have sat with all these guys on a one to one basis and asked them what their problems are. I have written them down and I have picked up the

problems that I can eliminate immediately ... In terms of the systems, I think I have partly solved the problem. I have now again received two fax machines. I had quite a fight to get those things.

[PARTICIPANT I: Ek het nou al met hierdie outjies gaan sit one on one en vir hulle gesê kyk, sê vir my wat is jou probleem en ek het neergeskryf en ek het probleme opgetel wat ek kan onmiddellik uitskakel...Wat aanbetref die stelsels, ek dink ek het al so gedeeltelik die probleem oorbrug. Ek het nou weer twee faksmasjiene gekry. So ek het 'n helse baklei gehad om daardie goed te kry.]

PARTICIPANT K: I am so busy keeping the people positive and trying to steer the difficult problems in a particular direction, that I don't do what I should.

[PARTICIPANT K: Ek is so besig om die mense positief te hou en probeer die moeilike probleme in 'n rigting kry, dat ek nie uitkom by wat ek moet nie.]

PARTICIPANT J: I always have sweets in the cupboard and then I give everyone a sweet and then they ask what the occasion is. Then I say, only love.

[PARTICIPANT J: Ek het altyd sweets daar in my kas en dan gee ek vir elkeen 'n sweet, dan vra hulle what is the occasion? Dan sê ek net liefde.]

There is a strong sense of a father or mother figure, fighting for his/her children. It is not a discourse of helplessness, but of an effort to provide and to harness the collective for survival. Positive in this text means self-sufficient and productive. The role of provider is seemingly not an easy one to fulfil: it is described as a struggle and they sometimes do it at personal cost, for example, depriving themselves of sleep and working long hours. The function of this discourse is to create security in a sea of unpredictability and in the face of the powerful system. In this context, security lies in the collective and predictability and in maintaining the status quo. Although they see themselves as providers, there is also a sense of abandonment for these managers themselves: they have to fight to obtain their share of the system and are also subject to the same changes and uncertainties as the rest of the employees.

PARTICIPANT I: You come into an atmosphere where the management will possibly be changed. In other words, the manager is transferred to another department. Now he comes, and I am busy settling in the same department, at the same time other new people came in too and in other words I expect more from him. In other words,

he has to adjust to the department and I have to try to get the new people into line. This does not always work that well because he has first to acquaint himself with the procedures of that department and they do too.

[PARTICIPANT I: Jy kom in 'n atmosfeer waar die bestuur miskien verander word. Met ander woorde, die bestuurder word verplaas na 'n ander afdeling. Nou kom hy, ek is besig om te settle in my selfde afdeling, terselfdertyd het daar nuwe mense ingekom en met ander woorde, dan verwag ek van hom baie meer. Met ander woorde hy moet aanpas by die afdeling en ek moet probeer om die nuwe mense ook in lyn te kry. Waar dit by sommige nie so goed werk nie, want hy moet nog eers vertrouwd raak met die prosedures daar op daardie afdeling en dienooreenkomstig hulle ook.]

In this changing environment managers are expected to act as protectors, although they themselves are not protected. It could be said that hierarchy in this organisation does not necessarily represent power, but rather the degree of protection that the manager has to provide. Another function of the protection discourse is that the managers compensate for a bigger organisation that is seemingly out of touch with its people, creating a feeling of abandonment and disregard.

The discourse of the manager as rescuer/provider/protector is supported by a discourse of action orientation and the need to focus not on problems, but on solutions. This discourse silences the voice of complaint. Managers are not allowed to moan, or say what they feel. The discourse of viewing problems as "challenges" is expressed as follows:

PARTICIPANT I: Well, I have learnt not to see my problems as a stumbling block, but as a challenge. So it is a very big challenge for me.

[PARTICIPANT I: Wel, ek het al geleer om my probleme nie te sien as 'n struikelblok nie, maar om dit te sien as 'n uitdaging vir my. So dit is vir my 'n helse uitdaging.]

PARTICIPANT J: I do not let it affect me or get in my way or stop me in doing anything. I really take it as a challenge for that day. A new thing comes in my way every day, so I just take it as a challenge and go on.

There seems to be an assumption that people on that level will not complain, but keep quiet and do something about the issue. However, the non-managerial employees in this organisation are allowed to express their feelings and unhappiness. The following examples describe this:

PARTICIPANT I: My people are very expressive. They will make it clear to you that they will not hide their feelings. An employee will state his problems in front of the whole group and it has a definitive influence on the bigger group. Another guy will not say anything, but he feels the he agree and it makes the rest of the group negative as well.

[PARTICIPANT I: My mense is nou very expressive. Hulle gaan dit vir jou duidelik maak ek gaan nie nog van my hart 'n moordkuil maak nie. Hy sê sommer voor almal wat sy probleem is, sodat op die groter groep het dit definitief 'n impak. Die ander outjie sê niks nie, maar dit het 'n definitiewe invloed op hom, want hy voel ek stem saam en dit maak die outjies baie negatief in die groep in.]

PARTICIPANT H: The manager got there in the morning and was not in a good mood ... and did not behave well ... and the guy grabbed him and said that, OK not physically, and then he said to him, I am not a dog and you do not talk to me like this.

[PARTICIPANT H: ...dat die bestuurder in die oggend daar aangekom het en hy was nie in 'n goeie bui nie.....toe was hy 'n bietjie uitgehaak en toe net daar gryp die ou hom vas, toe sê hy vir hom, okay nou nie met die hande fisies nie, toe sê hy vir hom ek is nie 'n hond nie, jy praat nie so met my nie.]

PARTICIPANT L: ... those people talk to me all the time ...

[PARTICIPANT L: ...daardie mense hulle almal kom praat met my die heelyd...]

If the manager's voice of complaint is silenced, but he/she still has to act as a receptacle for the complaints of his/her team, and on top of that to solve the problem, the presence of a burnout discourse is not surprising. Words such as "it is tiring", "fighting a losing battle", "depressed and despondent" signify that. This typical dilemma of the middle manager is made overt in the next paragraph:

PARTICIPANT I: As I have already said, we have a big responsibility on our shoulders. We have to tame this thing from all sides, the staff and the (inaudible), in

other words you get pressure from the top, you have responsibilities, you have target dates, you have (Inaudible) all that pressure from the top and then you still have to motivate the people below and keep them positive. You have to keep the monster happy on all sides. You must not get cross and you must not reflect any anger to the top and then you have to come back, in other words a manager is reprimanding you and then you have to come back and smile at the people.

[PARTICIPANT I: Soos ek reeds gesê het, ek sal sê ons het 'n baie groot verantwoordelikheid op ons skouers. Ons moet die ding al die kante tem, die personeel en die ... (onhoorbaar) met ander woorde jy kry druk van bo af, jy het verantwoordelikhede, jy het sperdatums, jy het ... (onhoorbaar) al daardie druk van bo af en nou moet jy nog die mense onder motiveer en ook positief hou. Jy moet al die kante die monster gelukkig hou. Jy moenie kwaad raak nie en jy moenie enige anger reflekteer bo nie en dan moet jy terugkom, met ander woorde jy word uitgetrap deur 'n bestuurder, dan moet jy terugkom en kom smile en vir die mense.]

A further problem is that the managers cannot always share thoughts with their peers, because there seems to be a discourse of mistrust in certain instances, for example:

PARTICIPANT H: No, all the new people are foundations built on each other. You understand what I am trying to say? In our set-up you cannot be friends with the guy working with you. If you understand me a hundred percent, you will know why I say so.

[PARTICIPANT H: Nee, al die nuwe mense is die fundamente bo op mekaar gebou. Jy verstaan wat ek vir jou probeer sê? In die opset by ons kan jy nie chommie-chommie wees met die ou wat saam met jou werk nie. As jy my honderd persent reg verstaan sal jy weet hoekom ek so sê.]

The experience of constant change and displacement in Organisation B probably contributes to this discourse of mistrust and caution. Folger and Skarlicki (1999) report that under conditions of threat, employees tend to engage in hypervigilance, in which every social interaction becomes scrutinised for hidden meaning and sinister purpose. Colby (in Folger & Skarlicki, 1999) also proposes that in conditions of change employees have an exaggerated perception of conspiracy and display a

tendency to view the actions of others as more tightly connected than they actually are. Employees also tend to make overly personalistic attributions to the behaviour of their colleagues (Kramer, 1994).

The function of the manager as rescuer/protector/provider discourse in this text seems to be to isolate the managers from their direct reports, their peers and from senior management. As a result they can only obtain security in their perception of themselves as heroic figures. They, experiencing as they do very little empowerment from the bigger organisation, empower themselves by perceiving themselves as playing a heroic role.

6.2.7 The control-resistance discourse

Gabriel (1995) writes that the concept of control lies at the core of numerous discourses on organisations. He notes that the concept of control has featured prominently in managerial literature since Taylor and Fayol and has been a central pillar of organisational theory since Max Weber's work on bureaucracy. Control is seen to be representative of order, predictability and reliability and has become virtually co-extensive of what is understood by organisation (Gabriel, 1995).

Gabriel (1995) further explains how control is achieved through the use of language, for example, by attaching labels such as "professional" to specific occupations and grades; the use of symbols, such as massive headquarters, expensive logos, the use of corporate rituals and of officially sponsored myths. Employees may submit to the organisation's cultural control, but may also resist it by developing their own sub-cultures and counter cultures, resulting in a control-resistance discourse.

6.2.7.1 Organisation A

The discussion group expresses control as alignment. The aim is to get everybody in the team or organisation to agree on the "rules" for achieving the goals. The team does not resist this form of control, but resists individual or imposed control. (See 6.3.2 for more detail.)

6.2.7.2 Organisation B

Gabriel (1995) argues that there is a third possibility besides the rejection of, or participation in, control practices. He proposes that within every organisation there is an uncolonized terrain that is not and cannot be managed, in which people can engage in all kinds of unsupervised, spontaneous activity. Gabriel (1995) refers to this terrain as the unmanaged organisation, a kind of dreamworld in which desires, anxieties and emotions find expressions in highly irrational constructions.

This third way of addressing control amounts to neither conformity, nor rebellion, "but to a symbolic refashioning of official organisational practices in the interest of pleasure, allowing a temporary supremacy of emotion over rationality and of uncontrol over control" (Gabriel, 1995, p. 479). Fantasy is the chief force in the unmanaged organisation and includes jokes, gossip, nicknames, graffiti, cartoons, and stories. In this terrain, the human subject is reconstituted as the product of organisational practices and the resistance to such practices. Gabriel (1995) identifies four different modes of subjectivity namely:

- (1) the subject as hero;
- (2) the subject as heroic survivor;
- (3) the subject as victim;
- (4) the subject as object of love.

Examples of this type of reaction to control can be seen in the text. The subject as hero can be seen in the following example:

PARTICIPANT H: ... and he said to him I am not a dog, you do not speak to me like that, and he said yes, but he did it in front of us all there. Those of us who were present, were called into the office He then said he would like to apologise and he appreciated it that somebody had the courage to stand up and to put him in his place and then it went better for some time.

[PARTICIPANT H: ...toe sê hy vir hom ek is nie 'n hond nie, jy praat nie so met my nie en toe sê hy ja, maar hy het dit voor ons almal gedoen daar. Die persone van ons wat daar was, toe roep hy kantoor toe, toe sê hy hoor hier, hy wil net om

verskoning vra en hy waardeer dit dat iemand die moed gehad het om op te staan en hom op sy plek te sit en dit het beter gegaan vir 'n ruk.]

In this example subjectivity is established through the humbling of a deserving victim. The subject as heroic survivor could not be picked up in this text, but there were a few examples of the subject as victim, for example:

PARTICIPANT K: I am not a person who gets cross easily. People always say that I smile, but there comes a day or a time where I get to that point, like the other Friday when we had the interviews with management. My letter stated 12:30 and when I got there, they wanted to go to lunch at 12:30. Look, when we got back I said how unprofessional (Organisation B) had been. I was very cross, because I feel that the letter stated 12:30 for my appointment and then it was moved to two o'clock, do you understand what I am saying?

[PARTICIPANT K: Ek is nie 'n ou wat maklik kwaad word nie. Mense sê altyd ek glimlag, maar daar kom 'n dag of 'n tyd wat ek op daardie punt kom, soos nou weer Vrydag toe ons die onderhoude gehad het met bestuur. My brief het gesê 12:30 en toe ek daar kom wil hulle 12:30 op ete gaan. Kyk, toe ons daar terugkom toe sê ek sommer hoe onprofessioneel (Maatskappy B) is. Toe is ek nog die hel in, want ek voel net die brief het gesê 12:30 is my afspraak en hier moet dit nou uitgeskuif word na twee-uur toe, verstaan jy wat sê ek.]

According to Gabriel (1995), gripes and tragic stories are symbolic attempts to overcome pain and suffering, and to turn material defeat into moral victory. In the example above the moral victory lies in the fact that the organisation was "unprofessional" but the person was "professional" by being on time and acting according to the letter.

The subject as love object is not a common mode of subjectivity, but traces of that could be picked up in this text. The two main themes of discourse of this nature are gifts or other expressions of recognition as well as fantasies of being in love (Gabriel, 1995). Some of the examples in the text are:

PARTICIPANT H: One day I was a bit difficult and then another woman sent me a memo and since then, every morning you say to everybody that you love them and give everybody a nice embrace just to say I love you and you should enjoy your job. You have to see this embrace to appreciate it.

[PARTICIPANT H: .. maar daar is ook eendag bietjie skuins beduiweld en to stuur 'n vrou vir my 'n memo en van toe af elke oggend sê jy vir almal jy is lief vir hulle en almal lekker drukkie net om te sê ek is lief vir jou, jy moet lekker werk. Jy moet hierdie drukkie sien om dit te waardeer.]

Although this person does not feel comfortable telling this story (see the distancing by using you, instead of I), it reveals a construction of the subject which combines affectionate feeling for a fellow human being with the reciprocation of this feeling.

There are also examples of more overt resistance against control in this text, for example:

PARTICIPANT K: I told the guys in the store to dress casually and who cares what the manager says.

[PARTICIPANT K: Ek het vir die ouens in die stoor gesê julle trek casual aan en who care what the manager says.]

Although this resistance is more overt, it still falls within the realm of the unmanaged organisation. The participant is constructing himself as the hero and management as the villain. As a hero he has a "devil-may-care" attitude and as in traditional myth, defines himself as the hero in "doing his own thing", "being himself", with a complete disregard for convention (Bowles, 1989). One gets a sense in the example that it is not practice to disregard management's wishes so openly, constructing this resistance as a deed of heroic proportions.

In these examples the employee is portrayed as having agency by symbolically reconstructing official organisational practices and gaining the emotional upperhand over management.

As can be seen from the above discussion, the major discourses in the text from the two organisations are the managerial meta-myth, the modern narrative of progress,

and universal design, the machine metaphor, the human relations discourse, change, the manager as rescuer/protector/provider and the control-resistance discourse. All these discourses are related to the scientific management discourse in some way or another. Wertheim (2002) is of the opinion that the core elements of scientific management remain popular today and have only been updated and modified over the years.

According to Wertheim (2002), scientific management was the first attempt at a systematic analysis of human behaviour at work. It was also an attempt to make organisations adjunct to machines and it looked at the interaction of human characteristics, social environment, task and physical environment, capacity, speed, durability, and cost with the aim of reducing human variability.

The managerial meta-myth and the machine metaphor could be seen as derivatives of scientific management with their focus on rational-technical issues. The human relations discourse developed in reaction to scientific management, but maintained the rational-technical element with an added focus on the importance of the attitudes and feelings of workers, as well as the social component. These discourses in the text could be viewed as the “how” for the narrative of progress, as they describe an underlying belief in the mechanisms to be used to achieve the ultimate aim of progress. The change discourse, the manager as rescuer/protector/provider and the control-resistance discourse could be viewed as the consequences or side effects of the “how” discourses. The side effects are all caused by the use of power within the “how” discourses and the reaction to, or accommodation of, those discourses.

The presence of these major discourses in the client organisations attests to the pervasiveness of the Scientific Management and Human Relations Movements in business today. The durability of scientific management could be ascribed to management and business education. According to Glover and Tracey (2000), from the time of the Second World War, and continuing through the Cold War, management and business have been informed by and imbued with a scientific approach and scientific methods. The success of the Human Relations Movement could be explained in part by its mythological status. Despite many experiential flaws the results of the Hawthorne experiment, “or rather the human relations

interpretation offered by the researchers who summarized the results, soon became gospel for introductory textbooks in both psychology and management science” (Ross as quoted in Kolata, 1998, p. 1). The Hawthorne effect is called a glorified anecdote (Kolata, 1998). The influence of the macro business culture where these discourses are still prevalent can thus be identified in the client organisations.

According to Boje and Dennehy (2000), each school of thought throughout time seeks an answer to the puzzle of harmony, namely how to insure the freedom of the individual in a competitive organisation. They argue further that in modern times, scientific management and human relations sought harmony that made the employee a happy cog in the industrial and bureaucratic machine. This seems to be the case in this text.

6.3 ORGANISATION SPECIFIC DISCOURSES

Some of the discourses were not present in both organisations and could be seen as possible pointers to unique organisational culture. These organisation specific discourses will now be discussed.

6.3.1 The diversity discourse

This discourse was offered by Organisation A as a problem-saturated story, but at the same time it elicited a particular discourse about diversity that might be unique to this organisation. Most prominent is that the voice of diversity is never really allowed in the text and that the discourses subverting diversity are more prominent. The most obvious discourses subverting diversity are:

- (1) sameness versus difference;
- (2) control versus autonomy;
- (3) competition;
- (4) team cohesion versus allowing diversity and individualism;
- (5) the machine metaphor;
- (6) helplessness in imposed diversity.

The various elements of this particular discourse will now be explored in more detail. The first point to note is that while the facilitator uses the word diversity, the other voices in the group call this “differences”, for example:

FACILITATOR: Why is it a challenge to create that vision, to let’s say harness the diversity in the team and to get them to become more creative and flexible? Why would you say this is a challenge?

PARTICIPANT D: Simply because we deal with humans, we are all different. They are different in the team, we are also a different person and obviously, I don’t know, it is probably not easy to see yourself in a mirror image and therefore will make it even more difficult to handle the team, I don’t know (inaudible), I think it makes it even more difficult and probably it should be easy if you were to see yourself on a mirror image and probably to make it then easy to understand their thinking and their wavelength as well.

Difference is equated with something being difficult and not easy. Difference could also be seen as not transparent and if those differences are made clear or eradicated, such as by becoming “mirror images of each other”, things will become “easier.” The “difference is equal to difficult” discourse is also illustrated in the next piece of text:

PARTICIPANT C: I refer to it as alignment and the vision was difficult to align the guys. I mean, you have got different backgrounds, you have different cultures, you have different ideas, have got different upbringing, you have got different approaches. It is all about aligning personalities and aligning for certain functions within the group. That is difficult and the reason why it is difficult because I have got an idea and I have got a goal, I need to utilise all these different personalities within the group to achieve that goal. Now if I say let’s do it this way and the other guy doesn’t like it because of the fact that he has a different upbringing, because of the fact that he has got a different approach and there is going to be obviously a conflict, but a difference in opinion.

What the voices might be saying here is that it is problematic if everybody is not the same, like me. The machine driving progress cannot function effectively if there is

not a sameness involved, if the differences are not aligned (formatted) to function in a predictable, required manner. This is in line with Byrne's (1971) similarity-attraction theory that suggests that humans prefer similarity in their interactions. Jehn (1999) also mentions theories of selection and socialisation that promote similarity in values and demographics as the basis for maintaining effective work environments. There are, however, also some studies in which diverse groups have been shown to outperform homogeneous groups (Jehn, 1999). Jehn's (1999) own research did, however, indicate that the various forms of diversity impacted differently on performance.

This contradiction might be a contributory factor to the call for diversity within boundaries, a more controlled diversity in this text. In the following the tension between diversity and similarity is made overt as the controlling of differences is suggested:

PARTICIPANT B: I think it is the strength having the differences rather than trying to say that the differences need to be made the same, you know, when we talk alignment what do we mean? Are we talking about sameness, are we talking about trying to find a common way? I think perhaps an idea would be to say it needs a framework within which to operate, to accommodate the diversity.

Accommodation fits into a control discourse and colludes with the utilisation image of the machine metaphor. Boje and Dennehy (2000) contend that managers exercise discipline by suppressing differences, correcting innovation and maintaining the status quo. Differences are blurred so that the voices of diversity do not sound at all different from one another. The use of a framework in this example has the effect of suppressing differences (employees are allowed to be different provided that it fits into the framework). The danger of uncontained diversity is implied in the following:

PARTICIPANT B: Yes I think as long as the boundaries are set to say you can operate within these wider boundaries. People almost need to run rife if you want to call it that.

Without the boundaries people will run rife, but within the boundaries this could be allowed, because then it is controllable. The function of constructing diversity as something to be contained within boundaries is to allow the narrative of the managerial meta-myth, the narrative of progress and universal design, as well as the machine metaphor. This view that diversity must be “managed” can be seen in the plethora of books on managing diversity. In one of these books, Taylor (1993, p. 39) motivates the necessity for this as follows:

In summary, there is reason to believe that the presence of cultural diversity does make certain aspects of group functioning more problematic. Misunderstandings may increase, conflict and anxiety may arise, and members may feel less comfortable with membership in the group. These effects may combine to make decision making more difficult and time-consuming, In certain respects, then, culturally diverse workgroups are more difficult to manage effectively than culturally homogeneous workgroups. In view of this, the challenge for organisations, as suggested in my definition of managing diversity, is to manage in such a way as to maximise the potential benefits of diversity while minimising the potential disadvantages.

This statement seems to be heavily influenced by rational, scientific management thinking. Although the diversity discourse in this text represents a strong impulse for sameness, it still tries to satisfy the humanistic demand (politically correct?) in the sense that it allows for individuality within limits. The image of the corporate playroom (allowing for controlled individuality) is evoked as, for example, in:

PARTICIPANT C: What I did basically if I may? First and foremost, set rules from the start. The rules being what is acceptable in terms of team behaviour and what is unacceptable. Make sure those rules are accepted unilaterally, not just by one person, so there has to be consensus and from there you start looking for common ground.

PARTICIPANT A: Ja, it is like a game, you set the playing field, these are the parameters, these are the rules and regulations and then that's it, you do not change it.

PARTICIPANT A: I would think not to let the people reporting to you fall into a groove and just do the same thing every day. They must be flexible and they must have an exciting job. So give them more rope, don't just hold them with you and let them do exactly what you want them to do. They must be flexible and they need us to control that.

The contradiction between flexibility and the prescription that it should be controlled is clear. There is also an element of control through deceit in this text. The people think that they are free, yet they are within restraints of control or "rope". This is because a machine metaphor without boundaries is unthinkable. Another example of an effort to accommodate the humanistic pull within the control discourse is:

PARTICIPANT D: I think all, well pertaining to finances to change the mindset of the top management and especially finance head office and then looking at new ways to do things more efficiently, more control obviously, but in an easy and friendly way as well. I think that would be my biggest challenge.

In the last session with Organisation A, the push for sameness and controlled versus unmanaged diversity played itself out in terms of a conflict between metaphors. The first metaphor entailed describing diversity as a collection of cell phones and the second metaphor a sports team. There was a strong attraction in the discussion group to accept the sports team analogy and strong resistance to the cell phone analogy. Some of the reasons offered were:

PARTICIPANT C: The thing is, I think cell phones are going to be changed (?) just to communication devices, that the whole concept of cell phones is going to change in my mind, whereas the team sport will remain a team sport, well, hopefully ad infinitum... (indistinct). So for me that is going to be more relevant in future than a cell phone... (indistinct). It is just a stating point of a much more complex communication device in the future, whereas a team sport could be a team sport forever.

Superficially one could say that this voice is saying that only things that stay the same can act as metaphors. The discussion about and resistance to certain

metaphors is significant in the sense that metaphors allow humans to understand abstract subject matter in terms of more concrete, familiar terms (Gibson, 2001).

As an example of this, a study by Gibson (2001) demonstrated that people around the globe hold different definitions of teamwork, as indicated by the metaphors they use when they talk about their teams. The study furthermore found that this variance is systematic across nations and organisations, with several predictable differences based on values, orientations and practices. The study found that if the national context is individualistic, for example, then sports or associated metaphors are likely to resonate. If the organisation emphasises tight control, then a military or family metaphor is likely to resonate. "Because they represent mappings from a source domain (for example, the military) to a target domain (for example, the work team), these metaphors carry with them expectations for how teams will be managed and how team processes will unfold. For example, employees who use the military metaphor are likely to have strong expectations about clarity of objectives and performance indicators" (Gibson, 2001, p. 30).

In the light of these findings, the resistance to the cellphone metaphor in this text could be related to the openness of the cellphone analogy. It is constantly changing, it cannot be controlled, whereas a team sport is transparent and the rules do not change much. The differences within the cellphone analogy might become too much, making it difficult to associate it with the picture of diversity that the majority of the team had constructed, as stated here:

PARTICIPANT F: Ja, but I think (Organisation A's) culture probably ascribes to the cellphone metaphor, everyone for himself, strive, challenge, all that, where the ideal would be the other one.

Here diversity is also linked with individualism and competition. In constructing diversity as competition and conflict and therefore undesirable, the diversity discourse is again subverted. At the same time it also supports the push for sameness. The following text describes some of this:

PARTICIPANT C: From my experience if I may. When you have a strong group of characters to do that which you can often have in (Organisation A), you will find that they will push their ideas and they would want their ideas to be followed through, because they will think that their idea is a good idea, in their opinion it is the best idea. Now because of that it is going to be difficult to align them, because usually most of us have the same goal, but the tactics or the method of implementation would differ.

The idea of individualism in this text also clashes with the discussion team's general push for unity and controlled collective action. The group also distances itself from the diversity discourse and blames external factors for requiring it from them. They construct themselves as powerless actors in this arena of forced diversity. When asked by the facilitator what has assisted the diversity discourse in becoming a dilemma, the group gave answers such as, the external environment, historic events in the organisation and in the country, corporate culture and the shareholders. Diversity is viewed as so alien to the machine and progress metaphors that it can only be imposed from outside, hampering its function.

There is constant tension between the collective, uniform team and the process of setting diversity free. The construction is such that a unified team is not possible if diversity is set free, for example:

PARTICIPANT E: With the different cultures you have in a team, appreciation and understanding of each of the cultures, but by everyone of the team members, because each culture directs you in a different way in certain instances and if you do not appreciate that particular culture, then you are not going to understand why behaviour is in that fashion and that is going to make it more difficult, because you have one perspective and your team might have different perspectives, depending on the culture that they are coming from and if people are not, if there is not a complete understanding across the team, all the team members in terms of the different cultures within the team, I think that can stimulate issues.

PARTICIPANT C: Ja, I think culture leads to interpretations and interpretation leads to specific behaviours. Those behaviours once again can, will either fit in that group or they will be rejected by the group in general.

There is again a push for overall unity and sameness ("complete understanding") and anything that threatens this discourse will be rejected. It is clear from the text that the discourse of diversity actually masks a stronger discourse of the team as a uniform and effective collective in serving the general discourse of progress, as driven by the machine metaphor. In the next paragraph the inappropriateness of diversity in the machine metaphor is again emphasised.

PARTICIPANT D: Can I also make another comment from the reflecting team. I think I was a bit worried with this knowledge of the family. With the family you've got kids and you are happy with whatever way that they are going to be offered, whereas within the organisation we are more goal driven, time driven, and it just doesn't work. It will never work, with the family you support kids as they are, with whatever they do, as long as whatever comes out is the best for themselves, not just for the common goal, whereas in an organisation it is more one goal and target driven.

This construction creates a sense that the machine metaphor is winning. In the quest for progress, uniqueness in terms of goals, time frames, etc. cannot be tolerated and everything (even "what is best for themselves") is subordinated to this goal. The construction of individualism as part of diversity is also viewed as a threat to the cohesive team as a mechanism for achieving the objectives of the organisation, in support of the grand narrative of progress:

PARTICIPANT C: ...but I sometimes believe that a team of individuals if they act as individuals, focusing on their own needs, in my mind is not always going to be a strong team. I think you should still harness the diversities, but the action should be in totality as a whole, should be for the team and not the individual. So I would even go so far to say in some instances, although it is not a very healthy thing to do, to sacrifice some of your individuality for the sake of the team, because...

The discourse of sacrifice in aid of progress is again present, and this time it is individuality that must be sacrificed. It is clear that the team discourse is used very strongly to subvert the diversity discourse and one has to ask why. The answer could be found in the following text:

PARTICIPANT C: I think structuring the team creates a certain sense of security, and where there is no structure and there are no rules, sometimes the guys get insecure because they do not really know what to do and what kind of circumstances.

It seems as if the team gains a sense of security from the machine metaphor and its function in counteracting unpredictability.

This team constructed the diversity discourse clinically and superficially in the main, refusing to explore traditional diversity issues such as gender and race as part of the discourse. These issues were mentioned overtly only three times in all three sessions:

PARTICIPANT D: ... and being a female and dealing with males is another thing as well you know.

PARTICIPANT G: Let me just make sure if I understand what you mean by diversity, I am not sure if you are talking race, are you talking

FACILITATOR: Everything.

PARTICIPANT G: A combination of everything?

FACILITATOR: Experience, age, gender, ja, race, everything.

The facilitator here assisted in constructing diversity as a more clinical concept, balancing all the components of the discourse. The use of the words "different backgrounds, different upbringing, different cultures" masks the issue of race in this discourse.

One voice tried to surface in this silent part of the discourse, but the rest of the group did not react to it at all:

PARTICIPANT G: What I have observed in the team is that people tend to associate or you know, click more with those of the same age, same colour and, ja, somehow naturally it just happens like that in our team, so I would for instance get closer to people who are black like I am and it just happens, the other races as well. That has been my observation.

The use of the word "observation" serves to silence any opposition, because it is difficult to argue against someone's observation. It provides an element of concrete evidence. The resistance against a deeper discussion of diversity might be explained by Roblyer, Henry-Dozier and Burnette (1996) who discuss the idea in Western Culture of different as bad as follows: "The preferences of Europe and North America constitute the dominant ideology and worldview. As objects of study, other worldviews are usually all but invisible. A central premise in Western culture is the pursuit of an "ideal culture", a melting pot of variations that merges into one all-encompassing worldview. This view is so deeply ingrained and permeates the culture so completely that the very idea of recognising fundamental differences among member groups and accepting them is so foreign as to be not worthy of consideration" (Roblyer, Henry-Dozier & Burnette, 1996, p. 7).

The discourse of "managed" diversity in this text seems to be typical of the modern paradigm and is in contrast to the post-modern invitation to minority voices and voices of dissent in the organisation to speak out (Gergen, 1992b). The diversity discourse in this text underscores the modernist belief in linear progress, absolute truths and rational planning of social orders (a diversity framework) "under standardised conditions of knowledge and production" (Harvey, 1989, p. 35).

6.3.2 The individual versus the collective discourse and the seat of power

After the reflecting team had had their first chance to reflect in Organisation A, the discussion team displayed resistance to their reflection. This resistance was expressed in terms of surprise: "Actually I am very surprised; I was very surprised I must admit; so for me I was very, very surprised when I listened to it". Comment from one of the reflecting team members also served to pull the normal discussion group together in an us (employees) versus them (management) scenario. The reason for this movement seems to be that one speaker (Participant B) evoked an individual discourse while the discussion group was very carefully constructing a collective discourse. An example of Participant B evoking individual discourse is:

PARTICIPANT B: In listening to the team I think one thing that needs to be taken cognisance of is the fact that (Organisation A) is a young organisation and maybe

the expectation is to block everybody into a nice box and treat them in terms of alignment and the like, but maybe we don't actually need alignment. Maybe that is what (this organisation) is really successful about and that is how the success came about is to think differently, to do things differently and grow.

The speaker used strong words, directly opposed to collectivism and control, for example "mavericks, out of the box, want to be different". Another reason for the group uniting against this individual discourse might have been that Participant B also linked the privilege of autonomy to some individuals in the hierarchy of the machine, as well as silencing the voice of the majority. He is generally perceived as being the voice of management in the latter part of this exchange:

PARTICIPANT B: Yes I think (Organisation A) particularly have been successful as a result of having mavericks, as a result of so many thinking out of the box, as a result of saying we want to be different... I think if we consider the experiences of people in the organisation, it is growing really rapidly, it is diverse, it was controlled very autocratically in the beginning stages and I think an organisation that's going through a start-up phase needs autocratic management. You know democracy is fine, but democracy actually doesn't need very many decisions being made, because we spend so much time discussing and debating and I think in knowing a business somebody needs to make a decision and other people need to do the work. Yes, there is a happy medium somewhere in the middle of allowing consultation and debate, but generally speaking somebody has to make a decision and get on with life.

In the context of this organisation the maverick also happens to be the autocrat and the "somebody" who should be allowed to make the decisions. This indicates that some actors have the privilege of being more autonomous than others. Only people higher up the hierarchy are allowed the privilege of being mavericks. Although the element of control in this discourse of autocracy corresponds with the team's discourse of controlled diversity, the difference lies in individual control versus collective control. The team used words such as "consensus", essentially describing a collective method of decision-making. To say that somebody has to make a

decision and get on with life is ascribing larger powers to this autocrat in the machine; its decisions are now impacting on life at large.

The function of this discourse is also to position power. In this particular instance a view of power as sovereignty is achieved by centring the maverick (or someone) as the wielder of power. Foucault (1979) illustrates this by the symbolic use of the power of the sovereign, the king with power of life and death over his subjects. In the example above the decision is "to continue with life".

In their responses the rest of the group challenge this notion of sovereign power, for example:

PARTICIPANT C: I don't think that is our point, but still alignment and cohesion and team spirit for me it is very important, but within the team we have a hierarchy and you work according to the hierarchy.

This response might represent a move to Foucault's (1979) alternative to sovereign power, namely the productive quality of power. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) state that the productive elements of power move from focusing on the controlling actors to the systems of ideas that normalise and construct the rules through which intent and purpose in the world are organised.

Control for the rest of the group is achieved through the commonly derived framework, by the clarification of expectations and by adherence to what was agreed upon. Together a norm is created that will guide behaviour. Foucault (1977) is of the opinion that this type of "disciplinary power" emerges with the advent of modern institutions and is extended through society. The creation of this type of power can be inferred from the following text:

PARTICIPANT E: I think on a similar or related to it is to at the outset discuss expectations from both sides, from your side and their side and then come to an understanding of this is the functionality or the level of functionality in terms of understanding each other and once that is out of the way and people do not have

any misconceptions in terms of what I expect of you and what you expect of me, it makes it a lot easier.

Foucault (1977) wrote that a certain significant generality moves between the least irregularity and the greatest crime. This means that it is no longer the offence or the attack on the common interest that matters but that the departure from the norm, the anomaly; haunts the school, the court, the asylum or the prison. In this context the same will happen – the deviation from the agreed upon norm will cause the biggest concern.

Although modern discourses of progress and the rational-technical are prominent in the text, the discussion team's notion of power as social co-ordination reflects a post-modern stance. Gergen (1989) defines power roughly as the capacity to achieve specified ends. If this definition is accepted, at least two components are essential for the existence of power. The first component involves the articulation of criteria for the achievement of power. The process is inherently social, requiring co-ordinated agreements among participants. As a second component of power, a range of activities must be co-ordinated around the achievement of these locally defined ends. Such activities involve both discourse and other forms of action. In effect, then, power is inherently a matter of social interdependence, and is achieved through the social co-ordination of actions around specific definitions (Gergen, 1989).

Power as social co-ordination is illustrated in many parts of the text through the use of words such as "alignment", "agree on expectations", "a shared vision", "consensus", and so on. The voices in the text do not seem to struggle with the concept of power as social co-ordination, but rather with the mechanics of how to achieve that. Diversity is, for example, viewed as a hindrance. Even if the organisation manages to articulate the criteria for the achievement of power, the co-ordination of activities around the achievement of these locally defined ends seems to be problematic, for example:

PARTICIPANT B: I think one of the earlier comments were made that we generally know what we want to achieve, but the method of how we get there may differ. You

know there are 1 700 ways of getting from Johannesburg to Durban and I think the same applies here.

There seems to be difficulty in managing the social interdependence, as suggested by the following:

PARTICIPANT C: I think for me the biggest challenge is to create a culture of participative management. In my mind that is definitely the way to go to move away from this silo management where everybody is just constrained with his own functions and ignore the rest.

The reason for the struggle might lie in a conflict between the discussion team's notion that power should be socially co-ordinated and the reality in the organisation in which no co-ordination of agreements amongst participants takes place, as can be seen in the following:

PARTICIPANT A: My challenge is actually specific to my function as to actually stay in line with my manager's way of thinking and changing. They keep on changing their mind, it is like a moving target. At times I can adapt but to get the people below me to also just follow and understand what people are thinking is not easy.

FACILITATOR: So is it that sort of change, managing the constant change and the people in it?

PARTICIPANT A: I am talking specifically, for instance my project, Alan might change his mind daily. I am used to it now, but people below me, they don't understand it, they, one battles, it is a challenge to get them to actually work with one.

It seems as if the team working with for this participant expects the exercise of power as an act of social co-ordination. The participant's manager (the ultimate source of sovereign power in the organisation) does definitely not attempt to facilitate common agreement on the criteria for the achievement of the specified end. In effect, it seems as if the ends are not even specified. This leaves the manager essentially powerless ("it is a struggle to get them to actually work with one"). If what Czarniawska-Joerges (1989) argues is true, namely that what

managers really manage is meaning, then it is understandable that this manager is struggling. According to Czarniawska-Joerges (1989), managers introduce worldviews, ideologies, ideas, rationalisations and interpretations in their effort to produce shared frameworks. All this displaces the more traditional forms of organisational control such as force, or incentives (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989).

“Managers tell their subordinates what is what (they label things), what things are like or what they could be like (they use metaphors), they tell them what is normal and acceptable (they utter platitudes). Labels, metaphors and platitudes are building blocks for more complex control machinery: worldviews, philosophies, ideologies, cosmologies, business ideas” (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989, p. 139).

In this example the participant as a manager himself finds it difficult always to grasp the meaning of what his superior is saying or doing. It is therefore even more difficult to provide meaning to his team. This leaves the option of traditional control mechanisms, one of which is incentives and it is not surprising that this particular manager mentioned monetary incentives as an option to motivate his team.

The discourse of socially co-ordinated power is thus strongly subverted in this organisation by the modern discourse of sovereign (autocratic) power.

6.4 MOMENTS OF CHANGE

Mezirow (1997) constructs transformative learning (perspective transformation) as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. One of the objectives of this study is to establish whether the use of the narrative therapy process did facilitate changes in perspectives. This is done by identifying shifts in discourses: if a shift is found, the role of the reflecting team and the narrative technique is explored. As no permanent or major shifts could be identified in the discourses, the focus here will be on moments or aspects of change in the discourses.

6.4.1 Shifts in language

In session one with Organisation A, the language used was mainly rational-technical, supporting the managerial meta-myth and the machine metaphor, for example:

PARTICIPANT E: I think you have got individuals in terms of their own perceptions and then they are having a functionality where they believe they're functioning at a particular level, but obviously your perception may be different and you try to bring them to realise that their functionality is not at maximum and they should have a bit more to give out in terms of output potential and also your learning levels are different.

In session two the language becomes softer, in a more human idiom, for example:

PARTICIPANT E: With the different cultures you have in a team, appreciation and understanding of each of the cultures, but by every one of the team members, because each culture directs you in a different way in certain instances and if you do not appreciate that particular culture, then you are not going to understand why behaviour is in that fashion and that is going to make it more difficult, because you have one perspective and your team may have different perspectives, depending on the culture that they are coming from and if people are not, if there is not a complete understanding across the team, all the members in terms of the different cultures in the team, I think that can stimulate issues.

A word such as “align” in the first session is now replaced with words such as “appreciate” and “understand”, indicating some shift from the machine and rational-technical narrative. The emphasis on understanding in session two results from the narrative technique question which required the group to identify the role-players who were influencing the problem. Initially they focused on external role-players, but when the facilitator asked them to focus more internally (“let us come closer to home”) they became more personal. It could be that they started using more personal, “softer” language as a result of this, as can be seen in the following:

PARTICIPANT C: You are right, but I believe in my mind, my personal view is that it should start with yourself. You should make sure, if you are a manager, that you put down some ... (indistinct) to make sure you understand them and make sure that they understand you. I think that is important.

There is also a shift in this participant's use of language in terms of the grounding of his opinions. In session one he starts by saying "From my experience if I may. This is my experience. This is my opinion". In the second session he uses the word "believe". A word such as "experience" usually has a more objective value than "believe", which has a more subjective value. This can be seen from the definitions in The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982). "Experience" is defined, inter alia, as "actual observation of or practical acquaintance with facts or events; knowledge or skill resulting from this", whereas "believe" is defined as "have faith in" and "put trust in truth of (statement), efficacy of (principle or system), advisability of (practice), existence of (thing)". In a sense, the use of the word "believe" represents a shift away from the more objective machine metaphor. Another example in session one in which another of the participants also shifted from the machine metaphor by using the words "belief" and "experience" can be seen in the following text:

PARTICIPANT D: ...I think we probably as managers, this is my belief that as you move up the rank there is less required in terms of experience in the field and more required with the human relations and I don't know, I don't, whether get to a (inaudible) but in a more efficient way, that there is always the gap between the fields and the human factor, human relations, and obviously it makes it difficult to do with people. You are less experienced in terms of human relations and handling diversity with humans. You are more in the field than with human relations and I think that's what makes it difficult, you try.

If experience is defined as actual observation of or practical acquaintance with facts or events, and the knowledge or skill resulting from this, it could be argued that experience is important in a technical-rational type organisation. Without actual observation (experience) it will be difficult to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of processes so important within the technical-rational type organisation (Gagliardi, 1989).

Because of its importance in the technical-rational type organisation, experience could also be linked to the hierarchy in the organisation, where promotion to higher levels within the organisation usually rewards the more “experienced” people. The usefulness of a “belief” would be limited in the rational-technical environment and is of more value in a humanist discourse where a hierarchy of experience does not play the same role.

From a constructionist point of view, the shift in the use of language is important, as language is used to construct reality. Ford (1999) describes change from a constructionist view as the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of existing realities so as to bring about different performances. In this text the use of different words could be interpreted as a reconstruction of reality and might lead to different performances with regard to problem-saturated stories.

6.4.2 Shifts in metaphors and discourses

According to Ford (1999, p. 488), “for the network of conversations that constitute an organization to shift, people have to shift what they talk about, which in turn alters the context in which they find themselves, making new actions possible”. In the texts from both client organisations examples could be found of the conversations shifting in terms of the use of different metaphor discourses. These instances will now be discussed.

6.4.2.1 Shift in the construction of relationships

In Organisation A’s first session, relationships were mostly constructed in a geometric fashion, as can be seen in the discussion of the machine metaphor. Gephart (1996) describes the hierarchical nature of relationships within the rational-technical organisation as an emphasis on (upward) hierarchical obedience. In session two, however, relationships were sometimes constructed as more fluid and open, for example:

PARTICIPANT E: I think if you have an open mind and open door policy and you are open to ideas from the entire team and make it a group effort and not a directed (?)

effort from a manager to team, I think you will have a more open mind, people are free to express their views and ideas and then you can learn from them in terms of what more can you contribute to achieving a particular goal in terms of whatever the issues may be and with an open mind I think you are able to achieve more and you are able to get a greater team cohesion of having playing open with all of the team members and listening to each of them and their different perspectives.

The relationship in this text is constructed through exchange and not necessarily through conformity with the organisational hierarchy. Where alignment was the vehicle to achieve cohesion in session one, listening is now used to achieve this. Alignment is also replaced by the word “closer”, as in the following text:

PARTICIPANT E: I think it makes you work closer to the team because you are open with them and they are able to share their ideas and thoughts and the thinking in terms of whatever issues there are and you tend to get a much closer relationship with your team members in terms of working together with them.

The last two examples could be indicative of a shift in the text, from the use of the machine metaphor to that of the discourse metaphor. According to Grievies (2000), discourse as metaphor provides for the possibility of identifying different power dimensions of talk and in enlightened organisations critical debates could be used as a stimulus for change. The discourse metaphor also leads to a more egalitarian relationship between organisational members, hence the use of words such as “sharing” and “working together”.

Whereas different opinions in the first session were constructed as leading to conflict, the sharing of ideas in session two leads to a closer relationship. In session one the achievement of a closer relationship amidst all the differences in character, opinion and so on was perceived as difficult, whereas this was not the case in session two , as revealed in this section of the text.

This shift from a more geometric construction of relationships (as in the machine metaphor) to more open, human construction might be indicative of a movement to the post-modern. According to Gephart, Boje and Thatchenkery (1996b), the

reconceptualisation of structure within a post-modern framework requires a greater focus on human interpretive acts and discourse and hence decentres human artefacts that were previously privileged, for example, the status associated with levels in an organisation. Relationships therefore become more flexible and are created through discourse and interpretive practices (Gephart, Thatchenkery & Boje, 1996b).

6.4.2.2 Shift from the team as a mere form of socially co-ordinated power to a vehicle for satisfying some individual needs

During session one Organisation A did not refer to the “team” often, but preferred the word “group”. In the second session, they started using the word “team”. The traditional distinction between a team and a group is that a group is a loose clustering of people, while a team is based on the premise that every member is working towards the same goal (Armstrong, 1992). This is in line with the discussions group’s preoccupation with “alignment” in terms of the organisational goals. According to Armstrong (1992), teamwork is more important during periods of rapid change or crisis. Organisation A operates in a fairly volatile environment and the participants may have emphasised teamwork as a coping mechanism within this environment.

In session one the concept of the group as collective was used mainly to position power as a socially co-ordinated construct. In session two the team is constructed as a safe haven where the individual can satisfy both lower-order and higher-order needs. As has already been mentioned in point 6.3.1, the team is seen as providing security. In session two, more of the individual needs mentioned by Maslow (Du Toit, 1990) are seen to be provided by the group. One of these is the social need, including membership of a group, acceptance and belonging. Another is the esteem and status need, including pride, self-respect, recognition, appreciation and respect from others (Du Toit, 1990). The following text explains this observation:

PARTICIPANT C: Can I answer that question? When we started with this whole project management culture or management by project, we had a few seminars and one of the seminars they referred to a team that becomes so strong in their unity, I

mean, they start wearing the same T-shirts, they start wearing caps, you know, that kind of thing, because they were really successful and the organisation started respected the team for being so successful and that is why I feel of you are part of such a team, you feel like "jis, this is my team, I belong to this team" and I think from that point of view you might experience a sense of belonging of this your team, this is, it is like a soccer team or a rugby team. If the team keeps on winning, you know, it improves your self-esteem and it improves basically a lot about yourself (?) and you start in the context of the team as well.

It seems as if this discourse places a high premium on the concept of team psychological safety (Edmonson, 1999). Team psychological safety is described as the shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. In this text the safety within the team is, however, linked to the success of the team. The more successful the team, the greater the satisfaction of the employee's needs and the greater the sense of security will be.

The discourse of the team as a satisfier of individual needs represents a shift away from the machine metaphor and the managerial meta-myth to a more humanistic discourse. The team as satisfier of needs also shifts the discourse from the grand narrative of progress to a humanistic discourse, as expressed in the following:

PARTICIPANT A: Ja, it is a different game, this game is from eight to five, five days a week. After hours you and your family form a team, then you have got different goals. So one must look past the differences, the colour, the age, the gender, anything like that.

PARTICIPANT D: Hm, ... (indistinct).

PARTICIPANT A: This is, you have got, you set your goals for this game, which is in the corporate industry.

PARTICIPANT G: So from eight to five I feel a sense of belonging in that particular team ... (interrupts).

PARTICIPANT A: In that team, ja.

PARTICIPANT G: And then when I go home at five, then I belong to the other team?

PARTICIPANT A: That is how I see it. I do not see, I do not believe in really socialising with my work colleagues after hours. I feel that, I mean, there is so much outside, you

must socialise with, you can social with them, but I prefer to have my other friends ... (interrupts).

PARTICIPANT G: Outside?

This is a discourse subverting the grand narrative of progress, where everything is sacrificed for the sake of progress. Here a clear boundary is drawn in terms of what will be sacrificed and when. This corresponds with an observation by Ezzamel (1998) that economic and psychological dependency may induce employees of capitalist enterprises to comply with management's requirements, but co-operation for the purposes of earning a wage does not necessarily imply an acceptance of corporate priorities.

This discourse of controlled sacrifice also leads to a discourse of belonging, based on the goals of the team, and introducing the voice of agency or subjectivity. Based on the goals, the individual can choose whether he or she would like to belong or not.

PARTICIPANT G: Hm. Perhaps there are different levels of this sense of belonging. I do not think that I can feel that I belong to the team in the same way that I would feel when I get home ... (intervenes).

PARTICIPANT C: No absolutely.

PARTICIPANT G: You know with my own team at home. So to me it looks like there would be different levels of belonging, a sense of belonging that one achieves ... (intervenes).

PARTICIPANT C: Absolutely, no, I agree with you.

PARTICIPANT G: ... (indistinct) depending on the type of the goals or the team, maybe.

PARTICIPANT C: Absolutely. Your relationship is just totally different.

PARTICIPANT G: So well, I suppose it is belonging in both instances, it is a sense of belonging.

This discourse acknowledges the different spheres of the employees' lives and the different experiences of belonging. This perception of belonging to the organisation/team is also called organisational identification (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram & Garud, 2001). According to Wiesenfeld, Raghuram and Garud (2001),

organisational identification, or the strength of employees' psychological links to the organisation, has been associated with the degree to which employees are motivated to fulfil organisational needs and goals, their willingness to display organisational citizenship and other co-operative behaviours and their tendency to remain with the organisation. In this text the employees seem to be willing to display organisational citizenship behaviour within boundaries – “from eight to five” – and they also identify with another organisation – “the team at home” – and recognise a greater degree of identification with the latter.

This discourse also invokes the work-life balance discourse. A survey by Prudential Financial and Linkage Inc. in the United States of America shows that in today's environment of continuous change, the major concern of employees is striking the proper balance between their commitment to their personal life and their job (Harkins as quoted by Business Editors, 2001). This can be seen in the compartmentalisation of work and personal life in this text. This discourse assists in shifting the team discourse from work-related only and introducing a team discourse on a more personal level.

6.4.2.3 Shift from a rational-technical to a more personal discourse

In session three, Organisation A, in their resistance to a cellphone as a metaphor for the diverse team, started a “personal touch” discourse. This was not in resistance to the machine metaphor, but could indicate an effort to maintain a sense of humanity in the machine/system. The following text summarises most of this discourse in session three:

PARTICIPANT B: ...what I have found is that personal interaction becomes so important so that you understand one another. I am a great advocate of E-mail and all those wonderful things, but at the end of the day I still believe that personal touch is important and if you just go back to language and interaction, you know a vast, a large percentage of interactions are non-verbal. So we lose all of that the minute we go and we use technology. So you read something on a screen and it is cold, it is text, you do not see the emotion behind it, you do not see the non-verbal reaction of people and I believe that has a lot to say in terms of the context of the message, but I think it is very

much what you are trying to say. You know you may say "I do not like you" but it is the tone, it is the emphasis on certain words that makes a big difference.

The invocation of this "human touch" discourse might, on the other hand, not represent a shift to a personal discourse but rather to a power discourse. Gergen and Whitney (1996) state that face-to-face representation is gradually replaced by visual or graphic constructions of organisational reality and by electronically disseminated discourses. "This shift is accompanied by profound losses in management's capacity to direct or compel forms of everyday activity. These losses in the monologic control of representation undermine the power of top management and singularity of organizational strategy" (Gergen & Whitney, 1996, p. 331). The voice in organisation A lamenting the loss of the human touch in this text is also a representative of senior management and as such might invoke the discourse of the "human touch" to achieve continued control of the meaning making process in the organisation.

This discourse might also be regarded as resistance to the post-modern form of organisation. Gephart (1996, p. 40) writes: "a postmodern organization can be envisioned where human-machine interactions replace human-human interactions and where these are ultimately replaced by machine-machine interactions". The shift from a more rational-technical to a "human-touch" discourse seems to be done in an effort to maintain control within the organisation. In a way this fear of losing the personal touch might also indicate a fear that the socially interdependent nature of power might be lost.

6.5 THE REFLECTING TEAM'S DISCOURSES

In this section the effect of the reflecting team in shifting the different discourses will be explored.

6.5.1 The reflecting team in Organisation A

The first time that the reflecting team had the chance to reflect on the group's discussion, one of the reflecting team members created the opportunity for a

different perspective on the issue of diversity. The way in which the differing perspective was introduced, however, made the discussion group defensive and vigourously protective of their initial discourse of contained diversity within a team. Although the person concerned introduced an individual discourse, he did not actually differ from the group in terms of the issue of contained diversity, as can be seen in the following:

PARTICIPANT B: I think perhaps an idea would be to say it needs a framework within which to operate, to accommodate the diversity.

PARTICIPANT B: Yes, I think as long as the boundaries are set to say you can operate within these wider boundaries. People almost need to run rife if you can call it that.

These words were spoken midway through the reflecting team's turn and were not heard by the discussion team because the first part of what this reflecting team member said had made them defensive; everything afterwards was heard within the framework of what had been said initially. Lax (1995) states that one of the rules for the reflecting team is to present both sides of a dilemma and not an "either or" position. From the following it is evident that the reflecting team member stated a directly contrary idea and that this may have caused the resistance:

PARTICIPANT B: In listening to the team I think one thing that needs to be taken cognisance of is the fact that (Organisation A) is a young organisation and maybe the expectation is to block everybody into a nice box and treat them in terms of alignment and the like, but maybe we don't actually need alignment. Maybe that is why (Organisation A) is really successful about and that is how the success came about is to think differently, to do things differently and grow.

Another reason for the first turn of the reflecting team not opening up other possibilities in the discussion team's discourse, but instead consolidating them against the individual discourse of the reflecting team member, may have been the person's seniority in the organisation. The specific reflecting team member represented senior management's voice and a form of autocratic power, while the team was airing a discourse of democratic power.

Although another member of the reflecting team initially introduces the seemingly humanistic discourse of the family, with its promise of satisfying the need for belonging, this actually masks a hierarchy discourse:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: So if I listen to you it is like, well what you are saying is, you know the image that came to mind for me is like being a majorette, you know it is like being a parent, but what the parents are saying is that you know we have like this family, like children, like all these children are so different and, but I hear you saying is that you can't treat all the children the same, that you have to allow for differences.

Although Gibson (2001) mentions that the metaphor of the family could be used to indicate that the team's activity is broad and extends over a number of domains in life, the family metaphor in this instance seems to emphasise the level difference between the parents and the children. It does, however, succeed in voicing the diversity discourse that has been silenced by the discussion team. The family metaphor is used again by the reflecting team to introduce a discourse of acceptance of diversity to balance a competitive discourse ("comparing to the Jones's or the bigger brother or sister").

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: It makes me wonder about you know if you think about families that succeed in making children feel like you know, I am being accepted for who I am you know and not being compared to my brother and sister you know, whether they get it right.

The second turn of the reflecting team in the first session introduces a shift away from the narrative of the "universal plan". The words "a fairly loosely based approach, there isn't really a template, there is not a recipe" are used. This shift in the discussion could not be explored further as it was the end of the session, and ultimately it was not possible to establish whether it opened up space for alternative discourses.

In the second session the first turn of the reflecting team introduces the discourse of belonging, and that opened up space for a discourse on belonging, but also on individualism within diversity versus the cohesive team.

The following text shows the introduction of this discourse. The second text opens up a discourse on the degree to which individuality can be accommodated in the team. This represents a shift in the push for sameness in the discussion.

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: I was wondering about that too, you know, if you think about it, it sounds like there is this strong voice of diversity and what is the opposite of diversity is similarity, you know, so for that voice of diversity becomes so strong, what happened to that voice of similarity? Has that been silenced again? You know and then the other question that sort of came to me while people were talking about diversity is like what happens to one's sense of belonging? You know, to a team ... (indistinct) where you get diversity, a voice gets raised ... (indistinct) of much connected or do you feel ... (indistinct), do you feel like you belong?

PARTICIPANT A: I think the fine line as you say now, we have to give up some of your individuality and actually work as a team, you cannot lose all your individuality, you need to actually compromise and to form a team.

PARTICIPANT C: That is correct. That does not mean to say like you just become a puppet, not at all.

As discussed in 6.4.2.2, this turn of the reflecting team also opened up space for a shift in the construction of the team. During the reflecting team's second turn in session two a discourse of safety and a discussion of instances where the team would allow for diversity was introduced. This opened up space for the discussion team to move from a strong discourse of belonging and unity in a winning team, to a performance discourse and the effect of non-performance on the individual in the team. The safety discourse was introduced and expanded on as follows:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Ja, but I think, you know, what I sort of picked up on now the second time around you know, when Participant G questioned like what a sense of belonging, may be the thing, if we talk about teams but we are not saying is like you know when does it feel safe enough? When, like when is there

enough safety to shake the bucket? (*chuckles*) You know that, as I have come, like Lydia has made me think of it, you know, that if you have all these precious stones in the bucket that they really shine if you can shake it up, but like when does it feel safe enough to shake it up? And if people feel already committed, you know, does that help for people to feel safe or if there is like a commitment like to a common goal. That was interesting like how people kind of hold like this sport metaphor that was very strong and that people are holding onto that in a way that seems like that is like a safe thing to hold onto this sport metaphor.

PARTICIPANT F: Also what you are saying about safe, it links to comfort, it is like a comfort zone and while the concept of a winning team came up quite a bit, it is also possible that whether the team wins or loses, it is that comfort within the team that is more important and the sense of belonging with shared values and shared norms and that type of thing, that makes someone feel that they belong to a team.

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Because I was kind of wondering what happens if the team loses?

PARTICIPANT F: Ja.

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: You know it is not a safety.

PARTICIPANT F: Me too, so I think it is more of a sense of again belonging as opposed to winning or losing.

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Or performance.

This opened up a discourse of the team as a very unsafe place if it does not perform. The reflecting team's discussion seems to have initiated a movement back to the grand narrative of progress and the fact that in the quest for progress even the individual's sense of belonging is dependent on the performance of the machine:

PARTICIPANT C: The level of performance with that I can play around, but in essence in terms of, in the organisation culture non-performance in today's world, there is no place for that. If you do not perform, just plain and simple you are out of the game, you are kicked out, you get replaced. It is a simple fact of life.

PARTICIPANT A: If somebody does not perform in one game, he might be replaced.

In the third and last session, the reflecting team opened up space for a human versus an inanimate discourse. This represented a moment of change from the human as a

mere cog in the wheel to a subject with its own will and desires. The shift was initiated in the following text:

PARTICIPANT G: I think what really was going on in my mind was cellphone *versus* a team as in a sports team. With the cellphone we own we, we feel some sense of ownership, you can use it to whatever the extent that you want to but with a person you are in a team environment, you do not feel like you own your team mate, therefore you have no control in pushing him to reach, it must be up to him to motivate to do something ... (indistinct).

PARTICIPANT B: Sorry, just one from my side. I think one of the comments made was that you can control a cellphone. I think that is fundamentally the issue here is that it is an in ... (indistinct) object, you can take it, you can hit it, you can break it, you can do what you like with it and nobody is going to complain, whereas you cannot do that with people and fundamentally you have got to deal with people as people and you have got to take their feelings into account and what they did last night and then personal problems and all of those issues and all of those problems do not exist with cellphones. (*Chuckles*)

When the facilitator asked some audience and experience of experience questions, the reflecting team had their last turn in the third and last session. The reflecting team mentioned that they felt that there was a lack of feedback and praise. The response from the discussion to this serves to emphasise the presence of the machine metaphor in this organisation:

PARTICIPANT E: ... I think it is more in terms of the way the work process has developed over the years, that people take for granted that your performance level should be at a particular level, then you constantly perform and that does not always get, you do not always receive feedback in terms of that performance level.

PARTICIPANT B: Ja, the general expectation is that if you are doing fine, then nobody bothers ...

PARTICIPANT E: Yes

PARTICIPANT B: But the minute you mess up then everybody has something to say.

The human as a mere part of the machine is confirmed by the above. It is accepted that as a mere part in the machine one will never receive feedback and only minimum maintenance if one is performing well. Only a breakdown will warrant major attention.

The voices from session one to session three did, however, change from being the driver of the machine (the manager) to being part of the machine (the employee), for example, "... and you try to bring them to realise that their functionality is not at that maximum and they should have a bit more to give out" initially, to "that people take for granted that your performance level should be at a particular level, then you constantly perform". This shift might have been caused by the use of the narrative technique that tends to focus on personal experience, rather than by the reflecting team necessarily.

Based on the above it seems that the reflecting team opened up some alternative views for the discussion team, although this did not lead to major redefinitions of the group's frames of reference.

6.5.2 The reflecting team in Organisation B

In their first turn in session one the reflecting team opened up space for the voice of the manager: the manager is also subject to the changes from which he or she is trying to protect his/her team, for example:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: What I hear is people discussing management, aspects of management. What do I as a manager do and what I hear is that which is difficult in the way that they manage. How do I make people under me feel that they belong and how do I cope with the unpredictability to which I as manager am being exposed?

[PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Wat ek hoor die mense oor praat is, bestuurs, aspekte van bestuur. Wat doen ek as 'n bestuurder en wat ek hoor wat moeilik is vir die mense in die manier wat hulle bestuur is, hoe laat ek mense onder my voel dat hulle behoort en hoe cope ek met die onvoorspelbaarheid waaraan ek as bestuurder blootgestel word?].

This gave the discussion team the freedom to shift the discussion from themselves as enablers of the team to themselves as survivors of the system, for example, "The only way you overcome that is by how quickly people accept you. How quickly you fit in". In the second turn of the reflecting team during session one, the metaphor of a foundation is introduced. This metaphor served as an analogy of commitment, or a willingness to sacrifice and to work hard. It was also constructed as a precondition for positive (productive) workers. This also created an "old" versus "new" discourse, where employees of long standing were seen as being a solid foundation and new employees not part of the foundation. The construction of "building a foundation" also mobilised the discussion team to help actively in one of the areas with a perceived lack of foundation and encouraged them to keep on trying to build a foundation, for example:

PARTICIPANT I: ... We tried everything. Let me tell you, you are not alone in the struggle. We have guys here. We have PROs who are trying, for instance, to get the corporate clients to do their work better, their deposits. So there are steps that are taken to try ...

[PARTICIPANT I: ...ons probeer alles. Laat ek vir jou so sê, julle is nie alleen in die stryd nie. Ons het outjies hier. Ons het PRO's, which are trying for instance to get the corporate clients om hulle goed beter te doen, hulle deposito's. So daar is stappe wat geneem kan word om te probeer].

This call to keep on trying to succeed is captured in the following text:

PARTICIPANT K: I agree with you. It is a very big job. I tend to agree with Fanie. It is a very big job, but I do not think that we should throw in the towel.

[PARTICIPANT K: Ek stem saam met jou. Dit is 'n helse job. I tend to agree with Fanie. Dit is 'n helse job, but I do think dat ons nie die handdoek moet ingooi nie].

This is a further strengthening of the manager as rescuer/provider discourse. In the second session the reflecting team again used metaphors during their turns. During the first turn they built further on the metaphor of the foundation and the house, as well as added analogies of "like a peppermint in a sweets bag" and "it is like washing dishes". The function of these analogies was to introduce the quest for existential

meaning within an environment fraught with problems, as constructed by the participants during the first part of the session. The following text acts as illustration:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: ... We talk of a metaphor of a house and a foundation, but a foundation consists of people and people have certain needs, and there are practical things like the money for food or whatever that impacts on whether you are happy or not, but it is something else, that is not concrete, that people are talking about. As you know, when you come to work, you want to feel that you are not only coming to work to make money, but because you really want to. That is the thing that I hear. Sometimes maybe what is feeding the monster is that there is not really a higher meaning.

[PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: Ons praat van 'n metafoor van 'n huis en 'n fondament, maar 'n fondament bestaan uit mense en dat mense het sekere behoeftes, en daar is praktiese goed soos die etegeld wat ookal wat 'n impak het op of jy gelukkig is of nie gelukkig is nie, maar dit is iets anders wat nie tasbaar is nie, wat mense oor praat. Soos jy weet as jy werk toe kom wil jy voel jy kom werk toe, nie net om die geld te maak nie, maar jy kom werk toe omdat jy rêrig wil. Dit het betekenis in jou lewe. Dit is die ding wat ek hoor. Partykeer miskien wat ook die monster voer is dat daar nie regtig 'n hoër betekenis is nie].

During their last turn in session two, the reflecting team “authenticated” the agency and subjectivity that they had observed in the discussion team’s behaviour during the previous discussion turn. The following text illustrates this:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: ... and you always think about it as something that is quite exact. People are working with money so you cannot actually afford to make mistakes. You have got to do it right. There is one way of doing things, that is the right way. I think what now sort of is coming through is that even though it is a very exact business, you are working with people, so sometimes you have to relax and you have to create the openness. You have to be creative and that in the end actually will make people make less mistakes but you can’t afford ... (inaudible) because it is an exact business, then you forget that they are people. The creativity thing and sort of going outside the rules, I was very impressed with that.

In the third session the group built further on the human relations discourse and focused specifically on the need for belonging and the comfort of the collective within the impersonal system as experienced in this organisation. The need for belonging could be explained by the role of the informal group in serving as a defence mechanism against forces that group members could not resist on their own. Joining forces made the members feel stronger, less anxious and less insecure in the face of a perceived threat. As long as needs exist that are not served by the formal organisation, informal groups and smaller teams will fill the gap (Accel-Team, 2000). The reflecting team continued this discourse by commenting on the manager's own needs in this area, for example:

PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: What is starting to emerge now is that if I want to manage well then I must also create a place for myself to be heard and to share. You cannot take it all on yourself and just carry baggage. Somewhere you also have to get rid of the baggage. And some spiritual dimension also emerged. People have a need for something spiritual....

[PERMANENT REFLECTING TEAM MEMBER: ...van hierdie idees wat nou begin uitkom het as dat as ek goed wil manage dan moet ek vir myself 'n plek maak om gehoor te word en om ook te deel. Jy kan nie net ... (tussenbei) alles op my neem en net die baggage dra nie. Iewers moet ek ook van die baggage ontslae raak. En daar het ook iets uitgekom vir my van 'n spirituele dimensie. Dat mense het 'n behoefte aan iets spiritueel].

This opened up even more space for the discussion group to continue with a discourse of existential meaning within the machine metaphor. The presence of the managerial meta-myth may also play a role in the sense that it is viewed as an insufficient substitute for deep meaning because it is dehumanising and denies the spiritual (Boyce, 1996). Therefore the conditions for personal and social integration "are not to be found in the experience of work" (Bowles, 1989, p. 415). During the reflecting team's last turn the metaphor of the house and foundation became an analogy for personal and social integration in the system. The concept of integration can be seen in the emphasis on a balanced structure and on spirituality. The analogy of the house corresponds to Bowles' (1989) creative mythology that enables "the individual to commit him/herself to a pattern of activities, through work and life in

general, where self potentials, both cognitive and affective, can be exercised and where the action of operating on the environment, as opposed to being merely subject to it, allows at some level, a sense of purpose and well-being" (Bowles, 1989, p. 416). This is summarised in the following:

PARTICIPANT M: If I get back to the metaphor that we have used over the last two days, the house that you build, you have to be a balanced person. That means for me in this metaphor that all the walls should be the same height, or else the roof will touch some places and not others and where it does not touch, the wind will come in and destroy. You have to build a relatively sturdy structure and build in balance, the same height, use the same number of bricks here as you are using there. And I also realise today that there is a spiritual undertone to the whole discussion. I do not know whether there is specific reason for this, but you can't just build this sturdy little house with this, it does not help if you have a strong foundation and you are not balanced afterwards, but this sturdy house with this sturdy foundation is to be a balanced person.

[PARTICIPANT M: As ek terug kan kom na ons metafoer wat ons die afgelope twee dae mee gewerk het, die huis wat jy bou hierso, jy moet 'n gebalanseerde persoon wees. Dit beteken vir my in hierdie metafoer dat al die mure moet ewe hoog wees, anders gaan die dak by party plekke bykom, by ander plekke nie bykom nie en daar waar hy nie bykom nie, gaan die wind inkom en verwoesting saai. Jy moet 'n redelike stewige struktuur bou en gebalanseerd bou, ewe hoog, ewe veel bakstene hier gebruik as wat jy daar gebruik en ek kom vandag agter is hier 'n baie spirituele ondertoon in die hele gesprek. Ek weet nie of daar 'n spesifieke rede daarvoor is nie, maar jy kan net hierdie stewige huisie met hierdie, dit help nie jy het 'n stewige fondament en jy is nie gebalanseerd daarna nie, maar hierdie stewige huis met hierdie stewige fondament is om 'n gebalanseerde persoon te wees].

The reflecting team introduces the discourse of spirituality and in so doing elevates the humanistic-existential discourse to another level. Typical humanistic-existential questions such as "who am I, what is my purpose in life, what is it that I have to offer?" are labelled by some authors (Block, 1993; Hawley, 1993, Neal, 1998) as some of the fundamental ideas that individuals typically posit in spirituality. According to Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett and Condemi (1999), an active spiritual life can help individuals find

meaning and purpose in their lives and live out deeply held personal values. These values often reflect a desire to make a difference and to help create a more meaningful world.

All of these elements were present in the discourse of Organisation B. It was, however, never clear whether this represented Organisation B's core spiritual values which represent the philosophical views of the organisation as well as its priorities and sense of purpose (Anderson, 1997). Rather, there was a sense that spirituality was emphasised to compensate for a lack of "soul" (core deeply held common values) (Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997) in the organisation. The reflecting team picked this up and personalised the spirituality (the individual as the house) rather than focusing on the organisation.

The goals of the reflecting team (Friedman, Brecher & Mittelmeier, 1995) were discussed in point 4.5.2 and in this discussion the reflecting team mainly fulfils the functions:

- generating metaphors and images that stimulate, intrigue and alter the client's understanding of the problem. The metaphor of the house did not necessarily alter the team's view on the issue of negativity, but it intrigued them and stimulated them to develop a narrative of transcending their particular circumstances.
- noticing and commenting on "exceptions" to the client's problem-focused view of self and others. The reflecting team reinforced the instances where the team managed to counteract the effect of the system through their own creativity.
- to "authenticate" change by making comments that embody and embed the changes in observed behaviour. Although the discourse did not really change, the reflecting team approved certain behaviour from the discussion team, for example, "I was very impressed with that".
- to comment on aspects that are hidden, ignored or unnoticed. The reflecting team opened up space for the managers themselves. Initially, they tended to neglect their own emotions and feelings in the narrative, seeing themselves as rescuers, rising to the challenge, providing for others, but not for themselves. Later on they acknowledged their own feelings, for example, "it feels nice, you feel rather good about that".

The reflecting team ran the risk of reproducing normalising judgements through the way in which acknowledgement was given, for example, "I was very impressed with that". According to White (2000), congratulatory responses such as this are informed by conclusions that someone has done well according to certain measures. The utterance of such a response is thus inevitably associated with the assumption that the person expressing this is in a position to make a judgement about another's performance, and has the means for assessing this performance. White (2000) mentions the various risks of practices of applause in the therapeutic process, for example, participants may experience it as patronising and it may shut the door on the exploration of alternative stories. It does not, however, seem to have had such a negative impact on this discussion.

The reflecting team seems to have assisted the managers in Organisation B to create a process in which their experience within the organisation was more richly described. Within the bigger system, these managers seem to have been isolated in their roles as middle managers. Through this process an opportunity was created to re-engage with themselves as deeply connected with others and to be embraced by an account of themselves as deserving of understanding and as having a choice of alternative ways of managing within the bigger system.

6.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section the results will firstly be integrated and then discussed according to the guiding hypotheses set earlier.

6.6.1 Integration of discourses

The major discourses identified in the text of the two organisations are integrated in Table 6.1, indicating the supporting discourses and whether any shifts in the discourses took place.

The discourse of the managerial meta-myth is supported by various other discourses, for example, personal sacrifice for the sake of efficiency, the positive employee and the rational-technical discourse. The subordination of the individual to

an ideology of technical efficiency and the viewing of a “happy” worker as a means of achieving efficiencies form part of the meta-myth. The culture of most organisations is fundamentally modern and the modernism is characterised by technical rationality (Ingersoll & Adams, 1989). The way in which the managers in the client organisations understand their managerial role is influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which they live (Morgan, 2000), of which the managerial meta-myth is one. A shift in this discourse took place when the rational-technical language shifted to more humanistic language.

TABLE 6.1
INTEGRATION OF DISCOURSES

DISCOURSE	SUPPORTING DISCOURSES	SHIFTS IN DISCOURSE
The managerial meta-myth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal sacrifice for the sake of efficiency • The positive employee • The rational-technical • Western business culture 	Rational technical language shifted to more humanistic language
The grand narrative of progress and universal design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal sacrifice for the sake of progress • Teamwork • Winning and goal achievement 	A shift to controlled sacrifice versus total sacrifice
The machine metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subordination to the machine and its hierarchy • <i>Minimising of the subject</i> • Predictability • Geometric relationships • Functionalism 	A shift from the geometric construction of relationships to a more open, human construction and also to more human subjectivity
The human relations discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human agency and subjectivity • The positive employee • Collectiveness and belonging 	The emphasis on spirituality and work-life balance indicates a shift in this discourse
The change discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power via techniques of distribution • Interactional injustice 	The spiritual discourse can be seen as an effort to subvert the change discourse as a show of organisational power
The manager as rescuer/protector/provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle • Abandonment • Sacrifice • Action and solution orientation • Burnout 	No real shift, but work-life balance discourse could counter sense of neglect
The control-resistance discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unmanaged organisation • Human agency and subjectivity • Alignment 	The discourse of the unmanaged organisation indicates a shift from the helpless victim within the bigger system
The diversity discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sameness versus difference • The machine metaphor • Controlled diversity • The managerial meta-myth • Individuality versus collectivity • control versus autonomy • team cohesion versus letting diversity free and individualism • helplessness in imposed diversity 	
The individual versus the collective discourse and the seat of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovereign power • Disciplinary power • Power as social co-ordination 	Shift from team as form of socially co-ordinated power to satisfier of some individual needs
Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanistic-existential discourse • Work-life balance 	

The grand narrative of progress and universal design is firstly supported by a discourse of personal sacrifice for the sake of progress. Various references to goal achievement, success and winning also support this discourse. The grand narrative of progress further hinges on all the other tensions in the text, namely: sameness versus diversity, free-flowing diversity versus contained diversity, the beast of technology versus the human touch, autonomy versus organisational control. The concept of "team" also seems to be important in this discourse.

The issue of a common, unifying goal is stressed in the text and the team becomes part of the means of ensuring progress. The fate of the manager seems to be based on accomplishing goals in accordance with the prevailing institutional logic of the organisation (Gephart, 1996), and that seems to require "sacrifice" or "team players". A shift in the grand narrative of progress and the universal design was indicated by a shift from total sacrifice to controlled sacrifice, where the participants limited their sacrifice from "eight to five".

The machine metaphor is supported by the discourses of subordination to the machine and its hierarchy, the minimising of the subject, discourses of predictability and geometric relationships. The use of the words "functioning", "functionality", "functions" and "utilise" in the text creates the image of the machine and strengthens the metaphor. In Organisation A in particular, the discourse reduces the human element to a mere cog in the wheel, a part of the machine. As soon as the machine metaphor is present, it allows for a minimising discourse, dehumanising the human element.

The machine metaphor also allows for a more geometric construction of relationships as suggested by the words "silo's", "boxes", "alignment", "level", "boundaries", "cohesion", "hierarchy" and "comparison". The overall goal was to remove "human variability" (Wertheim, 2002, p. 2). The machine metaphor's major role seems therefore to be one of control and of keeping human behaviour at a manageable level within the organisation (machine). A shift in this discourse was indicated by a movement away from the geometric construction of relationships to a more open, human construction and also to greater human subjectivity.

The human relations discourse is supported by discourses of human agency and subjectivity, the positive employee, collectiveness and belonging and teamwork. The human relations discourse is based on the premise that people should work in a humane context where their unique natures are expressed and where they have a choice as to how they react. The human relations discourse further works from an assumption of underlying employee-employer harmony. The human relations discourse is operationalised as collectiveness and belonging. Reshef (2002) is, however, of the opinion that as in scientific management, the human relations discourse wants to rationalise management in order to increase workers' effort at work. A shift in this discourse was indicated by the spirituality discourse and the work-life balance discourse that moved the emphasis from human relations to achieving the organisation's goals to the achievement of other "higher-order" goals.

The change discourse is supported by discourses of power via techniques of distribution. The change discourse in the client organisations concerned the personal impact of change on the participants and never the formal organisation's reasons for change. The type of change (or change intention) was not part of the text, creating a sense of change without reason and meaning for the participants. Most changes are associated with uncertainty and the change discourse serves to illustrate the power of the system by keeping the participants in a state of constant flux through techniques of distribution.

Change in this text is usually initiated by higher powers in the organisation, who do not bother to explain the reasons for the change, signifying interactional injustice (Stephens & Cobb, 1999). The change discourse is thus mainly about control and ensuring order through keeping employees in their place. The spiritual discourse can be seen as an effort to subvert the change discourse as a show of organisational power. In taking part in a prayer (as a problem solving technique), solutions are sought from a power that in the employees' perception is much stronger than the organisational power. In obtaining answers from this power, they are breaking the hold and control of the organisational power system.

The discourse of the manager as rescuer/protector/provider is supported by discourses of struggle, abandonment, sacrifice, action and solution orientation and

burnout. The discourse of action orientation is characterised by an overwhelming need to focus on solutions instead of on problems.

Managers are not allowed to complain, or to say what they feel, contributing to the discourse that it is a "struggle" to achieve anything, as well as a sense of abandonment by senior management. In turn, this leads to personal sacrifice and burnout. The function of the manager as rescuer/protector/provider discourse in this text seems to be to isolate the managers from their direct reports, their peers and from senior management. No shift in this discourse could be identified in the text, but there were indications that the work-life balance discourse which emerged during the later sessions could counteract the sense of neglect, because it provided for sustenance in another environment, namely the home.

The control-resistance discourse is supported by discourses of alignment, the unmanaged organisation and human agency and subjectivity. Gabriel (1995) writes that the concept of control lies at the core of numerous discourses on organisations. Employees may submit to the organisation's cultural control, but may also resist this by developing their own sub-cultures and counter cultures, resulting in a control-resistance discourse.

The discussion group in Organisation A expresses control as alignment. The team does not resist this form of control, but resists individual or imposed control. Gabriel (1995) argues that there is a third possibility besides the rejection of, or participation in, control practices. Gabriel (1995) refers to this terrain as the unmanaged organisation, a kind of dreamworld in which desires, anxieties and emotions find expression in highly irrational constructions.

Fantasy is the chief force in the unmanaged organisation and includes jokes, gossip, nicknames, graffiti, cartoons, and stories. In this terrain, the human subject is reconstituted as the product of organisational practices and the resistance to such practices. In this way human agency and subjectivity is established. As such, the unmanaged organisation represents a shift from the feelings of helplessness within the bigger system.

The diversity discourse is supported by discourses of diversity versus sameness, the machine metaphor, controlled diversity, the managerial meta-myth and individuality versus collectivity. It should be noted, however, that the supporting discourses of diversity in this text actually undermine the issue of diversity and do not serve to strengthen it. Rather, there is a call for diversity within boundaries, a more controlled diversity in this text. The overwhelming view is that diversity must be "managed". The push for sameness and controlled diversity versus unmanaged diversity, for example, plays itself out in terms of a conflict between metaphors. The first metaphor entails describing diversity as a collection of cellphones and the second as a sports team. There was a strong push from the discussion group to accept the sports team analogy and a strong resistance to the cellphone analogy.

Diversity is also linked to individualism and competition. In constructing diversity as competition and conflict and therefore undesirable, the diversity discourse is again subverted. The group also distances itself from the diversity discourse and blames external factors for requiring it from them. There is constant tension between the collective, uniform team and letting diversity free. It is clear from the text that the discourse of diversity actually masked a stronger discourse of the team as a uniform and effective collective in serving the general discourse of progress, as driven by the machine metaphor. It appears that the team felt a sense of security from the machine metaphor and its function of counteracting unpredictability.

Traditional diversity issues such as gender and race were not explored as part of the discourse. The diversity discourse in this text underscores the modernist belief in linear progress, absolute truths and rational planning of social orders (a diversity framework) "under standardised conditions of knowledge and production" (Harvey, 1989, p. 35). No shift in terms of the diversity discourse could be identified in the text.

The individual versus the collective discourse and the seat of power discourse is supported by discourses of sovereign power, disciplinary power and power as social co-ordination. Although the modern discourses of progress and the rational-technical are prominent in the text, the discussion team's notion of power as social coordination reflects a post-modern stance. It seems that the team working with for

this participant expects the exercise of power as an act of social coordination. The discourse of socially coordinated power is, however, strongly subverted by the modern discourse of sovereign (autocratic) power in organisation A. The tensions between the individual versus collective discourse and the seat of power were maintained throughout the text and no significant movement could be identified. A shift from the view of the team as a form of socially coordinated power to satisfier of some individual needs was, however, noted.

The spiritual discourse was supported by discourses such as the humanistic-existential discourse and the work-life balance discourse. Typical humanistic-existential questions such as “who am I, what is my purpose in life, what is it that I have to offer?” are labelled by some authors (Block, 1993; Hawley, 1993, Neal, 1998) as fundamental ideas that individuals typically posit in spirituality. Spirituality was emphasised to compensate for a lack of “soul”, or core deeply held common values (Blanchard & O’Connor, 1997) in the organisation. The issue of work-life balance was also used to counteract the sense of disappearing into the bigger system and to establish purpose outside of the system. These discourses represented shifts in themselves and as such no other movements could be detected.

It appears that many of the discourses are interrelated and an artificial classification for the purposes of the study could detract from obtaining a totally integrated view. Table 6.1 does, however, provide a visual link between the different discourses. This comment should be viewed in the light of Burr’s (1995) statement that discourses are not monolithic. She explains this as follows: “they do not interlock neatly with each other, cleanly sealing off all possible cracks and weaknesses. There are weak points, places where they may be attacked, and points at which other discourses pose a real threat. The important point to remember about the nature of discourses is that they are always implicitly being contested by other discourses; this is Foucault’s point about power and resistance always operating together” (Burr, 1995, pp. 74 – 75).

As discussed in point 6.5, some shifts in discourses and language took place, but overall, most of the discourses stayed fairly fixed. In the next section the results will be discussed within the framework of the guiding hypotheses.

6.6.2 Guiding Hypothesis 1

Guiding Hypothesis 1 considered whether the use of the narrative technique would cause the participants to alter the initial nature of their discourse and lead to a richer discourse, allowing for alternate views.

The results from the study do not totally support Guiding Hypothesis 1. Although some shifts in the initial discourses took place, the major discourses did not shift drastically. It is, however, possible to make the assumption that the various deconstructive questioning techniques used in narrative therapy automatically caused some shifts in discourse. The unique outcome questions, for example, usually lead to a more personalised and energising discourse. In Organisation A, for instance, the language shifted from having a more mechanistic trend to a showing greater use of more human type words such as “experience versus believe” and “trust versus align”.

According to Ford (1999), shifting conversations and discursive practices like the examples mentioned above could have profound implications for the identities and relationships that operate within them. For example, by shifting the language from the mechanistic to the human, the participants take on and project a new social identity – that of resisting subjects within the machine.

Although many studies (for example, Burck, Frosh, Strickland-Clark & Morgan, 1998, Focht & Beardslee, 1996, Gosling & Zangari, 1993, Kogan & Gale, 1997) have investigated the outcomes of narrative therapy, the shifts in language are usually reported as a constructionist and variety issue. Change is reported as either a different construction of the problem (Gosling & Zangari, 1993) or as the use of a wider range of discourses and the ability to hold more complex views, enabling participants to deal more flexibly with their lives (Burck et al, 1998). The shifts in language in this text could be viewed in the same light, as new constructions of the participant’s role and identity are facilitated by these shifts and they also indicate the use of a wider range of discourses and resulting flexibility.

The reflecting team also assisted in certain instances in opening up space for alternative stories (for example, issues of belonging and safety within the team discourse). Overall, however, the major discourses did not necessarily change. One could, nevertheless, say that they became richer as a result of the input of various participants. The development of the dominant story in general did not allow for alternate views to stimulate major change during these sessions. This is evident from the concluding comments from the participants in Organisation B:

PARTICIPANT I: I have done a mind refreshing and it again led me back to the issue that guys are social. The human as a person comes first and then he will deliver deadly results and will have the feeling that he wants to go to work. It is nice there and there is a team caring for him. There is somebody giving you sweets. There is somebody shouting hallo or morning. Those type of thing. Those little things. If you do those little things, as I say, it always comes back to the inner person. Over and above the paperwork lying there it comes back to the inner person and if the inner person is happy and satisfied, then that does not mean anything. Then he can finish it in the wink of an eye.

[PARTICIPANT I: Ek het 'n mind refreshing gedoen en ek het klomp idees gekry, 'n klomp idees van verskillende mense en dit het my net weer terug laat lei dat die ouens is sosiaal. Die mens as 'n persoon kom eerste en dan gaan hy vir jou dodelike resultate lewer en dan gaan hy die gevoel hê van ek wil werk toe gaan. Dit is lekker daar en daar is 'n span wat omgee. Daar is iemand wat vir jou sweets gee. Daar is iemand wat vir my skree hallo of morning in die oggend. Sulke tipe dinge. Daardie goedjies. As jy het daardie goedjies doen, en soos ek sê dit kom altyd, dit kom weer terug na die innerlike mens. Bo en behalwe die papierwerk wat daar lê, dit kom terug na die innerlike mens en as die innerlike mens tevrede is en gelukkig is, dan beteken dit vir hom niks nie. Dan kan hy dit binne 'n oogwink afhandel].

This result could be related to Wick's (1996) criticism of narrative therapies when he states that the definition of language or the restriction of the discussion to language creates a story that has no pictures, odours or tastes. According to him, narrative therapists negate the complex nature of communication and only focus on one part of the communication continuum. In this text the focus on the human as a language generating and hence meaning generating system might be limiting the facilitation of

change. Whatever the reasons, in this study there was not a major revisiting and reframing of current perspectives. The development of a richer discourse, allowing for alternate views, was thus negated.

6.6.3 Guiding Hypothesis 2

Guiding Hypothesis 2 asks whether the use of the narrative technique allows for transformation in perspective.

The results of the discourse analysis in this study did not indicate major shifts in the discourses from one session to another and as such the presence of a perspective transformation could not be identified. As mentioned in Chapter 3 (see 3.3), most management development approaches endeavour to achieve personal growth, conceptual development, feedback and skill building. The use of narrative therapy in this study was mainly aimed at personal growth where the intention was to facilitate the consideration of different worldviews that could possibly trigger new approaches to managerial challenges. It was hypothesised that the changes would be indicated by changes in the discourses (see 5.7.1). In this hypothesis a discourse is to a certain extent equated to Mezirow's (1997) concept of a meaning perspective, where a meaning perspective or point of view (Mezirow, 1997) is the articulation of the constellation of belief, value judgement, attitude and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation.

The equation is explained by Burr's (1995) description of discourse as referring to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements that in some way together produce a particular version of events. She also states that "we can think of discourses as systems of meaning, ways of representing ourselves and our social world, which constitutes not only what we think and say, but what we feel and desire and what we do. Discourses can be seen as having the potential to be deployed ideologically, that is, in the service of power and in the interests of the relatively powerful groups in society, but may at the same time allow room for people to exercise some degree of choice in the discourses they take up and use" (Burr, 1995, p. 85).

These descriptions of a discourse are very close to Mezirow's (1997) definition of a frame of reference. He views frames of reference as the structures of assumptions through which people understand their experiences. Frames of reference selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition and feeling (Mezirow, 1997). In this sense they fulfil exactly the same role as a discourse. According to Parker (1992), a discourse is a system of statements which constructs an object and a frame of reference defining the individual's life world (Mezirow, 1997).

One could be as bold to say that a discourse and a habit of mind (viewed by Mezirow as one of the two elements of a frame of reference) are exactly the same. This is further highlighted by an example from Mezirow (1997, p. 6): "An example of a habit of mind is ethnocentrism, the predisposition to regard others outside one's own group as inferior. A resulting point of view is the complex of feelings, beliefs, judgements, and attitudes we have regarding specific individuals or groups". Similarly, one would identify a discourse of ethnocentrism in a text, based on the specific way in which it is constructed.

The elements of attitude and judgement as mentioned in Mezirow's (1997) definition of a meaning perspective are, however, not compatible with a social constructionist understanding. Burr (1995, p. 50) expresses this as follows: "Let us be clear about the status of the things people say and write, from the perspective of a poststructural social constructionism: these things are not a route of access to a person's private world, they are not valid descriptions of things called 'beliefs' or 'opinions', and they cannot be taken to be manifestations of some inner, essential condition such as temperament, personality or attitude. They are manifestations of discourses, outcrops of representations of events upon the terrain of social life. They have their origin not in the person's private experience, but in the discursive culture that those people inhabit". Mezirow's (1997) concept of meaning schemes that influence a point of view or meaning perspective is also largely shaped by the discursive culture in which the person is situated.

This could lead to a typical "what came first, the chicken or the egg?" debate. According to the social constructionist perspective, the discourse is first and the attitude and habits are manifestations thereof. According to Mezirow (1997), the

associations, concepts, values, feelings and conditioned responses will shape the frame of reference (or discourse). It is not the purpose of this study to address this debate, but rather to identify whether the frames of reference or discourses changed over the course of the sessions.

It is also not possible to talk about changes in discourses from a social constructionist point of view, but rather of a shift to a different discourse. Burr (1995) argues, for example, that if one accepts the view that a multitude of alternative versions of events is potentially available through language it means that there may be a variety of different discourses surrounding any one object, event or person, each with a different story to tell about the object in question.

There is no question here of synthesis of the different discourses as suggested by Mezirow (1997). According to him, discourse is a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view. "The more interpretations of a belief available, the greater the likelihood of finding a more dependable interpretation or synthesis. We learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others to arrive at a common understanding that holds until new evidence or arguments present themselves" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7).

It is clear that there are philosophical differences between the two approaches, but for the purposes of this study it was still possible to trace whether different discourses emerged around certain issues or, from Mezirow's perspective, whether alternative interpretations of issues were presented.

Not many alternative discourses or frames of reference could be identified in this text. Reasons for this could be the following:

6.6.3.1 Not enough opportunity for deconstruction

One could say that Mezirow (1997) advocates deconstruction as a method to transform a frame of reference. According to Burr (1995), deconstruction refers to attempts to take apart texts and to examine how they are constructed in such a way

as to present particular images of people and their actions. This can take several different forms, for example, revealing contradictions or tracing the development of knowledge. In the latter, deconstruction concerns itself with tracing the development of present ways of understanding, of current discourses and representations of people and society, to show how current truths have come to be constituted, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry (Burr, 1995).

Mezirow (1994) is of the opinion that meaning structures are transformed through reflection and he defines reflection as attending to the grounds (justification) for one's beliefs. According to Mezirow (1994), individuals reflect on the unexamined assumptions of their beliefs when these beliefs are not working well for them, or when old ways of thinking are no longer functional. The individual is then confronted with a disorienting dilemma that serves as a trigger for reflection. Reflection entails a critique of assumptions to determine whether the belief, often acquired through cultural assimilation in childhood, remains functional for the person as an adult. The assumption's origins, nature and consequences are critically examined.

Just as in deconstruction, Mezirow (1990) suggests the examining of the development of present assumptions or "truths" and their effects. This is also similar to the intended effects of the processes of "externalisation of the problem" and "mapping the influence" in narrative therapy. White and Epston (1990) postulate that the externalisation of the problem helps people to identify and separate from unitary knowledges and "truth" discourses that are subjugating them. They believe that these unitary knowledges can be exposed by encouraging persons to identify beliefs about themselves, others, and their relationships that are reinforced and confirmed by the continued presence of the problem (White & Epston, 1990).

According to White and Epston (1990), people gain a reflexive perspective of their lives through the process of externalisation. New options become available to them through challenging the "truths" that they experience as defining and identifying them and their relationships. Reflection, externalisation and mapping the influence can all be seen as ways of deconstructing the text. In this particular study, the narrative techniques of externalising the problem and mapping the influence were

used. In Organisation A the problem was externalised as the “diversity dilemma” and in Organisation B as “the monster of negativity”.

These processes did not, however, lead to a conscious reflection on the assumptions underlying the participants’ frames of reference or discourses, and consequently not many alternative discourses or frames of reference were generated. In Organisation A the reason for this might lie in the way in which the facilitator grouped all the team members’ stories together and found one area of possible commonality, forcing that into one generally experienced problem-saturated story. Eventually the externalised problem did not sufficiently represent the whole group’s lived experience and hence led to a superficial discussion of a more abstract discourse of diversity. The questions used in the narrative process also failed to facilitate the group in exploring how the different discourses of, for instance progress, and the managerial meta-myth shaped their frame of reference in terms of diversity.

In Organisation B the facilitator did not externalise the dominant problem, but instead objectified one of the symptoms of this problem. If the facilitator had asked more exploratory questions, it would probably have led to a more useful objectification of the system as the “monster” instead of a focusing on negativity as the main issue. This prevented the group from ever really mapping the influence of the problem, as they were in effect mapping the influence of one of the influences. This hindered the development of alternative stories and frames of reference immensely and in effect strengthened the dominant human relations discourse.

It is, however, not always possible to create a fixed external definition of the problem, because as White and Epston (1990) found, the external definition is often fluid and evolves over time. In this specific case, it was only possible after three sessions to come to grips with the main problem.

In certain instances the reflecting teams also contributed to the limited opportunity for deconstruction. As a result of the inexperience of the majority of the members of the reflecting teams, it was sometimes the case that the team members merely offered their own individual ideas to the discussion team. They asked very few

questions of each other and consequently did not always shift to a conversation among reflectors as guided by Anderson (1990). More questioning of each other might have allowed for more varied understandings and the expression of more novel ideas (Lax, 1995).

6.6.3.2 The pervasiveness of some of the discourses

As has already been mentioned, the narrative of progress and the machine metaphor might be so entrenched in the culture of an organisation (as in Organisation A in this study) that it will take more time to open up the discourse for other alternatives. As Ari de Geus (2001, p. 1) says: "It is certainly easier to manage machines, than it is to manage people ... Many of the problems we read about today stem from the fact that we still have generations of managers who are trained in managing machines and the emphasis of the present management generation and the financial world is clearly all on maximization of shareholder value and profit. Such priorities mean organisations are just machines to make money and their managers are machinists".

Organisation A definitely falls into this category. Its mission statement ends with the words "and above all to deliver value for our shareholders". As mentioned by Höpfl and Dawes (1995) in Chapter Three, activities (or in this case discourses) which reinforce the legitimacy of the managerial prerogative are acceptable, while those which, by implication, threaten the coherence of collective meaning are not. For the participants in Organisation B, the existence of alternatives to the narrative of progress is probably too foreign to create an opening for the exploration of alternative discourses. Some of the supportive discourses within this discourse did, however, shift during later sessions, indicating that with time, alternative constructions might have been explored.

The human relations discourse in Organisation B was also very pertinent and was actually reinforced in each successive session. The endurance of this discourse in the text might be explained by the effect of greater interdependence between organisations. According to Barry and Elmes (1997), the strategic stories of organisations may shift away from a focus on agency (oriented toward self) and

move toward community (focused on relationships with others) as they become increasingly interdependent.

Barry and Elmes (1997) predict a move away from agentic organisation characterisations such as warrior, traveller, maker or sage; in their place they expect more communitarian characterisations such as teacher, humanist or friend. The human relations discourse in Organisation B seems to be sustained by the threat of the impersonal system. This threat is too big to allow for an opening for other discourses at this stage. The human relations discourse appears to be a safety blanket in this organisation.

6.6.3.3 Lack of a disorienting dilemma and other phases in perspective transformation

The first phase in the process of perspective transformation is a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1994). The participants in these groups did not really experience a disorienting dilemma, therefore there was no reason for them to examine their current frames of reference critically. In terms of narrative therapy a person will usually explore alternative stories only if his/her current story is no longer functional. White and Epston (1990) make the general assumption that people experience problems when the narratives in which they are storying their experience, and/or in which their experience is storied by others, do not represent their lived experience adequately. They further assume that in these circumstances there will be significant aspects of the person's lived experience that contradict these dominant narratives. The client usually seeks therapy in these instances.

In both organisations the participants identified certain challenges or problems facing them as managers. Although the issues selected seemed to allow insufficient space for the performance of the groups' preferred stories, one could not really say that this constituted the motivational power of a disorienting dilemma.

Some of the other phases involved in completing a total perspective transformation (see 2.3.4) might have been present to some degree, but could not in general be identified from the text. Phase four, in which the individual recognises that his/her

discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change, could, however, be identified in Organisation A.

6.6.3.4 Surface effort

Narrative therapy and the reflecting team are usually used with a family group with a homogeneous story for which they would like to generate alternatives. Although the respective groups each selected a common challenge it did not necessarily have the same problem value for everybody, resulting in a typical post-modern "game" with its fragmentation, lack of commitment and failure to look beyond the surface. In this "discussion game" people just take part in the discussion, knowing that soon they will move on to the next "game" or "spectacle". According to Boje (1999a), spectacles provide a mirage, a phantasm and an illusion that allows individuals safely to avoid looking beneath the fabricated images, product stars, and corporate icons.

There was a tendency in the group process (especially in Organisation A) to avoid talking about things. The issue of diversity was never really examined beyond the surface and therefore the conditions for perspective transformation were not favourable in the sense that the group did not really attend to the grounds (justification) for their beliefs (Mezirow, 1994). They might not have been motivated to generate alternative stories.

6.6.3.5 Size of the group

Traditionally narrative therapy and the reflecting team are used with intact groups such as a family and with individuals (Barry, 1997). The therapy would then typically focus on externalising a specific problem area and developing alternative stories through deconstructing questions. Certain deconstructive questions would be asked more than once and in different ways (Morgan, 2000). In this study the size of the team made it difficult to explore certain stories more deeply by asking more deconstructive questions. More alternative stories might have been generated if there had been an opportunity to ask more deconstructive questions. In this

particular study, however, each participant had the opportunity to respond to every question, taking up time and not necessarily allowing for free-flowing conversation.

6.6.3.6 Number of sessions

In general, the number of sessions in narrative practice varies widely. In some instances five sessions are enough (Wetchler, 1999), in other instances eight sessions are recommended (Focht & Beardslee, 1996) and in another example the process stretched over eight months (Behan, 1999). It is therefore difficult to specify the optimal number of sessions, but one gets the impression that the three sessions in this study, with the number of people present, were not enough to allow for adequate openings for new stories and the development of those new stories (discourses). Barry (1997) used the narrative therapeutic process in an organisational setting over several months and reported many positive changes. This leads one to surmise that a longer period of intervention might yield more favourable results (in the form of perspective transformations).

Guiding Hypothesis 2 could not be supported and no perspective transformation could be identified.

6.6.4 Guiding Hypothesis 3

Guiding Hypothesis 3 states that the different organisational cultures would result in different discourses and perspective transformation in each group.

Guiding Hypothesis 3 was substantiated because the discourses differed from organisation to organisation. Different discourses were also silenced in the two organisations. As mentioned in 3.4.3.1, the macro culture plays a role in the learning experience. Hofstede (1993) defined the four underlying dimensions of organisational culture within the international context as:

- power distance - the degree to which authority is decentralised and leadership is autocratic.
- uncertainty avoidance - the degree to which society perceives itself to be threatened by uncertainty.

- individualism vs. collectivism - the relationship between the individual and society as a whole.
- masculinity vs. femininity - the degree to which a society values assertiveness and wealth over compassion.

The nature of these dimensions (as deduced from the discourses) in the two organisations is indicated in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2
CULTURAL DIMENSIONS IN THE TWO ORGANISATIONS OF THE STUDY

Dimension	Organisation A	Organisation B
Individualism versus collectivism	Individualistic (senior management) Collective (other employees)	Collective (the discussion group)
Masculinity versus femininity	Masculine	Feminine
Power distance	High level, but with resistance from discussion group with lower level of power distance	High
Uncertainty avoidance	Moderate	High

In some instances there seemed to be a discrepancy between the espoused theories and the theories in use. In Organisation A, for example, the theory in use seems to be autocratic leadership, indicating a high power distance, whereas the discussion group promoted a discourse of socially coordinated control, indicating their preference for a lower power distance. Although the discourses in the organisations in the study seem to indicate high uncertainty avoidance practices, the participants did not resist the type of discussion technique used. This is in line with Francis' (1995) assessment which places South Africa as a whole in the last third of a continuum of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, indicating that South Africa has a tendency for weaker uncertainty avoidance and lower power distance.

The phenomenon that the different organisations both silenced some discourses and voices, supports Salaman and Butler's (1994) contention in 3.4.3 that in certain instances groupthink can also lead to a condition where the group becomes entirely unable to learn. In both Organisation A and B the groups had strong similar opinions, possibly leading to the silencing of certain discourses (for example, real diversity in Organisation A and the overall goal of the organisation in Organisation B).

Although some of the discourses in the two organisations seem similar, there are subtle differences, for example:

- in Organisation A collectivism is used as a driving mechanism and in Organisation B as a protective mechanism.
- in Organisation A work is focused on bringing in new initiatives and in Organisation B on maintenance and repetition.
- in Organisation A changes are sometimes associated with helplessness and in Organisation B with despondency.

Culture has received a lot of attention in the practice of narrative therapy as part of situating the problem in context (Morgan, 2000). "Narrative therapists are interested in discovering, acknowledging and 'taking apart' (deconstructing) the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story. In this way, the cultural beliefs that have assisted the problem to come into the person's life, and the beliefs and ideas that are assisting in sustaining the life of the problem, become available for questioning and challenge" (Morgan, 2000, p. 45). Despite many studies in organisational culture and organisations as such (Reed, 1992), very little research has been done on the impact of narrative therapy within the organisational context and information on the impact of organisational culture on the therapeutic process is scarce.

Although the study could not identify major perspective transformations, Guiding Hypothesis 3 could still be supported, as the impact of the cultural differences on the discourses was quite clear.

With this, Step 6 of the qualitative research, namely the presentation, discussion and integration of the research findings, is completed.

6.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the results of the discourse analysis were reported and discussed. Firstly, the major discourses present in both organisations were highlighted and interpreted, after which the organisation-specific discourses were isolated and interpreted. The shifts in discourses were then examined and the chapter closed

with an integration of the major and supporting discourses and the interpretation of the results based on the three guiding hypotheses. In the next chapter conclusions, possible shortcomings of the study and recommendations will be offered.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, SHORTCOMINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND INTEGRATION

In this chapter the conclusions, shortcomings and recommendations with regard to the study are presented. The conclusions will be formulated first and thereafter a discussion of the shortcomings of the research will follow. The study will then be concluded with the presentation of recommendations and an integration.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

From the results an overall conclusion can be made that the study achieved its goals. The conclusions will now be discussed in terms of the research objectives as laid out in point 1.3.

7.1.1 Objectives: Literature study

The extent to which the objectives of the literature study were achieved will be reflected in this section.

7.1.1.1 Objective 1

The first objective of the literature study, namely to examine critically the ability of transformational learning theories to facilitate adult learning in a post-modern paradigm was achieved in Chapter 2.

From this the conclusion is made that the transformational theories of learning, and in particular Mezirow's theory of Perspective Transformation, do have the ability to facilitate adult learning in a post-modern paradigm. Although the theories themselves are not purely based on post-modern premises, they display post-modern themes such as an interdisciplinary nature and pastiche, deconstruction and language as a method of construction.

The Transformation Theories of learning do, however, represent a more generative and individualistic theory than suggested by postmodernism. Human agency and the

individual as subject are highlighted, especially in terms of the transformation of “distorted” meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1990). Despite this, Transformational Learning Theory’s ability to facilitate learning in a post-modern paradigm lies in the value that it gives to the different experiences and learning that people engage in and in that it does not impart a single ordered view of the world, but accommodates the multiple realities that are experienced.

7.1.1.2 Objective 2

The second objective, namely to evaluate current management development efforts from a post-modern as well as social constructionist paradigm, was achieved in Chapter 3.

From Chapter 3 it is concluded that most of the current management efforts are greatly influenced by a modern paradigm and not necessarily by postmodernism or social constructionism. Modern narratives such as the systems metaphor and the grand narrative of progress structure these efforts on a conscious level. Elements of postmodernism and social constructionism could, however, be found in most of the elements of so-called effective management development, leading to the conclusion that current management practices are unconsciously influenced by post-modern and social constructionist ideas. In practice this leads to a pastiche of approaches to management development.

7.1.1.3 Objective 3

The third objective, namely to propose a design for a management development intervention based on narrative therapy, was achieved in Chapter 3.

The format of a management development intervention based on narrative therapy involves the use of deconstructive listening, deconstructive questioning, story development and a reflecting team. The nature of the design led to the conclusion that it would satisfy the criteria for the most effective learning processes from a social constructionist viewpoint in that: it accepts the co-existence of multiple realities and truths; there is a move away from the use of external authority; the

manager's experience is respected; it is a collaborative process that creates space for the forming of new meanings.

7.1.2 Objectives: Qualitative study

The achievement of the objectives of the qualitative study will be examined in this section.

7.1.2.1 Objective 1

The first objective of the qualitative study, namely to track the impact of the Management Development Discussion Intervention (MDNI) through discourse analysis, was achieved in Chapter 6. Discourse analysis facilitated the identification of major discourses in the text. It was also possible to identify supporting discourses as well as silenced discourses. Discourse analysis could therefore be productively used to "track" discourses over the course of a series of sessions. The tracking of the discourses indicated that the Management Development Discussion Intervention did not necessarily facilitate perspective transformations in the participants.

It was, however, possible to identify moments of change or small shifts in the discourses. Some of these moments of change are listed below.

- Shifts in the use of language, for example, from rational-technical to a human relations orientation.
- Shifts in metaphors and discourses, for example, the construction of relationships, from the team as a mere form of socially co-ordinated power to a vehicle to satisfy some individual needs and a shift from a more rational technical to a more personal discourse.

7.1.2.2 Objective 2

The second objective of the qualitative study, namely to identify factors inhibiting and enhancing perspective transformation through the use of narrative technique was achieved in Chapter 6. The first major finding was that the use of narrative technique in this study did not result in major perspective transformation in the

participants. The type of deconstructive questions and their effect on the discourses were identified as factors enhancing the possibility of perspective transformation.

With this, Step 7 of the qualitative study, namely the formulation of some possible conclusions, is complete.

7.2 SHORTCOMINGS

The following shortcomings were identified in the research.

7.2.1 The tension between paradigms

Although the study was done from the perspective of the post-modern and social constructionist paradigms, the issues being explored are built on strong modern and positivist paradigms. Management development is essentially built on the modern narrative of progress and adult learning within the organisational context is also often structured in the modern idiom. This could, in a sense, have resulted in subdued post-modern and social constructionist perspectives, reducing the study to a mere academic exercise with no progressive intention (or progressive effect).

7.2.2 Criticisms of discourse analysis

Burman and Parker (1993) identify several problems in discourse analysis. Discourse analysis was used in this study to track discourses from one session to the next. The type of criticism as mentioned by Burman and Parker (1993) should therefore be mentioned to indicate the possible impact that it may have had on the study. Burman and Parker (1993) identify fourteen problems of method:

- discourse analysis is very labour intensive. The researcher in this study can definitely attest to that!
- it is difficult to determine whether the different repertoires or discourses are present in the text as discrete phenomena, or whether the changes in context are responsible for changes in meaning.
- it is difficult to move from a specific text, from a particular usage to a wider context and it is frustrating to feel that no broad empirical generalisations can be

made. According to Burman and Parker (1993), there is thus a failure to theorise universal processes.

- the analyst is often restricted to the confines of the text.
- the traditional complaint is that discourse research does not provide a sufficiently rigorous methodology, where the reader is satisfied that the analysis has produced the only possible reading. To satisfy this request would be against the intent of discourse analysis, namely to open up space for alternative readings of a text.
- the ethical dilemma of the analyst imposing meaning upon another ('s) text.
- there is a danger of attempting to prevent the analysis of grammatical constructions from leading to an analysis of the social relations implied by discursive forms.
- different types of text work in different ways and there is a risk of taking what one imagines as the "method" of discourse analysis and applying it to all texts without taking the differences into account.
- a symptom of the competing styles of analysis is using such terms as discourse, text, narrative, theme and story as if they are interchangeable.
- there is a danger of focusing on language only, and neglecting the working of power relations after the text has stopped.
- isolation of psychology from other disciplines would hamper discourse analysis. Some awareness of cultural trends, of allusions to political and social developments, is essential for discourse analysis to work.
- the position of the reader as researcher and the ethics of imposing meanings.
- awareness and sensitivity from the researcher to the way oppression is maintained in language.
- an ambivalence to the use of psychoanalytic concepts.

Burman and Parker (1993) also identified problems where discourse analysis in practice slips from social constructionism to empiricism. Another worrying aspect of discourse analysis in this context is the abstract character of the debates. According to Burman and Parker (1993), the theoretical framework is not easy to understand, and as such it is open to the charge of elitism when an analysis which defies simple

exposition is elaborated and when it explicitly resists generalised description or easy how-to-do-it rules.

The next set of problems is classified as political. The first problem is one of relativism, where the authors (Burman & Parker, 1993) are of the opinion that discourse analysis could cause theory to float disconnectedly from any political position and find this to be a return to a disturbingly familiar liberal pluralist position. The second problem in this category occurs where the emphasis on the specificity of situations, and of socio-historical conditions, tends towards a fragmentation of positions, making collective action difficult.

The third problem here is the way in which resistance to power is made problematic. The eventual analysis of power as all pervasive threatens, according to Burman and Parker (1993), to usher in an exhausted and passive fatalism and surrender of political vision. Lastly, the issue of reflexivity and the danger that focusing on the researcher's construction of the account rather than what is being accounted for can present problems as well. In trying to deal with these issues, researchers are in danger of creating even more problems in terms of their subjectivity detaching the analysis even further from reality.

It is clear that some of these problems could exist in the current study, but they are not exclusive to this particular study and are inherent in any study using discourse analysis.

7.2.3 Design and implementation of the MDNI

Some aspects of the design and implementation of the MDNI could have resulted in the intervention failing to achieve the expected results. The following factors were listed as possible factors inhibiting perspective transformation through narrative technique in this particular study:

- insufficient opportunity for deconstruction. The competence of the reflecting team and facilitator contributes to the opening of space for alternative stories.

- the pervasiveness of some of the discourses. Some of the discourses are so embedded in the fabric of the organisation that longer and more intensive sessions would be necessary to create space for alternative stories.
- lack of a disorienting dilemma. Without the motivational impetus of a disorienting dilemma, the need for an alternative view is limited.
- surface effort. True to a post-modern perspective, the teams will generally experience the sessions as just another “game” to play, before moving on to the next one. They will put in just enough effort to maintain the image of participation.
- size of the group. The size of the group influences the identification and externalisation of the problem. It is also difficult to ask adequate deconstructive questions within the time limit.
- number of sessions. To open up space for alternative stories more time is needed and three 60-minute sessions were not enough.
- lack of adequate training of members of reflecting team. Members without training in psychology and counselling found it difficult to fulfil the role of a reflecting team member optimally.
- limited use of metaphors. Inexperience on the part of the reflecting teams meant that they did not always use metaphor effectively to throw new light on issues.

With this, Step 8 of the study, namely the formulation of the shortcomings of the study, has been completed.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations with regard to industrial psychology and research will now be formulated from the conclusions.

7.3.1 Industrial Psychology

This study focused specifically on the sub-disciplines of management development and adult learning within industrial psychology. These fields are traditionally based on positivist paradigms and therefore the first recommendation is that industrial psychology should follow the example of the other fields of psychology (for example,

social psychology) and explore and operationalise alternative paradigms to the positivist/modern paradigms overwhelmingly in use in the field. This could lead to a more vibrant and more functional contribution to the field.

Although the use of narrative therapy and one of its associated techniques, namely the reflecting team process, did not lead to a perspective transformation as defined by Mezirow (1990), it facilitated various discourses and allowed different voices to be heard. It is therefore recommended that narrative therapy and the reflecting team process be refined for use in Management Development Narrative Interventions, especially with regard to issues of diversity and problematic interpersonal relationships. If this approach is followed it is recommended that the members of the reflecting team be thoroughly trained in their role, their behaviour and the use of metaphors. For managers without training in psychology, a training session of at least one day is recommended. During this training they will be exposed to the theory behind the approach and should also have the opportunity to practice and receive feedback.

It is also recommended that managers be exposed to deconstructive techniques such as discourse analysis as part of traditional management development. Without these tools they will find it difficult to examine their underlying assumptions and to identify alternative perspectives or even to transform current perspectives. The prescription in most management literature that managers think in ways that open up learning and growth is usually not accompanied by practical hints on achieving this. If guidelines are provided, it is usually from the positivist/empirical paradigm, for example, "In a learning organisation, mental models are changed largely by confronting thinking with reality. Openness, trust, effective use of data, and rational inference and problem-solving processes are vital. Planning processes are an excellent vehicle for changing mental models, when used effectively" (Walker, 1992, p. 219).

It is recommended that the structure of the Management Development Narrative Intervention (MDNI) as applied in this study be refined further by improving the training of all group members and experimenting with the sequence and number of sessions, as well as the size of the group. The results from this could be used to

suggest alternative management development techniques. It is lastly recommended that the traditional methods of management development and adult learning should explore to a greater extent the social construction of management concepts, as well as the performative nature of language within the context of each organisation. This will highlight specific organisational symbols and myths that could be used to help the individual manager develop a more productive perspective of his/her management behaviour.

7.3.2 Research

This study was mainly descriptive in nature, with some exploratory notions. Some of the recommendations for further research are based on the fact that it was not possible to explore several issues in more detail. Some of the issues to be explored further will be recommended below.

7.3.2.1 The use of narrative technique in an intact team

From the results it is clear that a heterogeneous group might influence the effectiveness of narrative therapy in an organisational context and that more sessions might be needed to create adequate space for alternative stories. The technique might, however, hold great promise in a team building context where the focus is on improving interaction among group members in setting goals, working together, and getting work done (Walker, 1992). Narrative therapy, with its focus on the identification and deconstruction of dominant stories in families' lives, would probably be very effective in teams struggling with issues of diversity. The recommendation is therefore that further research should be done on work teams, where narrative therapy and reflecting teams are used to open up space for alternative stories to the team's problem saturated views.

7.3.2.2 The use of narrative therapy in performance coaching

According to Walker (1992), coaching narrowly implies training, instructing, or guiding, but is actually more than this. It is also about caring, listening, nudging, encouraging, advising and nurturing others as they strive to achieve results. It is

particularly when the manager has to facilitate an employee with a problem-saturated story that narrative technique might be of great assistance. Very few guidelines exist for coaching in these circumstances and by assisting the line manager to use the various deconstructing questions involved in narrative therapy, the employee might be helped to open up space for alternative stories. It is thus recommended that the use of narrative therapy be researched in the management coaching context.

7.3.2.3 Organisational myths and symbolism

Although much research has been done on organisational myths and symbols (see for example Pondy, Frost, Morgan & Dandridge, 1983), not much has been done to study the effect of these myths and symbols on management development and learning. Much of the existing research has not been conducted from a social-constructionist perspective and it would be worthwhile to study organisational myths and symbols and the effect on management development and learning from a social constructionist and even post-modern perspective.

7.3.2.4 Post-modern perspectives on management and management development

In this study it was difficult to find literature on post-modern perspectives of management and management development. A major source was Boje and Dennehy's (2000) free book on the Internet called "Managing in the Post-modern world". The authors do not, however, investigate management development from the post-modern perspective and more research in this field from this perspective might open up more space for alternative (more functional) approaches. As Boje (1999a, p. 2) writes: "Finally I think postmodern theory does have significance to the fields of management and business. To me these have to do with workplace democracy, ecological sustainability, and finding less violent forms of production and consumption".

7.3.2.5 Discourse analysis in Organisation Development (OD) efforts

Research in industrial psychology in South Africa seems to focus mostly on using positivist approaches to the study of organisations. In other countries, however, post-modern and social constructionist methods are used, for instance, to conceptualise organisation change, as in “Operationalising the postmodernity construct for efficient organizational change management” (White & Jacques, 1995).

Discourse analytic research in South African organisations could deliver particular value to organisation development and its change efforts.

7.3.2.6 Perspective Transformation

Mezirow’s theory on perspective transformation has not really been researched in the South African context and more research would make a valuable contribution to the design of learning programmes aimed at filling the educational gap in the country (especially for the development of historically disadvantaged adult learners).

With this, Step 9, namely the formulating of some recommendations, is complete.

7.4 INTEGRATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research dealt with the use of the narrative technique in management development to facilitate perspective transformation. The post-modern paradigm, as well as social constructionism, played a major role in the structuring of the study.

In the study it was indicated that despite the influence of postmodernism and social constructionism in the broader fields of psychology, management development efforts have not consciously acknowledged its influence. In contrast, effective management is almost universally portrayed as a fully rational-technical process (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986).

This caused most management development and education efforts to embrace enthusiastically an ideal of a fully rationalised, mathematical representation of

human experience and reality (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986). In education this manifests itself in two forms: descriptive statements, which are generalisations about the nature of organisations, as well as what works and what does not work in management; and prescriptive statements about what managers ought to do (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986). The need to explore management development and adult learning from a post-modern paradigm, where prescriptions for the "best way" to manage would be untenable, led to this study.

Mezirow (1991) introduced Transformative Learning as an adult learning theory. It is based on constructivist principles, but this study indicated that it does not necessarily have a strong post-modern slant. It places strong emphasis on human agency and the ability of the individual to transform his/her frames of reference. It does, however, recognise the performative nature of language and the social construction of reality. The theory also emphasises the importance of reflection to facilitate a change in perspective.

Narrative therapy is traditionally used in family therapy, but seems to hold promise as a framework around which to structure a management development intervention. The narrative mode does not lead to certainties, but rather to varying perspectives, and opens up space for alternative views (White & Epston, 1990). In management development this approach could be useful in helping managers to deal with the following trend: according to Hosking (2001), the rational-scientific approach to management and leadership will give way to the intuitive art of inspiration. He further states that this approach will not be based on blind irrationalism but on the realisation that reason and calculation are not always the best guides. A movement away from the rational-scientific approach will create the need to explore alternative views and narrative therapy could facilitate this.

The MDNI was designed based on the principles of narrative therapy and the use of a reflecting team. The sessions were taped and transcribed and the data analysed through discourse analysis. This indicated that although the use of narrative technique and the reflecting team facilitated minor shifts in language and in discourses, it did not necessarily facilitate perspective transformation (or major shifts in discourses). This could be ascribed to many reasons, but most of them pertain to

the structuring and technical aspects of the Management Development Narrative Intervention.

Factors such as the diversity and size of the groups, duration of the sessions and inexperience of the reflecting teams were highlighted as impacting negatively on the effective implementation of the narrative technique. A study in which these issues are addressed might lead to different results. The study did, however, generate many issues for further exploration, especially in terms of organisational symbolism, change management, diversity management, general management and education.

Although the use of narrative therapy in this particular study did not lead to perspective transformation, it cannot be concluded that it is not a useful method to use in transformative adult learning and management development. More research is therefore necessary.

With this, Step 10 of the qualitative research, namely the integration of the research, as well as the total research project, is completed.

7.5 SUMMARY

The conclusions, the weaknesses of the study, as well as recommendations were presented in this chapter. It was concluded by an integration of the overall research project.

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APPENDIX**GUIDELINES FOR THE REFLECTING TEAM PROCESS**

The guidelines could be classified in terms of relevance to the conversation style, the conversation content, body language, the role of the therapist and logistical arrangements. These guidelines are based on the work of Janowsky et al., (1995), Lax (1995), Anderson (1995) and Turner (1997).

1. THE CONVERSATION STYLE

During the conversation the reflecting team should follow these style guidelines:

- ideas are presented tentatively, with qualifiers such as “I was wondering, perhaps, possibly, or it’s just an idea...”. These terms suggest possibility rather than certainty and avoid authorship of other people’s lives.
- comments are formulated as positive or logical connotations as opposed to negative attributions or blaming.
- perceptions are shared and “consultants” thoughts, images or imaginings are emphasised more than evaluating, judging or explaining what was observed.
- reflections attempt to present both sides of a dilemma, moving from an either-or position to a both-and position.
- reflections should not be too similar to or different from the pacing, style or wording of the conversation preceding them. The attention is to the variations that might make a difference in the conversation. The task of the reflecting team is to balance the tension between levels of difference. Comments must be connected to what preceded them but should neither be too similar nor too different.
- at times, all reflecting team members might share the same idea. When one reflector states an idea, even if the next person has the same idea, it is the latter’s responsibility to come up with something else. If all the team members’ state only one thought, the other team might be left with the idea that that is the only option.

- no private talking is allowed among the reflectors while the other team is talking.
- the reflecting team acts as a role model. For example, reflectors in teams have different ideas and opinions. One way to avoid an either-or position is to preface a potentially polarising comment by something such as: "That is interesting. I have some other thoughts about that".
- the team members formulate their curiosity and wonderings into questions. It helps the reflecting team not to lapse into subjective comments or interpretative remarks that refer to theories of causation. Because the team works on the assumption that they cannot truly know the other's experience, they prefer to provide a sequence of possibilities that invite clients to select for themselves what is most useful.
- situate questions. Here team members say what personal experience, previously held theories or newly concocted fantasies have led them to the content of their particular question. This prevents their comments from being accepted as truth and also makes the process more transparent.
- reflections are wholehearted. The team does not consider reflection either strategically therapeutic or interpretative. Instead, comments incorporate the experience of the team members as they listened to the interview. This is a discussion that has historically been withheld from the other team and that takes place frankly among team members. The conversation remains among the team members as is not directed to the other team.
- use ordinary, not "psychiatric" language. The use of "expert" language serves to break down genuine conversation and alienates the listeners. The idea is to open up alternatives that the others can identify with.
- ideas and speculations are expressed in terms of the protagonist's beliefs, not the team members' beliefs.
- all remarks demonstrate genuine respect for the protagonist and, in general, statements are turned into questions.
- statements, opinions or meanings are avoided. Anderson (1995) states that meanings can very easily be heard by the clients as something they should consider or even do, and if the team's meaning is different from their own, they might easily regard it as better and their own as second best. If that happens some clients might even feel criticised.

- feel free to comment on all that is heard, but not all that is seen. Certain non-verbal behaviours might provide a clue to a person's real feelings, but the reflecting team respects the right of others not to talk about all they think and feel.
- to be able to hear and see carefully and precisely, it is important for the listener (for example, the reflecting team) to avoid thinking that the person who speaks means something other than what he/she says.

2. THE CONVERSATION CONTENT

During the conversation of the reflecting team the following guidelines with regards to the content of the discussion should be remembered:

- focus during the session on unique outcomes, thinking of them as entry points to an alternative story. Ask questions about previously unnoticed aspects of the other team's experience.
- speculations are restricted to the conversations that have taken place in the room. Team members do not speculate about the truth of what is presented, but instead focus on how meaning is given to the experience.
- another type of reflection is new information that, while stimulated by the conversation, is somewhat out of line. This is referred to as "surprise" comments. Surprise comments may seem too unusual to the other team, but when explained might open up more conversational space to all. One member of the reflecting team asking questions of another can also generate surprises. Questions such as "What in the conversation led you to these ideas? How did you reach that idea? What life experiences of your own led you to these comments?". These comments are examined and not left as a priori truths.

3. BODY LANGUAGE

Team members should maintain eye contact with one another, without being discourteous, maintaining the separation between the listening and talking positions. It is important that the reflecting team members have a conversation with each other

and do not just deliver a monologue. This can be achieved by asking questions of one another, shifting to a conversation.

4. THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Lax (1995) explains the role of the facilitator when reflecting comments are completely ignored by the client. The comments might be ignored because the clients might not experience any connection with the reflections, they may feel that the reflecting team is missing the point or they may not be able to listen as they are still engrossed in some prior aspect of the conversation. The facilitator has to explore this experience by asking questions such as: "What would you have liked them to have said?", "What parts of the conversation made sense to you and what parts not?". This can help to facilitate the transition from ignored comments to new understanding.

5. GENERAL ISSUES

According to Lax (1995), there are no absolute rules about how many reflections may be offered during an interview. Time is usually the factor determining the number of reflections. Reflections should be brief, taking no more than five to ten minutes. Reflectors should refrain from providing too much information, whether it is new or not, as recipients of reflections seem to be able to absorb only so much information at any one time (Lax, 1995). It is suggested that the size of the reflecting team should be a maximum of five members, with the ideal number being three. It is also important to allow all the members in the team to reflect as the omission of one member might send out an unwanted message (Lax, 1995).