

**A STUDY OF THE THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF  
FACILITATOR EDUCATORS**

Submitted by

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## Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i> .....	2
<i>List of Figures</i> .....	6
<i>List of Tables</i> .....	6
<i>Thesis Summary</i> .....	7
<i>Statement of Authorship</i> .....	8
<i>Prologue</i> .....	9
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Study focus</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Study purpose</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Study context</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Facilitation within experiential education.....	16
Facilitation in business management .....	18
<b>Statement of the research problem</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Thesis overview</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Part 1: Approaches to facilitator education</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Technical facilitator education .....	27
Intentional facilitator education.....	34
Person-centred facilitator education .....	44
Critical facilitator education.....	52
<b>Part 2: Group counsellor education and its relevance to facilitator education</b> ...	<b>58</b>
Didactic instruction.....	60
Observation .....	61
Experiential participation.....	62
Experiential leadership.....	64
Some examples of combined strategies .....	65

<b>Theoretical interpretive framework .....</b>	<b>67</b>
Issues with the theoretical framework .....	70
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>(Re)statement of the research problem.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Research paradigms .....</b>	<b>74</b>
The interpretive paradigm and this study.....	76
Focused on meaning making.....	77
Multiple realities and tentativeness.....	78
Situated in a context.....	79
Value bound .....	80
Co-creation .....	80
Call to action.....	81
Comparing and contrasting with other paradigms.....	82
Positivistic and interpretive paradigms.....	82
The critical and interpretive paradigms .....	83
Criticisms of the interpretive paradigm .....	84
<b>Methods of data collection.....</b>	<b>85</b>
The interviews and participant observation with facilitator educators.....	85
Interviews .....	85
Semi-structured, in-depth interviews.....	86
Interviews as negotiated texts.....	88
Interviewing effectively .....	89
Observation .....	90
Characteristics of observation .....	90
Observational roles .....	91
The use of field notes.....	92
Sampling strategies and issues .....	93
Qualitative surveys .....	95
Sampling strategies and issues .....	96
Interpretivist perspectives on objectivity, reliability and validity.....	97
Intended audience for this study.....	100

Timelines.....	101
Ethical issues .....	102
<b>Data analysis.....</b>	<b>104</b>
The interactive process of data analysis.....	105
Data reduction .....	107
Transcribing issues .....	107
Thematic analysis .....	109
Coding the data.....	109
Strengthening the data analysis process.....	111
Issues with computer-based qualitative analysis .....	113
Summary and conclusions .....	114
<b>Chapter 4: Study Findings and Interpretations.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Research participant profiles .....</b>	<b>115</b>
Facilitator educators: Meg and Julian.....	116
Facilitator educators: Rose and Bruce .....	120
Facilitator educator: Janet .....	123
Facilitator educator: Sean.....	126
Facilitator educator: Max .....	128
Summary .....	130
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Important facilitator educator values and actions .....</b>	<b>132</b>
Unconditional positive regard .....	133
Commitment to coaching and supporting .....	135
The use of role modelling .....	138
The use of meta-facilitation .....	140
<b>The role of self facilitation theme.....</b>	<b>141</b>
Self-awareness focus.....	142
Rationales for focusing on self-awareness.....	142
Self-awareness frameworks.....	144
Focus on unconscious processes.....	148
Focus on being.....	149
Overcoming fears .....	151

<b>Key facilitation concepts theme.....</b>	<b>154</b>
Clarity of facilitation roles .....	155
Need for intentionality .....	156
The place of intuition.....	158
Clarity of values and thinking .....	161
<b>Important elements of the facilitator education process .....</b>	<b>163</b>
The importance of the group process.....	164
Focus on theories and models .....	167
Opportunities for practice .....	170
The focus on skills and techniques .....	171
Learning-centred focus .....	172
Strategies to optimise learning .....	174
<b>Summary of findings .....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b><i>Chapter 5: Conclusions.....</i></b>	<b><i>180</i></b>
Primary outcomes sought by facilitator educators .....	180
Important elements of facilitator education .....	181
Theoretical foundations and underlying values.....	183
Important elements of the facilitator education process according to the emerging facilitators.....	186
<b>Reflections on the interpretive framework.....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Implications for future research .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Epilogue .....</i></b>	<b><i>191</i></b>
<b><i>Appendixes .....</i></b>	<b><i>194</i></b>
<b>Appendix A: Letter of invitation to facilitator educators .....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Appendix B: Letter of invitation to facilitation course graduates .....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Appendix C: Sample survey used with facilitation course graduates.....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b><i>References .....</i></b>	<b><i>199</i></b>

## **List of Figures**

<i>Figure 1: Theoretical underpinnings of the theoretical framework .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Figure 2: The nine disciplines of a facilitator (Jenkins and Jenkins, 2006, p. 4).....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Figure 3. The dimensions of facilitator education .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 4. The defining characteristics of naturalistic inquiry within the interpretivist paradigm as used in this study. ....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Figure 5. The Interactive Model of Data Analysis (Miles &amp; Huberman, 1994, p. 12) ..</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Figure 6: Overview of the facilitator educators in the study.....</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Figure 7: Facilitator education foci: Meg and Julian .....</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Figure 8. Facilitator education foci: Rose and Bruce .....</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Figure 9. Facilitator education foci: Janet .....</i>	<i>125</i>
<i>Figure 10. Facilitator education foci: Sean .....</i>	<i>127</i>
<i>Figure 11. Facilitator education foci: Max.....</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Figure 12. The major themes underlying the theories and practices of facilitator educators in this study.....</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Figure 13. Important facilitator education values sub-themes.....</i>	<i>133</i>
<i>Figure 14. The role of self-facilitation sub-themes .....</i>	<i>141</i>
<i>Figure 15. Key facilitation concepts sub-themes .....</i>	<i>154</i>
<i>Figure 16. Important facilitator education processes sub-themes.....</i>	<i>163</i>
<i>Figure 17. Major themes and sub themes for the study.....</i>	<i>179</i>

## **List of Tables**

<i>Table 1. The links between approaches to facilitator education and other typologies....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Table 2. Preliminary interview questions .....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Table 3. Graduate survey details .....</i>	<i>96</i>

## **Thesis Summary**

The facilitation literature is focused primarily on describing facilitation skills and practice, and to a lesser extent, on providing details of the theories that underpin facilitation practice. There is, however, little focus on the processes by which facilitators may develop their skills, competence, judgment and/or theoretical grounding. This study is an examination of the theories and practices facilitator educators use to help novice facilitators to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. The theoretical interpretive framework used in this study involved both a model describing four dimensions of facilitator education, and the four main strategies used to educate group counsellors.

Operating within the interpretivist paradigm, interviews and participant observations were conducted with six facilitator educators to establish the primary outcomes and critical components of facilitator education programs, and the theoretical foundations and values informing the practices of facilitator educators. Surveys with the graduates of their programs were also used to establish, from their perspective, what the strengths and weaknesses of the programs were. The facilitator education programs (or parts of them) were observed in Australia or New Zealand and included two longer programs (20-30 days each) and three shorter programs (1-4 days each).

Some significant findings of the study included: shorter facilitator education programs were limited in their ability to provide person-centred facilitator education; no programs focused on technical facilitator education alone; the need to develop self-awareness was considered an essential component of person-centred facilitator education; and, a range of theoretical foundations were utilized by the facilitator educators. The importance of intentionality in facilitation practice was reinforced, but there is a need for facilitator educators to articulate more clearly the strategies that may be used to help emerging facilitators to develop their intentionality. The theoretical interpretive framework was a useful tool to interpret the theories and practices of facilitator educators.

## **Statement of Authorship**

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Faculty of Education, Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC R003/05).

Signed:

GLYN THOMAS

Student No.: 02321665



## **Prologue**

The purpose of this prologue is to position myself in this research project, to frame the thesis, and declare my personal motivation for, and interest in, the study and its findings. My interest in facilitator education stems primarily from my role as a lecturer in the School of Outdoor Education and Environment at La Trobe University, Bendigo, Australia. However, my passion for, and interest in, facilitation began much earlier. I have worked to assist the development of people and my career pathway demonstrates an evolution of working roles that have progressively enabled me to pursue that passion more effectively. As a firm believer in the power of experiential learning, I soon realised that some educational contexts suited this approach more than others. My initial work as a physical education teacher in a traditional school lacked the flexibility for me to work with young people in a way that allowed me to apply the principles of experiential learning. Consequently, over the next 15 years I experimented with other roles such as a youth worker, school counsellor, training consultant, and outdoor educator, before settling into my current role as a university lecturer. One of the primary foci of my current teaching role requires me to prepare students to work as facilitators in experiential education contexts.

My educational philosophy, or paradigm, could be described as a *developmental* perspective (Pratt, 1998), which holds that understanding comes from the personal construction of internal representations of concepts, that knowledge is a social construction, and that we all make sense of the world differently (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998). The values and assumptions underpinning my educational paradigm described above have also shaped my research interests and the interpretivist paradigm was an easy choice based on my respect for, and belief in, people. I have always tried to live my life with integrity and as a researcher I wanted to be able to make a contribution to the field but not at the expense of the research participant. To this end, a naturalistic inquiry approach allowed me to work alongside my research participants in an attempt to co-discover some principles about developing facilitators that may also be useful for others.

The primary motivation for this study was to develop a stronger knowledge and understanding of the theory that could inform my practice as a lecturer preparing facilitators for work in experiential education contexts. I have always attempted to ground my practice in theory, and before I started this research I was concerned at the apparent lack of reflective, critical writing describing the best strategies to develop experiential education facilitators, or the theories underpinning those strategies. It is my hope that this study will make a contribution to this growing body of knowledge.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this chapter, the study focus, purpose, background, and context are presented. An overview of the study and the organisational structure of this thesis are also provided.

### **Study focus**

This study is an examination of the theories and practices facilitator educators use to help novice facilitators to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with facilitator educators, participant observation of facilitation training courses, and qualitative surveys of facilitator training course graduates. The majority of these data were collected in 2005 and 2006. A review of the facilitation literature provided a framework for examining and interpreting the theories and practices of a group of facilitator educators in Australia and New Zealand.

One of the challenges for this study is the confusion and ambiguity about what actually constitutes facilitation practice. Educators refer to the use of a *facilitatory* teaching style. Managers within organisations use facilitatory styles of management. Others describe themselves as professional facilitators. Hunter and Thorpe (2005) explained,

General use of the term facilitator makes no distinction between the professional group facilitator who skillfully guides the group process from a basis of co-operative values and ethics and other professionals, such as managers, consultants, and trainers, who use some facilitative techniques but may operate from different value sets and competencies. (p. 545)

To add to the confusion, the role that a facilitator plays has been likened to the conductor of an orchestra (Spencer, 1989, cited in Hogan, 2002); a catalyst, chameleon, and cabdriver (Priest, Gass, & Gillis, 2000); midwives (Hogan, 2002); a choreographer (Hunter, Bailey, & Taylor, 1995); and a change agent (Robson & Beary, 1995). A number of authors have developed definitions of facilitation, or the role of the facilitator, to provide some clarity about the work facilitators actually do.

Hogan (2002) defined a facilitator as a “self-reflective, process-person who has a variety of human, process, technical skills and knowledge, together with a variety of experiences

to assist groups of people to journey together to reach their goals” (p. 57). Based on the premise that facilitation is not value-neutral, Hunter, Bailey, and Taylor (1999) defined facilitation as “a body of knowledge and skills which seeks to empower groups of people to work co-operatively towards creating a more co-operative and sustainable world” (p. 16). Schwarz (2005) defined group facilitation as

a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, to increase the group’s effectiveness. (p. 3)

These various definitions of the facilitation process, and the role of the facilitator in that process, enable a rich and full understanding of the focus of this thesis and closer examination reveals coherency in intent, if not in language. Many contributors to the facilitation literature have provided a new definition of the facilitator’s role, which in their opinion provided new clarity. For the purposes of this study, Schuman’s (2005) short definition of group facilitation as “helping groups do better” (p. xi) will be adopted. Hence, in the context of this study, a facilitator is someone who helps groups do better. Although grossly inadequate at capturing the diversity and complexity of the facilitator’s role, this definition does provide a common understanding, albeit a simple one. Schuman’s definition is readily applicable to the two contexts chosen in this study, which will be discussed in the next section.

The term ‘*facilitator education*,’ is not a common term in the facilitation field, either in the literature or in practice. The term ‘*training*’ is more commonly adopted to describe the processes used to develop facilitators. However, I share Hogan’s (2002) concern that the term training implies a “‘box of tricks’ mindset” (p. 207), where the developing facilitators focus almost exclusively on the development of skills. In part, I have been responsible for introducing the term facilitator education to the facilitation field (Thomas, 2004, 2005, in press) although Hogan (2002) had used the term previously. The term education was chosen for this study because it more accurately conceptualised the processes required for facilitators to develop their skills, knowledge and experience. Throughout this study the term *emerging facilitators* is used to describe the participants in facilitator education processes. This term effectively captures the fact that developing

as a facilitator is an ongoing journey and that novices are not the only potential beneficiaries of facilitator education processes.

The literature pertaining to facilitation is replete with descriptions of facilitation skills and practice, but gives less coverage to the theories that underpin facilitation practice. There is also little explicit discussion about the processes by which facilitators may develop their skills, competence, judgement and/or theoretical grounding. Another apparent gap in the facilitation literature is that only a small percentage of the literature is grounded in empirical research. Most of the suggested facilitation skills and strategies are based on anecdotal evidence or the personal preferences of the authors concerned. Subsequently, the majority of the recommended facilitation strategies in the literature lack substantiation.

At the time of this study in Australia and New Zealand two distinct approaches to facilitation training were evident. Three organisations were providing longer training programs involving between 20-30 days of contact in various formats and two of these organisations agreed to participate in this study. There were more facilitation training courses ranging from one to three days long being offered at the time of the study and although these programs did not claim to provide the same developmental opportunities as the longer ones they do offer something to novice facilitators who cannot, or choose not, to attend the longer courses. This study included three of the shorter programs. Consequently, the facilitation courses observed in this study represented a substantial proportion of the overall facilitator education opportunities publicised and available at the time in Australia and New Zealand.

### **Study purpose**

The main purpose of this study is to describe how facilitator educators make sense of their practice in order to foster a better understanding of the educational process. To achieve this purpose, interviews and participant observation were conducted with six facilitator educators to establish the aims of their programs, why they run their programs, the way they do, and the aspects of their programs that they feel allow learning to occur. These foci were chosen to enable a rich description of the facilitator educator's practice and the theories underpinning that practice. Surveys with the graduates of their programs

were also used to establish, from their perspective, what the strengths and weaknesses of the programs were.

The literature focussing on facilitation was reviewed to determine what strategies were recommended for novice facilitators to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. In some cases these strategies were outlined explicitly, but more typically the reader was left with little clarity about how the facilitator education process occurred. Given the paucity of literature explicitly addressing facilitator education processes, sections of the group counselling literature were also reviewed to determine how the strategies used to develop group counsellors might have relevance to the theory and practice of facilitator education.

This study does not attempt to summarise or critique the content of facilitator education programs because I was more interested in describing the general educational practices of the facilitator educators and the theories underpinning those practices. To my knowledge, research with this focus has not been completed, so this study aims to address that gap. There is no attempt to prove or disprove that any particular strategy is more effective than another.

### **Background**

The growing interest in the use of facilitation in a range of contexts has been documented by Hogan (2002). The factors she identified as shaping the increased use of facilitation included: shifts towards more student-focussed learning in formal educational settings; growth in participatory approaches to management; increased use of groups in therapeutic settings; the increased emphasis on community development; the use of mediation as a preferred approach to conflict management and dispute resolution; and the emergence of focus groups and co-operative inquiry in qualitative research. Due to the chosen contexts of this study, which are discussed more fully in the next section, the focus in this section will primarily be on the first two factors identified by Hogan.

In formal education settings, there is increased pressure on teachers to enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences. In 2005, the Australian federal government established a National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to address teaching and learning in Australian universities (Carrick Institute for Learning

and Teaching in Higher Education, 2005). Universities have experienced growing pressure to demonstrate high standards of teaching in order to access additional government funding. However, this emphasis on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning is not limited to the higher education sector and there are similar reforms in the school sector (Latham et al., 2006).

The New Learning Charter, developed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001), encouraged teachers to help students to develop “the dispositions and orientations that allow them to navigate change and diversity, solve problems, communicate across a variety of mediums, and operate in collaborative, flexible, and creative environments” (Latham et al., 2006, p. 8). These new approaches to teaching require different skills, knowledge, and experience and, according to Hogan (2002), a more facilitatory teaching style can be part of the solution to address these challenges.

A student learning centred focus is now accepted as one of the cornerstones of high quality teaching (Biggs, 1999a; Henderson & McAuliffe, 2005; Ramsden, 2003; Taji & McLoughlin, 2005; Weimer, 2002). To foster learner-centred teaching, Weimer (2002) encouraged lecturers in higher education contexts to reform their practice in five key areas including: sharing the balance of power with students; reconstituting the function of content; redefining the role of the teacher; sharing responsibility for learning; and clarifying the purpose and processes of evaluation. Learner-centred teaching requires teachers to reflect on their philosophies, theories, and methods. Whilst the experiential learning field (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Boud, 1985; Boud & Miller, 1996; Itin, 1999) has long recognised the importance of facilitation processes, there is a growing awareness that facilitation processes also have the potential to make an important contribution to the broader education sector, given the imperatives described above.

The pressure to reform is not unique to the educational sector. Global economic change continues to put increased pressure on organisations through increased competition for customers, the rapid development of technology, reductions in production costs, and the proliferation of customers who are increasingly sophisticated about choices and pricing (Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Marsick & Watkins, 1999; Weaver & Farrell, 1997). Learning organisations characterised by continuous learning for continuous improvement and the

capacity to transform themselves, are best positioned to cope with the rapid pace of this change (Larsen, McInerney, Nyquist, Silsbee, & Zagonal, 2002). Business managers are increasingly required to provide strategic leadership for learning, connect the organisation to its environment, empower people towards a collective vision, create systems to capture and share learning, encourage collaboration and team learning, promote inquiry and dialogue, and create continuous learning opportunities (Marsick & Watkins, 1999). A diverse range of facilitation skills, knowledge, and experience will help the business manager secure these desired outcomes (Larsen et al., 2002; Marsick & Watkins, 1999).

### **Study context**

Facilitation occurs within many contexts including experiential education, business management, organisational development, adult education, social work, and tourism. This study focuses on two of these contexts: the fields of experiential education and business management. These contexts were chosen because the literature on facilitation in these two fields is rich and plentiful and much of the theory and practice of facilitation is applicable to each of them. These two contexts were also chosen because of their ability to inform my own professional practice as an academic and an administrator, in an experientially based program, at a higher education institution.

Literature from the group counsellor education field is also reviewed in this study, because it provides some useful insights to facilitator education processes. However, this field is not a major focus of this study. In the next two sections the role of facilitation in the experiential education and business management fields will be discussed.

### ***Facilitation within experiential education***

The terms experiential learning and experiential education are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature and this practice is confusing. Itin (1999) distinguishes between the two by suggesting that experiential learning does not require the presence of a teacher or facilitator, whereas experiential education is a transactive process between an educator and a student. Experiential education uses the principles and practices of experiential learning, but it is the transactive nature of experiential education that involves facilitation.



Ringer (2002) defines experiential learning as “generating an action theory from your own experiences and then continually modifying it to improve your effectiveness” (p. 23). This process involves the learner thinking, modifying his/her attitudes, and expanding his/her repertoire of possible behaviours. Experiential learning has also been defined as “the insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalisation of our own or observed interactions, which build upon past experiences and knowledge” (Beard & Wilson, 2002, p. 16). It is meaningless to talk about learning occurring in isolation from experience, as experience may be seen as the central consideration of all learning. According to Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993), learning always builds upon what has gone before; hence, learners rarely start with a blank slate and “unless new ideas and new experiences link to previous experience, they exist as abstractions, isolated without meaning” (p. 8). This is in direct contrast to the ‘banking’ concept of education where the teacher makes ‘deposits’ (Freire, 1973).

Itin (1999) claims that experiential education finds its roots in the work of John Dewey (1938), Kurt Hahn (James, 1995; Kraft, 1986) and Paulo Freire (1973) because they were all focused on developing the capacity of individuals to take action for participation in a democratic society. Experiential education provides an ideal platform to develop critical thinking, self motivated, problem solving individuals who participate actively in their communities. In this respect, Itin (1999) conceives of experiential education not as a method but as an

holistic philosophy where carefully chosen experiences supported by reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis, are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results, through actively posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, constructing meaning, and integrating previously developed knowledge.  
(p. 93)

The fact that experiential education seeks to be student centred can potentially lead to a lack of direction. It also runs the risk of romanticising and/or neutering the curriculum, by being too student centred (Beard & Wilson, 2002). Beard and Wilson also suggested that experiential education sometimes results in poor learning, particularly if the experiences have an individualistic focus. It is also difficult to effectively use experiential education as the primary learning approach when technology or complex

theoretical concepts are the focus (Beard & Wilson, 2002). Other authors have expressed concerns that experiential education has frequently neglected to appropriately consider social, cultural, or historical factors (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe 1997 cited in Beard & Wilson, 2002; M. Reynolds, 1997). In some respects, these criticisms would be most true of poorly facilitated experiential education, which highlights the need for skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced facilitators.

One of the most thorough critiques of experiential learning was presented by Fenwick (2000) when she raised concerns about the popularised conception of “experiential learning as reflective construction of meaning” (p. 244). She is critical of the way some aspects of the literature present learning as “a reflection-action (or mind-body and individual-context) binary: recalling and analysing lived experience to create mental knowledge structures” (p. 244). Hence, Fenwick sets out to disrupt conventional notions of experiential learning and encourage more discussion about alternate conceptions by comparing five different perspectives including: a constructivist perspective; a psychoanalytic perspective; a situative perspective; a critical cultural perspective; and an enactivist perspective.

Fenwick (2000) argues that traditional constructivist notions of experiential learning are simplistic and reductionist for a number of reasons: they do not explain the role of desire in learning; they reinforce a conduit (input-output) understanding of learning; they falsely presume that subjects are divided from their environment and their experiences; they predominantly emphasise conscious, rational processes; and they assume a stable, unitary self. The aim of Fenwick’s critique was to generate more robust theoretical tools for exploring experiential learning, which “integrate themes within the issues of reflection, interference, participation, power and co-emergence as they are raised by different perspectives” (p. 265). Fenwick highlights the need for practitioners to better understand the processes involved in experiential learning and to “constitute their own roles relative to these processes in moral, sensitive ways” (p. 265).

### ***Facilitation in business management***

In the past, facilitation has been considered the domain of consultants and human resource professionals, but “the ever expanding sphere of facilitation is indicative of the transformation in how work gets done in today’s organisations: less through controlling

and directing, more through co-ordinating and collaborating” (Bens, 2005, p. xi). Stahl (1995) reported a definite shift away from traditional conceptions of management, of command and control, to a new focus on employee involvement, self managed work teams, and Total Quality Management approaches. The traditional management functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling are now shared with non-supervisory employees at different organisational levels reflecting a shift in the value placed on participatory management strategies.

The pace of work is faster and more furious ... managers have to deal with a staggering amount of information ... they have far more responsibilities and fewer resources to get the job done ... technology is rapidly changing the way people work together ... it is common for work groups to be geographically dispersed. Meetings frequently take place over the phone, and sales transactions are made via e-mail. (Weaver & Farrell, 1997, p. 2)

Managers in more responsive organisations lead by developing new skills, capabilities, and understandings and they come from many places within the organisations (Senge, 1996). Reviews of business school curricula indicate an increasing emphasis on key managerial skills such as technical skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and diagnostic skills (Stahl, 1995).

In many organisations today managers are exhorted to become teachers, educators, developers, leaders of learning, strategic learning managers, and coaches (Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002). Managers within organisations are increasingly being expected to act as de facto facilitators (Webne-Behrman, 1998). In a small qualitative study exploring the mental models of exemplary managers when they were serving as facilitators of learning, Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) found that organisations with new empowerment paradigms need to focus management development initiatives on more than just behaviour (coaching skills), but they must also focus on the beliefs managers hold. Many managers in progressive organisations have had to shift away from a traditional control model to a learning facilitator model. A supportive organisational culture was mentioned by managers in the study as very important in sustaining and supporting the transition to the facilitator of learning role – a process which takes time and presents many challenges (Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002).

Hughes (1999) warned that although the workplace is often seen as a rich and exciting learning environment, it can also be an extremely hostile one.

The workplace can be a far from ideal learning environment for employees. It can be argued that the role of employers and their supervisors as facilitators of learning is also fundamentally problematic because of the hierarchy and conflict of interest that is inherent in the relationships involved. (p. 34)

Hughes claimed that there is a fundamental barrier to supervisors ever becoming effective facilitators and that those who espouse the value of facilitation in organisations just assume that there is no conflict of interest between the facilitator and the learner, or they ignore the issue altogether. These conflicts of interest impact on the facilitator's ability to develop a trusting relationship and his or her ability to foster critical reflectivity that probes for assumptions, values, and beliefs underlying actions. Hence, facilitation within business management is problematic, but discussion of these complexities and challenges is not commonly provided in the literature.

### **Statement of the research problem**

Although some authors in the literature pertaining to facilitation do provide theoretical foundations for the skills and strategies they recommended facilitators develop, many authors do not. One of the primary purposes of this study is to describe the theories underpinning the practice of facilitator education. In the literature pertaining to facilitation there is also a lack of clarity concerning the way that emerging facilitators can actually develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. In contrast, authors in the group counsellor education literature are more explicit and comprehensive in their description of the strategies that are used to develop group counsellors. These two apparent gaps in the literature shaped the following questions, which form the basis of this thesis.

- What are the primary outcomes that facilitator educators are trying to achieve with the emerging facilitators in their programs?
- Which elements or components of facilitator education programs do facilitator educators consider important to the achievement of these outcomes?
- What theoretical foundations inform the practices of facilitator educators?
- What importance do facilitator educators place on understanding the values and/or theoretical foundations that underpin their practice?

- What importance do facilitator educators place on helping their emerging facilitators to understand the values and/or theoretical foundations underpinning their practice?
- From the perspective of the emerging facilitators, what were the important elements of the facilitator education process that assisted with the development of their skills, knowledge, and experience?

In closing this chapter a brief overview of the thesis will be provided.

### **Thesis overview**

This thesis is presented in five chapters, preceded by a prologue, and followed by an epilogue. A bibliography is provided as well as appendixes. Interview transcripts and completed surveys have not been included in this thesis, but they have been stored in accordance with research ethics approval requirements. The thesis is structured as follows.

#### ***Prologue***

In the prologue I introduce myself as the researcher and the research study. This will help to set the scene for the examination of the theories and practices of the facilitator educators in this study.

#### ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

In this chapter I have provided details of the study focus, purpose, and background. The two primary contexts of the study, experiential education and business management, have also been defined and briefly summarised.

#### ***Chapter 2: Literature review***

This chapter is presented in three parts. In part one I provide a review of the facilitation literature and an overview of two underpinning theories that formed the part of the theoretical framework used to interpret the literature and the findings in this study. In part two I respond to the paucity of explicit discussion about facilitator education strategies by considering the approaches used in the related field of group counsellor education. In the final section of this chapter I review the theoretical underpinnings of this study and summarise the interpretive framework, based on concepts distilled from

the literature in parts one and two, which is then used to interpret the findings in chapter 4.

### ***Chapter 3: Methodology***

In this chapter I begin with a brief restatement of the research problem and the study purpose. Then I provide a detailed rationale for the interpretivist research paradigm used in this study and a description of how this paradigm shaped the methodology chosen. The concurrent processes of data collection, reduction, and analysis used in this study are also outlined followed by a description of the intended audience, study timeline and ethics issues.

### ***Chapter 4: Findings***

In this chapter I present the findings of the study in a number of sections. First, a profile of the key research participants is provided, followed by a discussion of each of the four major themes that emerged from the data. These major themes included: important facilitator educator values and actions; the role of self-facilitation; key facilitation concepts; and critical elements of the facilitator education process. The interpretation of the findings under each of these four major themes, including a discussion of the links to the literature and the theoretical interpretive framework, are also provided.

### ***Chapter 5: Conclusions***

In the final chapter I provide conclusions related to each of the research questions. The chapter, and thesis, conclude with a review of the interpretive framework used in the study.

### ***Epilogue***

In the epilogue I provide some thoughts on my journey as the researcher in this study. The challenging nature of the dual roles of participant and observer is described along with some reflections on my development as a facilitator and facilitator educator through this study.

### ***Appendixes***

### ***References***

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this study the theories and practices that facilitator educators use to help novice facilitator educators to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience are explored. The aim is to better understand the way facilitators can be encouraged to develop by establishing what works well for emerging facilitators and by exploring why facilitator educators train emerging facilitators the way they do. The increased demand for facilitatory styles of management and teaching described in the literature (Biggs, 1999a; Henderson & McAuliffe, 2005; Larsen et al., 2002; Marsick & Watkins, 1999; Ramsden, 2003; Taji & McLoughlin, 2005; Weimer, 2002) provides the backdrop for the importance of the findings of this study.

This chapter is presented in three parts. Part one constitutes a review of the facilitation literature and an overview of two underpinning theories which form the theoretical framework used to interpret the literature and the findings in this study. The theoretical framework involves four distinct, yet overlapping, approaches to facilitator education including technical, intentional, person-centred, and critical facilitator education. Although the facilitation literature provides extensive discussion of the skills, theories and practice of facilitation, there is less examination of the processes and strategies that facilitators can use to develop their skills, understanding and experience.

Part two of this chapter deepens the discussion about facilitator education strategies, by considering the approaches used in the related field of group counsellor education. Although the purposes of facilitation and group counselling are not identical, there is significant overlap between the fields. The group counselling literature is more extensive than the facilitation literature for a number of reasons. Group counsellor education occurs primarily within academic institutions; there is a stronger emphasis on empirical research; and there are numerous academic journals dedicated to the profession. This chapter specifically addresses the strategies used by group counsellor educators to develop group counsellors, including didactic instruction, observation, experiential participation, and experiential group leadership.

In the third and final section of this chapter, I will review the theoretical underpinnings of this study and describe the interpretive framework. The framework was distilled from the literature in parts one and two and will be used to interpret the findings in chapter 4. To schematically represent the structure of this chapter, the primary theoretical influences in this study are summarised in Figure 1. The two theoretical frameworks developed by Ling, Burman, Ling, and Cooper (2002) and Giddens (1984) will provide a language and structure to interpret and make sense of the approaches to facilitator education outlined in part one of this chapter. The third primary theoretical input in this study is the four strategies used to educate group counsellors as described in the group counsellor education literature. Finally, the theoretical foundations of the facilitator educators that participated in this study have also provided another theoretical input to this study, and they are also described in part one of this chapter.

### **Part 1: Approaches to facilitator education**

In an electronic survey, conducted in 2003, Arnold (2005) asked facilitators to share the strategies they used to build their expertise. The results from the 125 respondents indicated that seasoned facilitators typically attend some form of training course or workshop once a year, attend national or regional facilitation conferences, extensively read the literature from the facilitation and related fields, participate in electronic discussion lists, enjoy observing other facilitators in action, understand the need to practice and apply learnings, actively seek feedback from peers, and teach others about facilitation. In this study the focus is on exploring processes that may be used by novices to develop their skills, knowledge and competence as facilitators. The insights gained in this study have the potential to improve the theories and practices used to educate facilitators in the future.

Within the facilitation and facilitator education literature there is a range of approaches used to describe how facilitation should occur and how facilitator education should proceed. However, most of the approaches described seem to fit into one of the following broad categories: facilitation which is skills-based and formulaic in style; facilitation where practice is grounded in theory and justifications for particular interventions exist; facilitation specifically emphasising the role of the attitudes, awareness and personal qualities of the facilitator; and facilitation that emphasises an increased awareness of the political nature of facilitation and its effects on all participants.



## Primary Theoretical Influences

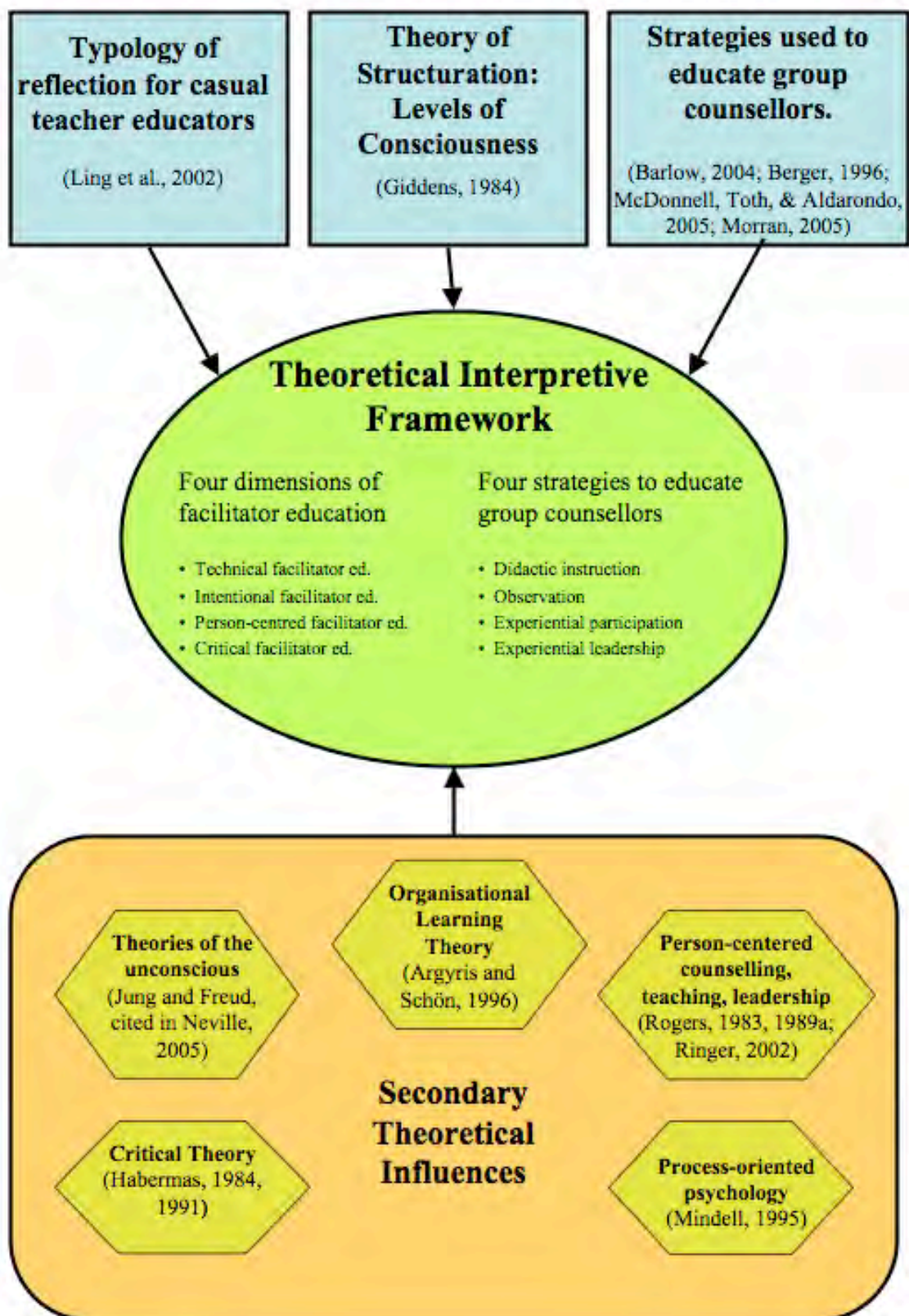


Figure 1: Theoretical underpinnings of the theoretical framework

These four categories are aligned with the interpretive framework developed by Ling et al. (2002) to distinguish the level of sophistication in the practice of casual teacher educators. A casual teacher educator is a person employed on a sessional or casual basis to lecture or conduct tutorials with preservice teacher education students. Ling et al.'s framework was based on typologies developed by Biggs (1999a; 1999b) and Giddens (1984). Biggs considered the different levels of sophistication in teaching practice. The first level focused on *what the student is*, where any variability in student learning is accounted for by individual differences between students. The second level focused on *what the teacher does*, where teaching is seen as “a bag of competencies; the more competencies you have, the better a teacher you are” (Biggs, 1999b, p. 63). In this stage, difficulties in the learning process are blamed on the teacher. At the third and final level in Biggs' model, he explained that whilst expert teaching includes the mastery of a variety of teaching techniques, success in the learning process is determined by looking at *what the student does*.

Giddens' contribution to the Ling et al. (2002) framework was based on his *Theory of Structuration* (Giddens, 1984), which posits, amongst other things, that social structures are both constituted by people, and at the same time those social structures are the very medium of that constitution. Giddens maintained that there are three levels of human action that contribute to the production and reproduction of social systems: 1) “reflexive monitoring of action” and “discursive consciousness” (what actors are able to say about the conditions of their own action); 2) “rationalizations of action” and “practical consciousness” (what actors know tacitly about their conditions of their own action but cannot articulate); and 3) “motivation for action” and “unconscious motives/cognition” (repressed semiotic impulses, affecting motivation, but usually barred from consciousness) (Bryant & Jary, 1991, p. 8).

Ling et al. (2002) used Giddens' (1984) levels of consciousness as an interpretive tool to analyse the responses from casual teacher educators, with regard to how they explained their actions and motives. The highest level introduced by Giddens, *discursive consciousness*, means “being able to give a coherent account of one's activities and the reasons for them” (p. 45). At the second level, *practical consciousness* involves “recall to which an agent has access in the *durée* of action without being able to express what he or she thereby ‘knows’” (Giddens, 1984, p. 49). Hence, actors at this level have only a tacit

awareness of the reasons or motives behind actions. In the lowest level used by Giddens, the *unconscious* level, an actor is not able to articulate the rationale or motive for an action he or she has taken. Giddens explained that this occurs “because there is a negative ‘bar’ of some kind inhibiting its unmediated incorporation within the reflexive monitoring of conduct and, more particularly within discursive consciousness” (Giddens, 1984, p. 49).

Using the theoretical frameworks developed by Biggs (1999a; 1999b) and Giddens (1984), Ling et al. (2002) classified the awareness and consciousness that casual teacher education staff have of their own actions, as being one of the following: *Non reflective* – no reflection on the nature of practice or intentions communicated; *Context oriented* – reflection focused on the context; *Teacher oriented* – reflection based on what the teacher is, analysis of personal practice; *Professional reflection* – critical reflection based on the nature of the teacher education task.

The relationships between the work of Ling et al. (2002) and Giddens (1984) and the four approaches to facilitator education identified through a synthesis of literature pertaining to facilitation are schematically represented in Table 1. The four approaches to facilitator education include: technical facilitator education; intentional facilitator education, person-centred facilitator education, and critical facilitator education. The relationships between the typologies developed by Ling et al. (2002) and Giddens (1984) and each of the four approaches to facilitator education will now be discussed in more detail.

### ***Technical facilitator education***

Approaches to facilitator education that may be classified as *technical* focus on the skills and competencies required to facilitate groups. Implicit within these approaches is the assumption that by mastering a certain set of skills and methods an individual can learn to effectively facilitate a group’s process. However, there are a range of perspectives on facilitator education demonstrated within this approach.

Given an increasing acceptance of the importance of facilitation processes described in the previous chapter, there are a number of resource manuals available for facilitation skills training courses (Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone,

1999). Although most of these facilitation skills manuals teach generic facilitation skills, there are some that focus on facilitation in a particular context (see McIntosh, 1997). Facilitation in these course materials is typically conceptualised as a means to achieve a specific end through the mastery of particular skills. For example, ‘The Facilitation Skills Training Kit’ (Bendaly, 2000) presented twenty skills-focused modules that can be used

*Table 1.*

*The links between approaches to facilitator education and other typologies*

Typology of reflection developed by Ling et al. (2002)	Levels of consciousness proposed by Giddens (1984)	Approaches to facilitator education synthesised from Ling et al. (2002) and Giddens (1984)
Non reflective	Unconscious	<p><b><u>Technical Facilitator Education:</u></b> Skills-based, formulaic approach</p>
Context Oriented	Practical Consciousness	
Teacher Oriented	Discursive Consciousness	<p><b><u>Intentional Facilitator Education:</u></b> Purposively grounded in theory</p>
		<p><b><u>Person-centred Facilitator Education:</u></b> Intentionally emphasising attitudes and personal qualities of the facilitator</p>
Professional Reflection		<p><b><u>Critical Facilitator Education:</u></b> Politically aware</p>

to help emerging facilitators to develop facilitation skills. The delivery of each module provided by Bendaly is highly structured, inflexible, and outcomes focussed. A similar facilitation training resource developed by Hart (1991) called the 'Faultless Facilitation Method,' provided a prescriptive training program focused on developing particular facilitation skills. Hart (1992) also provided the facilitator educator with an instructor's manual, which included detailed lesson plans, examples of course overviews, other resources, and evaluation forms. The "Facilitator's Toolkit" by Havergal and Edmondstone (1999) took a similar approach to facilitator education and, like the authors mentioned above, they were deliberately prescriptive about the skills needed to facilitate effectively.

In an article focussing on the 'never-ers' of workshop facilitation, Sharp (1992) provided a list of twenty practical tips for potential facilitators and all but one of the suggestions relate to specific actions. Only one of the 'never-ers' deals with the beliefs or attitudes of the facilitator. In a management context, Parry (1995) maintained that facilitators, in addition to possessing certain attributes, need a combination of technical skills, behavioural and interpersonal skills, and consultancy skills. The aim of Parry's facilitation training was to build the confidence of the emerging facilitators; she offered the following suggestions:

- don't overload trainees with too much technical knowledge;
- give plenty of opportunities for trainees to practice using facilitation skills in a training environment and back at the workplace with debriefs;
- look at what can go wrong for trainees and suggest ways to deal with it;
- introduce resources that will assist trainees to continue their development;
- encourage facilitators to develop peer support networks;
- give constructive feedback on their own skills and opportunities to develop;
- take account that the trainees have other work to do as well; and
- use mentors to help new facilitators. (Parry, 1995, p. 12)

Not all the literature within this approach to facilitator education was as skills focussed or formulaic as the previous examples, in the way they conceptualised facilitation and facilitator education. Although still emphasising the need to develop skills, Hackett and Martin (1993) also considered ideas and concepts. Justice and Jamieson (1999)

predominantly emphasised the need for skills but also recognised the need to “draw on some knowledge bases useful to facilitation” and to “employ personal characteristics that are helpful to the facilitator role” (p. 5). However, their “Facilitator’s Fieldbook” devoted less than one per cent of its overall content to the discussion of these knowledge bases and personal characteristics.

The approach to the relationship between theory and practice adopted by some authors is difficult to understand. Eller (2004) informed readers that he specifically designed his book as a “practical guide to the facilitation process that provides enough theory to help the practitioner understand the reasons behind the strategies presented” (p. ix). Although his book is based on “research-proven psychological principles” (p. ix), these principles, and the research on which they are based, are not provided. So, despite the promise of a description of the theory which underpins facilitation practice, Eller divorces facilitation practice from theory. Similarly, Bens (2005) provided a puzzling comment in the preface of her book on advanced facilitation strategies. She explained, “while references are made throughout this book to the experts who have given facilitation its theoretical underpinnings, the strategies described in this resource represent practical techniques found to work in everyday situations” (p. xii). The implication of Bens’ statement is that theoretical underpinnings do not helpfully contribute to the development of useful skills.

Some of the literature discussed earlier (Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999) chose to ignore the relevance or contribution of theory to facilitator education altogether. In effect, these authors have suggested that technical facilitator education can ‘stand alone.’ Some authors who advocate other approaches to facilitator education, to be discussed in following sections of this chapter, are openly critical of stand-alone technical facilitator education.

Stand-alone technical facilitator education is similar to the practice of competency-based training (CBT). In 1992 the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee defined CBT as “training geared to the attainment and demonstration of skills to meet industry-specified standards rather than to an individual’s achievement relative to that of others in a group” (cited in National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2000, p. 2). Hence, CBT is an outcome based approach to training and is primarily concerned with the acquisition of skills rather than knowledge (NCVER, 2000). Some of

the critiques of CBT and their relevance to technical facilitator education will now be discussed in more detail.

Marginson (1993) explained that shifts in Australian educational policy are responsible for the increased popularity of CBT approaches. The rising influence of economic rationalism in Australian education policy since the late 1980s has emphasised the need for education to help people use information and skills to increase productivity.

Marginson (1993) suggested that the goals of education have been excessively shaped by economics and that “the deeper problem lies in the employment of a singular, dominant educational discourse, in which the purposes of education can all be traced back to one overriding rationale – in this case, the development of a productive economy” (p. 233).

In a scathing critique of CBT, Cornford (2000) argued that it is a simplistic approach to education based on a flawed ideology. He maintained CBT was adopted as the foundation for the Australian training reform agenda in 1990 in vocational and post compulsory education despite any substantial empirical evidence as to its effectiveness in attaining desired goals. Furthermore, it was political leaders, business leaders and trade union officials who sanctioned the adoption of CBT ideology whilst important groups such as teachers and vocational education experts were not extensively consulted (Cornford, 2001). Cornford (2000; 2001) is also critical that there have been few substantial efforts by government bodies such as the Australian National Training Authority and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to evaluate the effectiveness of CBT following wider implementation. Due to the lack of funding, there have been few studies that have moved beyond theoretical or anecdotal analyses. This is curious for a training reform agenda based on achieving effective performance in an era of economic rationalism.

Mulcahy and James (1999) studied the effectiveness of CBT using: an academic literature search; a cross-sectional, investigative national telephone survey of training managers from 195 companies of various sizes; and eight intensive case studies of CBT programs throughout Australia. The implications for the policy and practice of vocational education and training (VET) of interest to this study included the need for a shift in views of competence because presently CBT is too narrow; the need to acknowledge process based models of VET; and that CBT is limited and not universally applicable.

Other research conducted by Cornford (1996, 1997; cited in Cornford 2000) surveyed the views of Bachelor of Education students and experienced teaching staff (average of 9.7 years technical teaching experience) in VET institutions. Results from the studies indicated that CBT is not suitable for all occupational or skill areas and it had not improved levels of performance, except in a very limited range of specialist areas. Cornford explained that because CBT is essentially summative in nature it is less effective at developing higher levels of skill performance, thinking skills, and problem solving abilities.

Therefore, given these concerns with the suitability of CBT, facilitator education approaches that are based on CBT principles are problematic because the approach

lends itself to the formation of procedural knowledge rather than other forms of knowledge which are required for work today, such as knowledge that underpins the capacity to shape problem solutions to particular situations and other general, behavioural skills, such as facilitation and communication. (Mulcahy & James, 1999, p. 20)

Smalley (1997, p. 29, cited in Mulcahy & James, 1999) argued, “There is evidence to suggest that competency based training is a more effective way of delivering the training of detailed procedures than of facilitation skills.” CBT also implies that there are no degrees of competence and mastery and ignores the incremental steps of learning that occur along the way. CBT prepares trainees for predictable tasks in relatively stable contexts and its efficacy in the training of group facilitators is unknown.

Stand alone, technical facilitator education also ignores the affective and cognitive dimensions of learning. James (2001) enumerates that CBT is inadequate in its ability to address values and professionalism, conceptual knowledge, underpinning experience, and tacit knowledge. Facilitators within this approach are not encouraged or required to develop any theoretical understanding to guide their practice. From Giddens’ perspective, technical facilitator education approaches would be considered weak because of their failure to encourage facilitators to be reflexive monitors of action. This will foster a structural impotence, which will limit the potential of facilitators to practice effectively (Bryant & Jary, 1991; Giddens, 1984). Comparing some of these technical facilitator education approaches to the Ling et al. (2002) typology of reflection on practice for teacher educators, the competency based approaches (Bendaly, 2000; Hart,



1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999; Parry, 1995; Sharp, 1992) would best fit their non-reflective category. This is because they neither demonstrate, nor encourage, reflection on the nature of facilitation practice, equating to Giddens' (1984) unconscious level of awareness.

At this point a distinction will be made between CBT approach and the *Facilitator Competency Model* (Pierce, Cheesebrow, & Braun, 2000) developed by the International Association of Facilitators (2004) and the Institute for Cultural Affairs (2006). The Facilitator Competency Model uses the term competency in a much broader sense and some of the 'competencies' presented in that model could more accurately be described as the values, goals or commitments of a professional facilitator (Hogan, 2002; Schwarz, 2000).

Some of the literature reviewed within this technical facilitator education approach (Hackett & Martin, 1993; Justice & Jamieson, 1999) did introduce theoretical issues and concepts. In this respect, these approaches would be situated within the context oriented level of reflection in practice, in the Ling et al. (2002) typology. However, it is possible that some facilitators demonstrate a degree of practical consciousness whereby they are able to facilitate effectively and skilfully, yet they cannot articulate why they do what they do, nor are they able to explain why their interventions work. This level of consciousness, proposed by Giddens (1984), is not unlike the reflection-in-action that expert practitioners may develop and utilise (Schön, 1995). In some respects, Giddens' level of practical consciousness bridges the technical and intentional approaches of facilitator education as shown in Table 1. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.

There is an apparent paucity of empirical research, from either positivist or interpretative paradigms, exploring the efficacy of technical facilitator education. The literature described in this section was descriptive in nature and there was little consideration given to the strengths, limitations, or issues associated with technical facilitation approaches. Facilitator educators who only utilise a technical facilitator education approach could be encouraging the non-reflective and uncritical application of facilitation skills and strategies. Some of the strongest criticisms of stand-alone technical facilitator education come from the proponents of intentional facilitator education, which will be discussed in the next section.

### ***Intentional facilitator education***

Facilitator education within this approach is *intentional* in that emerging facilitators are deliberate about what they are doing and can explain the reason behind that action. Some facilitator educators (Brockbank & McGill, 1998) maintained that facilitation should be intentional, “in the sense that the facilitator is conscious of what she is doing and why” (p. 152), which compares well to Giddens’ (1984) level of discursive consciousness. This type of explicit intentionality is demonstrated in the dialogue used, through an awareness of the process, by making otherwise hidden processes explicit, by encouraging an awareness of personal stances, and by modelling desired behaviours (Brockbank & McGill, 1998). However, the work of Schön (1988; 1995) on how professionals practice indicated that it may be possible for an experienced facilitator to function effectively without being able to articulate clear rationales for their actions, thus operating at Giddens’ (1984) level of practical consciousness. This notion will be explored more fully in the latter parts of this section.

When describing facilitation in an organisational development context, Robson and Beary (1995) explained that many theories underpin good facilitation practice, but that success as a facilitator comes from trying a wide range of interventions and being able to justify a course of action and predict likely outcomes. Weaver and Farrell (1997) were critical of authors who “assume that facilitation is simply having a sufficiently large stock of tools that can be selected when a group becomes bogged down” and they maintained that “effective facilitation reflects a practical set of skills and knowledge that helps people work together better to complete real work” (p. xiv). Killion and Simmons (1992) make it very clear that emerging facilitators “need to go beyond the application of new skills, knowledge, and practices ... [and] adopt the belief system of facilitators” (p. 2). They claimed that the challenge when educating a facilitator is to help people to move from the mindset of a trainer to the *Zen* of facilitation. They explained that the *Zen* of facilitation is not a religious practice, but rather a strong set of beliefs that drive a facilitator’s choices and actions. Killion and Simmons’ three essential beliefs for *Zen* type facilitators consist of: a trust in the group’s ability to find its own direction and resolution; a belief that a sense of community creates a forum for group work; and an avoidance of preconceived notions.

In terms of facilitator education, Killion and Simmons (1992) suggest that “acquiring the skills, practices, and beliefs of an effective facilitator is a process of evolution and internalisation” (p. 5). By internalisation they suggest changing the focus from theories and techniques to the *wholeness* of the process involving learning, engaging, and reflection. Killion and Simmons allude to the holistic nature of facilitator education when they suggest,

If we have learned one thing on our journey, it is that the tools or techniques alone are insufficient for long-term effectiveness. Facilitators must go beyond knowledge and strategies to seek truth and enlightenment that only come from practice, reflection, and following their beliefs. (p. 5)

Van Maurik (1994) developed a model that summarised the range of facilitation styles that can also be used by facilitators in a management context. The model outlines four different facilitation styles with varying degrees of *knowledge input* and *process input*. The model is similar to the *Situational Leadership Model* developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1993) in that the four styles described utilise different combinations of emphasis on task behaviour and relational behaviour. Van Maurik (1994) maintained that the challenge is for facilitators to become more consciously aware, and intentional, about the style they use. He explained, “the benefits of having models of facilitative behaviour to think about are that the facilitator can enact a more deliberate strategy and then look to see how effective it was” (p. 34). So, according to van Maurick, theory can play an important role not only in guiding practice but also in helping facilitators to evaluate the effectiveness of their practice.

Van Maurik (1994) also suggested that to effectively help people develop as facilitators, in an organisational development context, candidates must demonstrate a willingness to experiment outside their preferred styles. He suggested that the challenge for the facilitator is to avoid acting in a unidirectional manner but to operate in at least three of the four styles described in his model. Each style presented specific developmental challenges to the aspiring facilitator, including knowing the subject matter very well, commanding respect, gaining ‘sharp end’ experience, refining presentation skills, developing the ability to read people, developing coaching skills and observation skills, learning ways to effectively give feedback, and developing a sense of timing. According to Van Maurick, “some elements of counselling training can give the facilitator the right

armoury of skills to stimulate groups and to help them recognise their strengths, their weaknesses and also to assess their own rate of progress” (p. 33). In a part two of this chapter I will explore the potential links between group counsellor education and facilitator education as a way of understanding the theories and practices that may have bearing on the education of facilitators.

Bentley (1994) stated that traditional definitions of facilitation describe an activity – things that people do. However, he argued that it also includes “non-action, silence and even the facilitator’s absence” (p. 10). Thus, intentional facilitators are not only careful to consider how they act and respond but also how and when to not respond. Bentley explained that when a facilitator is functioning effectively, “it puzzles people at first, to see how little the able leader actually does, and yet gets so much done” (p. 10).

In one of the apparently rare research-based articles in the facilitation literature, Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) studied both the way managers frame their roles and also the beliefs they have about learners and the learning process. In their study they used semi-structured interviews with twelve managers and an adaptation of the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954; Ellinger and Watkins, 1998; cited in Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002). This technique involved systematic and sequential procedures to record detailed observations of critical incidents in the past. The data were then analysed using content analysis to establish emerging themes and develop broad psychological principles (Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002). A purposive sampling strategy was used and the managers who participated came recommended by their employers as exemplary facilitators of learning. There were some apparent weaknesses in the research design used by Ellinger and Bostrom including problems with the assessment process used to ascertain the managers’ status as exemplary facilitators, and the heavy reliance on memories of critical incidents. However, these problems do not detract from the findings of this piece of exploratory research.

The study found that managers perceive their roles as ‘manager’ and ‘facilitator of learning’ distinctly. Moreover, managers only successfully shift from traditional managerial controlling roles to facilitator of learning roles if their corresponding beliefs are also changed. Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) found that, “while most management development programs often focus on skill or behaviour development, few if any focus

on the belief aspects associated with acquired new behaviours” (p. 173). One of the recommendations that emerged from the study, was that “skill training and interventions that focus on behavioural change must pay attention to beliefs” (p. 173). Ellinger and Bostrom’s study also highlighted the need for a supportive organisational culture to sustain and support managers’ transitions to the facilitator of learning roles, a process which takes time and presents many challenges.

The *Skilled Facilitator Approach* developed by Schwarz (2002; 2005) is based on a set of core values, assumptions, and principles. His systems approach integrates theory and practice and focuses on the internal and external work of facilitation. The first foundation on which Schwarz (2002) builds his approach to facilitation involves making core values explicit. He explained that “rendering them explicit enables you to understand and evaluate them directly rather than having to infer them from the techniques I describe” (p. 9). The other key principle of Schwarz’s approach concerns the use of his *ground rules*, which serve as a diagnostic tool and a means of developing effective group norms. Explicit ground rules enable a group to share responsibility for improving process, as well as guiding the behaviour of the facilitator. With regard to intentionality, Schwarz (2002) explained,

you not only need a set of methods and techniques but also an understanding of how and why they work . . . you see the reasoning that underlies each technique and method . . . you can improvise and design new methods and techniques consistent with the core values . . . you can discuss your approach with clients so they can make informed choices about choosing you as a facilitator. (p. 9)

Schwarz (2002) stated that learning to facilitate effectively is “not simply a matter of learning new strategies, tools, or techniques. Your ineffectiveness results from the core values and assumptions you hold” (p. 66). In this respect, in Giddens’ (1984) terms, Schwarz’s approach demonstrates little tolerance for technical facilitator education approaches if they leave facilitators unable “to give verbal expression to the promptings of action” (Giddens, 1984, p. 49). Schwarz is unapologetic in his stance that facilitation is demanding, cognitively and emotionally, and the facilitator’s own ineffectiveness diminishes the effectiveness of the groups they serve. Through the Skilled Facilitator Approach, he aims to help facilitators understand “the conditions under which [they] act ineffectively, and understand how [their] own thinking leads [them] to act ineffectively in ways that [they] are normally unaware of” (p. 12). He warned aspiring facilitators of

uncritically borrowing methods and techniques from a variety of other approaches, because basing methods and techniques on conflicting values and principles can also lead to ineffectiveness.

Schwarz (2002) based his approach to facilitator education on the work of Argyris and Schön (1996) and he adopted their concept of *theory-in-action* to explore what guides a facilitator's interventions. This approach distinguishes between *espoused theory* and *theory-in-use*. Espoused theory describes how a facilitator says he or she would act in a given situation. In contrast, theory-in-use is what actually guides the facilitator and it has a powerful effect on the facilitator because it operates quickly, effortlessly, and outside his or her level of awareness. Schwarz explained that when facilitators find themselves in an embarrassing or tough situation with a group, it is not uncommon for them to activate just one theory-in-use to guide their behaviour and this often leads to ineffective facilitation. In these cases the facilitators are often blind to the inconsistencies between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use. Hence, Schwarz acknowledges the potential for facilitators to become ineffective by slipping unknowingly into what Giddens (1984) would describe as an ineffective, unconscious level of practice. This creates a significant challenge for facilitator educators because teaching facilitators to change what they say or how they say it is not sufficient to eliminate the unintended consequences they may experience (Schwarz, 2002). In conditions of low favourability the facilitator's theory-in-use will potentially override any new behaviour that lacks a corresponding change in thinking patterns. This explains why facilitation approaches that only teach techniques to improve facilitation may not work in difficult situations. Schwarz suggested that there are two levels of learning that facilitators need to engage in concurrently: learning how to change their thoughts and feelings so they can create conversation that is more productive and creates less defensiveness, and learning to reflect rigorously on and redesign core values and assumptions in order to think differently and use his (Schwarz's) ground rules effectively.

To help emerging facilitators develop an awareness of their internal functioning Schwarz (2002) recommended they slowly increase the range and length of difficult facilitation situations in which they practice operating from their espoused theory. With appropriate reflection and guidance, emerging facilitators should get better at avoiding reliance on ineffective theory-in-use (Schwarz, 2002). Argyris and Schön (Schön, 1988) developed

*reflective practica* where learners explored their theories-in-use, using a process which they called ‘decomposition’ to identify the way the learners’ theories-in-use interfered with their interpersonal functioning. The coaching process they recommended involved: *collaborative inquiry*, where joint experimentation helped the students to formulate the qualities that they wanted to develop; *learning by mimicry*, where a coach improvised a performance within which there were identifiable units of reflection in action; and *hall of mirrors*, where coaching resembled the interpersonal practice to be learned and the learners and the coach acted as researchers inquiring into their own and others’ changing understandings.

Heron has published numerous books on the topic of group facilitation and co-counselling in the last few decades (1989; 1993). His latest book, “The Complete Facilitator” (1999), presented the culmination of his writing and thinking on the topic of facilitation. He described six dimensions of facilitation:

1. The *planning* dimension: the goal oriented, ends and means aspect of facilitation to do with aims and how to meet them.
2. The *meaning* dimension: the cognitive aspect of facilitation about helping participants to find meaning and make sense of experience.
3. The *confronting* dimension: the challenge aspect of facilitation effected to raise awareness of resistant and avoidance behaviour.
4. The *feeling* dimension: the sensitive aspect of facilitation involving the management of feeling and emotion.
5. The *structuring* dimension: the formal aspect of facilitation that includes methods of learning and form, shape and structure.
6. The *valuing* dimension: the integrity aspect of facilitation focussed on creating a supportive climate that honours and celebrates personhood.

Heron (1999) also explained that there are effectively three modes of facilitation: the *hierarchical* mode where the facilitator directs the learning process, uses power to lead from the front, and takes charge and full responsibility; the *co-operative* mode where the facilitator shares the power, and is collaborative and co-operative with the group as they manage the group process; and the *autonomous* mode where the facilitator respects the total autonomy of the group and works to subtly create the right conditions for the

participants to exercise full determination in learning. Heron's (1999) approach to facilitator education essentially aims to help emerging facilitators develop an understanding of how the combination of these dimensions and modes creates a matrix of eighteen facilitation options. Heron suggested the matrix can be used to make facilitators aware of the range and subtlety of options, as a self and peer assessment tool to work on strengths and weaknesses, and to devise training exercises to develop skill within particular modes and dimensions. In a review of Heron's model, Hogan (2002) commented that "once internalised, it is a useful tool to enable a facilitator to be 'transparent' with a group and indicate to participants how power is being used and/or shared in the group" (p. 65).

Heron (1999) emphasised the importance of developing *facilitator style*, which he defined as "the distinctive way that a person leads any group," and this style is a "function of the facilitator's values and norms, psychological make up, degree of skill and development, of the objectives and composition of the group, and of a wider cultural context" (p. 13). Heron (1999) recommended that facilitators seeking to develop their facilitator style work on:

- *Personal values* which reflect what you deeply hold true about human development;
- *Personal principles* which are the guiding norms for action that follow on from the values;
- *Personal development* work which creates greater flexibility within yourself for facilitating group processes;
- *Training* which helps by alerting you to a comprehensive range of issues and options and a large repertoire of policies and strategies.
- *Professional development* which continues the learning process during your working career;
- *Criteria of excellence* that clearly articulate excellence for you;
- *Research* which breaks down the distinction between researcher and subject using techniques like *co-operative inquiry*.

In their book, 'The Essential Elements of Facilitation,' Priest, Gass and Gillis (2000) also encouraged facilitators to clarify their own personal belief systems and to develop knowledge of organisational development theories. They presented a smorgasbord of



facilitation ideas, methods and models to help facilitators increase their effectiveness. However, unlike Heron (1999) and Schwarz (2002), a theoretical framework upon which these methods may be based is not provided.

Returning now to the potential tension between explicit intentionality and implicit intentionality, Schön's (1988) work can enrich this discussion. His concept of a *knowing-in-action* provides a response to the advocates of explicit intentional facilitator education because he acknowledges that not all practice can be justified using a verbal description, and that it is perhaps not useful to always require it. Schön noted the limits of learning when the "meanings of publicly observable performance remain stubbornly ambiguous" (p. 301) and he argued that undiscussability and indescribability can reinforce each other. In this respect, Schön acknowledged the case for practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) when professionals act. However, in what appears to be a partial concession to discursive consciousness, Schön (1988) stated,

a student's learning is enhanced when she can voice her own confusions, describe elements of what she already knows, or say what she makes of a coach's showing or telling. And a coach's artistry is enhanced when he builds his capacity to negotiate the ladder of reflection. (p. 301)

In a later work, Schön (1995) argued "there is nothing strange about the idea that a kind of knowing is inherent in intelligent action" and "our bias towards thinking blinds us to the non-logical processes which are omnipresent in effective practice" (p. 52).

Supporters of this perspective would argue that some facilitators may practice a different kind of intentionality, yet there is apparently little discussion of this kind of practice within the facilitation literature.

Ghais (2005) encouraged emerging facilitators to use their intuition to offer hypothetical insights and she argued that a facilitator's intuitive capacity is a "remarkable human ability that's waiting to be tapped in helping groups deal with extreme challenges" (p. 229). Hunter et al. (1999) also acknowledged that "being connected with and using your intuition is essential as a facilitator" and that "often [facilitators] will need to act in the moment, with little time to think" (p. 76). Luckner and Nadler (1997) also lend support for the place of intuition in facilitation: they explained,

because experiential approaches to learning, training and therapy require each of us to make numerous, instantaneous decisions based on new information as well as rely on our intuition and previous experiences,

there will never be a recipe for processing that can be handed down from one professional to the next. (p. xvi)

However, Luckner and Nadler also argued that to maximize their effectiveness, facilitators need to understand that the “better we understand the factors that influence learning and the processes that underlie it, the better we can design experiences that will benefit individuals” (p. xvi).

The role of intuition, or unconscious processes, in decision making has been researched by Gladwell (2005) and although he does not write specifically about decision making in a facilitation context, the application to facilitator education is strong. Gladwell called the part of our brain that allows for fast decision making the “adaptive unconscious” and it works quickly and quietly to process a lot of the data we need in order to function effectively as human beings (p. 11). He described how making decisions very quickly can in some cases be as effective as making decisions cautiously and deliberately and that “our snap judgements and first impressions can be educated and controlled” (p. 15). Gladwell explained that fast decision making, or rapid cognition, uses a process that he calls *thin slicing*, which he defined as “the ability of our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behaviour based on very narrow slices of experience” (p. 23).

A group facilitator has large amounts of external and internal data to contend with in very short periods of time. What Gladwell (2005) described is not unlike some of the intuitive processes that facilitators must master to cope with all this information and still care for the groups they are leading. However, the idea that the evidence facilitators may use to make decisions is buried somewhere in their unconscious, and they cannot “dredge it up” is at odds with intentional facilitator education (p. 50). Gladwell acknowledges this problem:

snap judgments and rapid cognition take place behind a locked door.... [and] I don't think that we are very good at dealing with the fact of that locked door. It's one thing to acknowledge the enormous power of snap judgments and thin slices but quite another to place our trust in something so seemingly mysterious. . . . if we are to learn to improve the quality of the decisions we make, we need to accept the mysterious nature of our snap judgments. We need to respect the fact that it is possible to know without knowing why we know and accept that – sometimes – we're better off that way. (pp. 51, 52)

Gladwell (2005) does not stop there; in a defense of what is effectively practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) he also argued that there are times when an explanation

for a decision really is not possible and the responses some people give for their decisions just do not make sense. According to Schön (1995), “there is nothing strange about the idea that a kind of knowing is inherent in intelligent action” and “our bias towards thinking blinds us to the non-logical processes which are omnipresent in effective practice” (p. 52). Hovenlyneck (1998) described facilitator education as a generative process where emerging facilitators learn to articulate what makes *sense-in-practice*, or their knowing-in-action.

As a caution, Gladwell warned that there may be circumstances when rapid cognition leads to poor decision making based on incorrect first impressions. However,

we are not helpless in the face of our first impressions. They may bubble up from the unconscious – from behind a locked door inside of our brain – but just because something is outside of awareness doesn't mean it's outside of control. . . . Our first impressions are generated by our experiences and our environment, which means that we can change our first impressions – we can alter the way we thin slice – by changing the experiences that comprise those impressions. (pp. 96, 97)

Therefore, whilst it seems inevitable that rapid cognition or intuitive processes are likely to guide emerging facilitators, Gladwell (2005) argued there is no excuse for using them carelessly.

Taking our powers of cognition seriously means we have to acknowledge the subtle influences that can alter or undermine or bias the products of our unconscious. . . . Too often we are resigned to what happens in the blink of an eye. It doesn't seem like we have much control over whatever bubbles to the surface from our unconscious. But we do, and if we can control the environment in which rapid cognition takes place, then we can control rapid cognition. (pp. 252-253)

Consequently, Gladwell's (2005) ideas do not excuse emerging facilitator educators from practicing intentionally, but rather he provides another aspect of development on which emerging facilitators need to intentionally focus. The aspect of the emerging facilitators' environment that they can definitely influence is their internal environment and the personal development work appropriate for emerging facilitators will be discussed in the next section on person-centred facilitator education.

In concluding the discussion of intentional facilitator education, some authors (Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Heron, 1999; Schwarz, 2002; van Maurik, 1994) have argued strongly that facilitators must be able to demonstrate

discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and reflect on their practice at the teacher oriented and professional reflection levels identified by Ling et al. (2002). The exponents of explicit intentional facilitator education argued that practitioners who are unable to theorise their practice are disempowered. There is, however, the counter view of intentionality that Schön (1995) encapsulates in his description of knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action. With these concepts, practice is the embodiment of theory, not just an application of theory, and it represents a more 'holistic' conception of facilitation like that described by Killion and Simmons (1992). Perhaps Schön's most useful contribution to the discussion is to balance the view that facilitators could ever hope to reach a state of total discursive consciousness. There is also a danger that the exponents of explicit intentional facilitator education may dichotomise theory and practice by emphasising their distinctiveness rather than their embeddedness. As Carr (1982) explained, "educational theory' is not something that is created in isolation from practice and then has to be 'applied,' 'implemented' or 'adopted' through a 'sustained effort' on the part of the two reluctant parties" (p. 26). The next section on person-centred facilitator education approaches will include an explanation of how some facilitator educators have encouraged emerging facilitators to integrate or embody the theories of effective facilitation in the presence they bring to the group. While some of the facilitator educators described in this section encouraged emerging facilitators to develop an awareness of their internal functioning, person-centred facilitator educators extend this process further and provide a different perspective on what is required to educate a facilitator.

### ***Person-centred facilitator education***

The person-centred facilitator education approaches in the literature are also intentional in nature but are sufficiently different to warrant a separate discussion. Instead of focussing on skills, techniques or methods that a facilitator may use, or the theories that underpin those methods, person-centred facilitator education focuses on the personal qualities of the emerging facilitator and the interpersonal relationship between the facilitator and group. The counselling field has acknowledged the role of the relationship between client and counsellor and some counselling approaches see the relationship as being central to the helping role; some focus on the work done through the relationship, yet others focus on the outcomes to be achieved through the relationship (Egan, 2002;

Rogers, 1989b). The facilitation literature that can be classified as person-centred seems to emphasise all of these aspects of the facilitation relationship.

Rogers (1983; 1989a; 1989b) wrote extensively on the importance of the relationships involved in teaching or counselling. He claimed that the personal qualities and attitudes of the teacher or counsellor are more important than any methods they employ. Rogers explained, methods and strategies will not be effective unless the facilitator demonstrates a genuine desire to “create a climate in which there is freedom to learn” (Rogers, 1983, p. 157). He described the essential personal qualities of a facilitator as: *being real*, because facilitation is not about playing a role and effective facilitators don’t conform to educational formulas; *prizing, acceptance, and trust*, communicating that the participant is fundamentally trustworthy; and *empathic understanding*, which helps establish a climate for self-initiated, experiential learning (1983; 1989b). The majority of Roger’s work on person-centred teaching and counselling was completed in the 1970s and ‘80s, when social justice was a driving force in educational policy, before the onset of economic rationalism. This is significant because it indicates how the social and political forces at any particular point in time potentially shape the way facilitator education, or any other social process, may be conceptualised.

Ringer (2002) presented a slightly different perspective on facilitator education, but it sits most comfortably within this approach. He advocated a ‘subjectivist’ view of group leadership and facilitation that frees the facilitator from “the illusion that leaders are in control of the group. We can see our interactions with the group in a new light: as influence rather than control” (p. 62). In this respect, facilitators are still intentional in their approach to facilitation, but their role in a group is aided less by technique and more through the facilitator’s ‘presence,’ which is developed by enhancing a conscious awareness of his or her own subjectivity. Thus, it is the facilitator’s presence that becomes the focus of the intentionality, not his or her actions or responses to the group. Ringer’s (2002) perspective, based in psychodynamic theory, took the emphasis off learning skills and methods by explaining that effective group leadership is

not about control of the group or dazzling with knowledge or skill, but simply maintaining your self fully present with the group and providing appropriate support for the group to achieve its goal. (p. 18)

Although the prospect of an approach that seeks to ‘do less’ may sound attractive to the emerging facilitator, the emphasis on maintaining a *dynamic presence* is potentially more demanding on the facilitator than other models of group leadership that emphasise techniques and methods. In contrast to technical facilitator education approaches, Ringer (2002) deliberately avoided providing “algorithmic step-by-step recipes that are intended to substitute for the judgment and experience of the group leader” (p. 38). With respect to facilitator education, Ringer suggested that developing as a facilitator means “paying close attention to the complex constellation of feeling, thinking, action, intuition, and memories and fantasies that is *you*. It means addressing and dealing with your own vulnerability and failings” (p. 19). Ringer was also critical of competency-based approaches to facilitator education because their focus on empirical, sensory based evidence ignored the subjective processes critical to effective facilitation. Ringer stated, “there has long been an implicit and therefore invisible discounting of aspects of group leadership that do not fit into algorithmic schemes” (p. 241).

Ringer (2002) is also critical of the way step-by-step descriptions of ‘how to’ facilitate dominate the business and experiential learning literature. He observed that the field of facilitation, especially within the organisational development context, “largely ignores the body of knowledge that exists about ‘psychological’ processes” (p. 28) in groups, because the complexity and specialisation of language in these fields makes the wealth of knowledge inaccessible to many group leaders. Ringer provides an introduction to the psychodynamic process of group facilitation in a language comprehensible to the average practitioner. He is also critical of the influence of positivistic approaches in any process of developing group leaders and he argued that

the development of our capacity to lead groups cannot occur as an objective science – we need to integrate reason and passion rather than amputate passion. We need not to search for the illusion of objectivity, but to seek a clearer understanding of how our subjectivity affects what we notice, value and recall. (p. 54)

Although the model of facilitation competencies identified by the IAF and the ICA (Pierce et al., 2000) focus on technical skills and knowledge, they do also recognize that “in the art and science of guiding a group process, facilitators develop an awareness that they themselves are an important instrument in getting the work done” (p. 33) and that facilitators must also develop personal qualities in order to help groups achieve their

purposes. Similarly, Hunter (1995) explained that the secret to being an effective facilitator has “more to do with who you are and who you are being for the group you’re working with. . . . The relationship you develop with the group is the key” (p. 201). Similarly, in her approach to facilitator education Hogan (2002) enumerated the importance of relationships and the need for facilitators to be *fully present* and authentic with group members.

The data collection phase of this study highlighted a gap in my review of the literature and prompted me to explore the literature on the role of self-awareness in facilitator education. The results of this return to the literature, which allowed for a more complete interpretation of the findings, is presented in the balance of this section on person-centred facilitator education.

Ghais (2005) explained that no amount of brilliant skills and techniques will help emerging facilitators if they lack personal awareness, and “whether we’re aware of it or not, our inner states, moods, attitudes, and thoughts are always on our sleeves” (p. 14). Goleman’s (1996) study of *emotional intelligence* found that “emotions that simmer beneath the threshold of awareness can have a powerful impact on how we perceive and react, even though we have no idea they are at work” (p. 55). Goleman’s description of self-awareness as the “non-reactive, nonjudgmental attention to inner states” (p. 47) has distinct relevance to person-centred facilitator education. An emerging facilitator who is able to demonstrate high levels of self-awareness as described by Goleman would be careful to avoid getting “carried away by emotions, overreacting and amplifying what is perceived” (p. 47). High levels of self-awareness would help the emerging facilitator to monitor his or her own feelings as they occur, even amidst turbulent emotions.

Herein lies one of the complexities of person-centred facilitator education, as Ghais (2005) explained, facilitators “must be able to bring authenticity, confidence, presence, trustworthiness, and calm into the room. It is much more difficult to explain how to build these inner qualities than to teach skills and techniques” (p. 14). According to Ghais (2005), although it is difficult for emerging facilitators to fundamentally change the presence they bring to a group, they can work to “understand and enhance the natural strengths of [their] own presence, mitigate the negative aspects, and develop a unique, effective individual style” (p. 18). She encouraged emerging facilitators to get to know

more about themselves by getting feedback from others, taking personality inventories, observing themselves on video, and building on their strengths. The facilitator educators in this study either used, or recommended, a variety of methods to enhance the self-awareness of their emerging facilitators. To effectively interpret some of the findings for these facilitator educators a brief review of some of the relevant literature will be provided.

The role of the *unconscious* in the interpersonal functioning of a facilitator was a critical theoretical foundation for one of the facilitator educators in this study. Ringer (2002) noted that in Australia there is a common perception that discussions about “things like ‘the unconscious’ are whacky, odd and not for ‘normal’ people” (p. 82), yet he has found going against this cultural norm very worthwhile when developing group leaders. Ringer maintains that a “sound understanding of unconscious processes in myself, others and groups is very helpful to my work” (p. 83).

The authors most well known for the exploration of the unconscious are Freud and Jung and their contributions are well summarised by Neville (2005). The discussion in the literature about the role of the unconscious ranges from the “very ordinary observation that we are mentally aware of only a fragment of our experience, through romantic and pessimistic notions of a powerful force within us, to the profound or outlandish hypothesis that our individuality is only an illusion” (Neville, 2005, p. 122). From a psychodynamic perspective, the choice for facilitators is “not whether or not to ‘allow’ unconscious processes to occur in our groups because they will occur anyway. The choice becomes whether or not we deliberately work with unconscious processes in our groups” (Ringer, 2002, p. 280).

Although Freud did not discover the unconscious, he did set out to investigate the processes taking place beneath the surface of the mind in a manner none of his contemporaries had been able to. Freud believed the contents and functions of the unconscious were essentially nasty and unhelpful. However, his rigid view of unconscious processes spurred others to develop ideas of their own. Jung, for example, was more open-minded to the possibility that the unconscious could serve constructive purposes (Neville, 2005). Jung also contributed by developing the notion of archetypes, which Neville described as “typical and universal ‘modes of apprehension,’ which



appear as images charged with great meaning and power – images which exert great influence on our individual and collective behaviour” (p.125). In the context of formal education, Neville (2005) explored the role of unconscious processes for teachers. He explained how the teacher’s *persona* develops over time,

The teacher has from infancy, been learning a way of being with other people, of pleasing her parents, of adapting to the expectations of society. All the experiences she has absorbed, from significant adults initially and then from broader culture, have been processed into a way of seeing herself and the world and a way of behaving in it. (p. 129)

However, Neville (2005) also explained that there is another side of the teacher’s personality, the *shadow*, which includes all sorts of repressed experiences and events, in an interrelated cluster of unconscious contents, which is likely to be incompatible with the conscious self. Both the *persona* and the *shadow* are examples of what Jung called complexes, and they may develop after a traumatic event or by gradual accumulation. For example, a teacher who was repeatedly exposed to criticism as a child may develop a ‘criticism complex,’ which makes the person extremely sensitive about the way he or she receives and interprets feedback from students, colleagues, or supervisors. At times these complexes can cause significant disruption to effective interpersonal functioning, but

for the remainder of teachers, whose pathology remains at the normal level, complexes are not much more than a nuisance. They cause occasional embarrassments, and wreck a relationship here and there, but a certain degree of watchfulness can prevent them from dominating our lives. If we are attentive, we can even learn what our complexes are and do something about them. (Neville, 2005, pp. 130-131)

One of the methods used by a facilitator educator in this study to help emerging facilitators explore their complexes and develop ways of dealing with their potentially negative disruption is called *voice dialogue*. Developed by Stone and Stone (1989), voice dialogue provided a method to facilitate the “evolution of consciousness” (p. 16) by learning how the subpersonalities, or complexes in Jung’s language, operate within us. They explained, “without this understanding, we are in the powerless position of watching different subpersonalities drive our psychological car while we sit in the back seat or, worse yet, hide in the trunk” (p. 16). Stone and Stone (1989) argued that their voice dialogue method

has proven to be a dramatically effective and frequently humorous tool for igniting and expanding the evolution of consciousness by helping us to explore our subpersonalities, expand our awareness, and clarify the role of our egos in maintaining psychological health. (p. 48)

The voice dialogue method facilitates the evolution of consciousness by working through three stages: 1) developing awareness without being overly judgemental or controlling; 2) experiencing our different *selves*; and 3) developing an *aware ego* which performs the executive function of the psyche. A critical feature of this approach is the honouring of all selves in order to provide a greater degree of choice, because as Stone and Stone argued, “the selves we do not honor grow inside of us in unconscious ways, gaining power and authority” (p. 25). So in terms of its application to facilitator education, the voice dialogue method provides emerging facilitators with a tool to explore some of the ineffective internal conversations. Typically, this would involve others in the group ‘playing’ the roles of the unhelpful selves creating negative internal dialogue in the head of the facilitator and impeding effective facilitation.

Finally, a new text by Jenkins and Jenkins (2006) – only published as this study reached its conclusion – has the potential to make an important contribution to person-centred facilitator education. They focused on nine *disciplines* they believe emerging facilitators must master to be effective. They are very clear that theirs is not a ‘how to’ book, but rather is concerned with what happens inside the leader and how he or she makes decisions and functions as a whole person. They explained,

The most difficult thing any facilitative leader can do is master himself or herself. Every leader experiences doubt, anxiety, cynicism, and his or her own dark side. Facilitative leaders need to restore their personal energy, maintain respect for both colleagues and themselves, find new sources of ideas and inspiration, and battle the human propensity toward self-limitation, caution, mediocrity, and dependency. (p. 1)

Jenkins and Jenkins (2006) identified three developmental paths for emerging facilitators: regarding others, regarding myself, and regarding life. As shown in Figure 2, each of these pathways is conceptualised as a continuum. The left and right disciplines on the continuum are in tension with each other and the discipline in the centre “encompasses the art of standing in the tension between the other two” (p. 3).

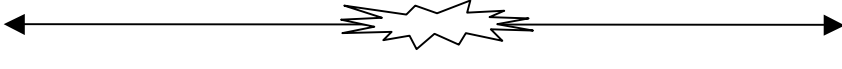
<b>Developmental Path</b>			
<i>Regarding Others</i>	Detachment	Focus	Engagement
<i>Regarding Myself</i>	Interior Council	Sense of Wonder	Intentionality
<i>Regarding Life</i>	Awareness	Presence	Action

Figure 2: *The nine disciplines of a facilitator (Jenkins and Jenkins, 2006, p. 4)*

The Jenkins and Jenkins (2006) development path of ‘regarding myself,’ and in particular, the discipline of *interior council*, is consistent with the emphasis that other authors (Ghais, 2004; Ringer, 2002; Stone & Stone, 1989) have placed on the need for self awareness of the internal voices that guide facilitators. Jenkins and Jenkins argued that “the ability to be aware of the voices and to select which ones you will pay attention to and which you will ignore is a key competency of the facilitative leader” (p. 147). However, they also acknowledge the difficulty of developing a rich and meaningful interior life when most people find it so hard to commit the time required to reflect on, and cultivate, that part of our lives.

The facilitator education literature that has been classified in this section as person-centred facilitator education extends the previous two categories of facilitator education, shown in Table 1, by emphasising the importance of relationships, self awareness, and presence to facilitate effectively. In the next section of this chapter, the facilitator education literature that can be categorised as critical facilitator education will be reviewed. In this facilitator education category, emerging facilitators are encouraged to develop a deeper level of personal and group awareness, particularly in the political dimension. An exploration of the critical facilitator education processes is important to this study because the proponents of these approaches, described in the next section, argue that without an awareness of power and rank, emerging facilitators can unknowingly perpetuate the very social systems they seek to change through their facilitation. To this end, critical facilitator education approaches make an important contribution to the complete picture of the theories and practices of facilitator education.

### ***Critical facilitator education***

Critical facilitator education approaches are based on *critical theory*, which originated from the work of Kant, Hegel, and Marx and was further developed by Habermas and his predecessors in the Frankfurt School (Rasmussen, 1996). Critical theory seeks to expose the operation of power, and to bring about social justice by redressing inequalities and promoting individual freedoms within a democratic society. Critical facilitator education aligns with the level of *professional reflection* identified by Ling et al. (2002) because facilitators are encouraged to think critically about the political nature of learning and the role they play in the process.

Rogers (1983) explained that discussion of politics in any teacher education process can be most threatening because the teacher “must face up to the fearful aspects of sharing her power and control” (p. 190). In this respect, critical facilitator education encourages emerging facilitators to examine their own practice to create optimal learning experiences for participants. The underpinning premise is that “where our beliefs remain unexamined, we are not free; we act without thinking about why we act, and thus do not exercise control over our own destinies” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 46). Although the skills and disposition of critical thinking can infuse intentional and person-centred facilitator education, critical facilitator education goes a step further because it is “specifically concerned with the influences of educational knowledge, and of cultural formations generally, that perpetuate or legitimate an unjust status quo” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 46).

Mindell (1995) maintained that it is the responsibility of facilitators to “bring forth and appreciate the views of those in power or in the mainstream, while dealing with the prejudices and hidden social, psychological and historical factors which create the experience of inequity” (p. 21). This is not an easy task because “mainstream power is often hidden and unconscious. It operates pervasively in groups and can be so oppressive that it is eventually balanced by other powers, such as rebellion” (Mindell, 1995, pp. 21-22). An increasing number of writers in recent times have questioned the idea of *neutral* facilitation. Kirk and Broussine (2000) refuted the notion of facilitation as a set of skills and processes which are value free, objective and neutral. Rather, they suggested that facilitators in an organisational development context need to have a strong political

awareness. In the sphere of adult learning, Drennon and Cervero (2002) maintained that teachers “need to take a critically reflective stance towards their practice, recognising and working to overcome its inherent oppressive dimensions” (p. 195). Although facilitators are often conceived as people apart, distanced from an organisation’s political networks, able to comment and intervene independently and neutrally, Kirk and Broussine (2000) contend that facilitators must recognise the political and emotional impact an organisation has on them. Broussine (1998) also identified the difficulty for facilitators in organizations to admit to the emotional and political aspects of their roles. For example, Hughes (1999) claimed that there is a fundamental barrier to supervisors in organisations becoming effective facilitators especially when they ignore the potential conflicts of interest as they assume facilitatory roles. These conflicts of interest impact on their ability to develop a trusting relationship unless they are prepared to practice critical reflectivity, and examine their assumptions, values, and beliefs underlying actions.

In an ethnomethodological study of facilitation in an experiential education setting, Brown (2002) found that facilitators frequently assumed the role of ‘gatekeeper,’ controlling what were supposed to be student-centered discussions. In this respect, the facilitators in the study played a “central role in creating and limiting opportunities for discussion, for evaluating student contributions and in collaboration with students to construct and articulate acceptable knowledge” (p. 111). This is problematic if the participants’ “right and responsibility to set their own learning agenda” is considered to be a foundational principle of experiential education (Hovelynck, 2003, p. 5).

Within this critical facilitator education approach, several authors espouse the need for a socially critical approach to facilitation. Kirk and Broussine (2000) warned that whilst most facilitators would aim to be emancipators, “facilitation can become part of a system of oppression and perpetuation of dependant relations, with facilitators becoming unwitting agents of manipulation and managerialism” (p. 14). Warren (1998) suggested that socially critical facilitation requires us to “become more conscious of how methods can advance or impede social justice” (p. 21). She is also critical of facilitation lacking in theoretical validation and described it as “empty attempts to practice without a sound grounding” and that it is particularly irresponsible if facilitators “attempt to ‘do the right thing’ without an understanding of their own biases or the current anti-bias work theory” (p. 23).

White (1999) adopts a socially critical perspective by suggesting that “good facilitators are . . . committed to empowering those who are weaker, more vulnerable, marginalised, oppressed or otherwise disadvantaged” (p. 9). White explained that socially critical facilitation entails unlearning, which starts with “recognising and countering disabilities of orientation,” which are often imprinted or inflicted on facilitators in the name of education and training (p. 9). Similarly, Warren (1998) is critical of facilitation training that focuses only on techniques and she suggested that emerging facilitators must also focus on the “social and cultural backgrounds . . . and the way their locations in privilege or marginality affect how they teach and facilitate” (p. 23).

Kirk and Broussine (2000) maintained that protestations of neutrality in facilitation show either naiveté or cleverness on behalf of the facilitator and that there will always be tensions between those who wish to preserve the system and those who wish to change it. The exercise of power is part of the system dynamic and the authoritative facilitator will be aware of how she or he is positioned in the dynamic. Drennon and Cervero (2002) suggested that facilitators “develop their own healthy scepticism towards the aims they seek to achieve and interrogate all practices for their effect on individuals and groups” (p. 207).

Kirk and Broussine (2000) identify four positions of facilitator awareness: *partial awareness – closed, immobilised awareness, manipulative awareness, partial awareness – open*. Within the partial awareness – closed position: awareness is incomplete; there is no omnipotence enabling them to see all there is to be seen and no consideration of their own partiality. The facilitator is unaware of interpretative lenses, denies the potential abuse of power, is unaware of group pressures on them as the facilitator, and is unaware of the influence of the client. In an acerbic critique, Kirk and Broussine claimed the “naiveté of such a position does not excuse its incompetence” (p. 18). In the second position of immobilised awareness, the facilitator is immobilised by fear. This includes: fear of getting it wrong, fear of making the difficult intervention, fear of breaking past patterns in co-facilitation, and the fear of disagreeing with a co-facilitator. To be effective, facilitators ought to be able to model mistake-making and imperfection to avoid nurturing blame cultures that are averse to risk taking and consequently learning. In the third position of manipulative awareness, “the cause of learning may be sacrificed on the altar of the facilitator’s own political agendas” (p. 19). Three types of

manipulative awareness exist: manipulating alliances, secret agendas, and personal image manipulation. In the final position, partial awareness – open, the facilitator is “aware of his or her own limited awareness, actively and openly works with what they think is going on in themselves, in the group and wider system. They will do this vigorously, but cautiously, realising their own partiality” (p. 20). It is this final orientation that best characterises the goal of critical facilitator education.

Mindell’s (1995) work in the area of process-oriented psychology has the potential to inform the practice of critical facilitator education. Mindell described the output of process-oriented psychology as *worldwork*, which he explained “combines ecology’s interest in the environment, psychology’s focus on the individual and social theory’s comprehension of historical change” (p. 23). The characteristics and focus of worldwork are aligned with the desired outputs of critical facilitator education, particularly in their emphasis on power and rank.

Mindell (1995) defines rank as “a conscious or unconscious, social or personal ability or power arising from culture, community support, personal psychology and/or spiritual power” (p. 43). Regardless as to whether the rank that a facilitator possesses is earned or inherited, it shapes much of his or her communication behaviour with a group. All facilitators have some form of rank, but “our behaviour shows how conscious we are of this rank. When we are heedless of rank, communications become confused and chronic relationship problems develop” (p. 49). Mindell argued that rank could be like a drug: “The more you have, the less you are aware of how it affects others negatively” (p. 49). However, he also explained that rank is not inherently bad, and nor is abuse of rank inevitable. In fact, if facilitators are aware of their rank, they can use it to their own benefit and the benefit of others as well. In this regard, the objective of critical facilitator education approaches is not to help emerging facilitators transcend the influence of rank, but rather to help them notice their rank and use it constructively. As Mindell posits, “The facilitator’s task is not to do away with the use of rank and power, but to notice them and make their dynamics explicit for the whole group to see” (p. 37).

Mindell (1995) made another important contribution to the discussion about facilitator education when he called for emerging facilitators to develop awareness. He explained, “A special kind of innerwork is needed to transform us into elders who can sit in the fire.

Without such transformation, we will continue to repress our awareness of group tensions and thereby perpetuate the world's troubles" (p. 33). Hence, critical facilitator education approaches help emerging facilitators understand that group conflict, or *fire*, to use Mindell's term, often stems from belief systems about how other people should behave. Mindell encouraged facilitators to continue the process of working on their own personal development in order to develop their awareness of how they may encourage or oppress themselves and others. On the issue of technical facilitator education Mindell is explicit that emerging facilitators' development must involve more than developing techniques if they are to succeed in raising consciousness of personal, group, and social issues.

Mindell's approach to critical facilitator education is certainly aligned with Giddens' (1984) call for discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984). Emerging facilitators are encouraged to be critically reflective of the ways they are involved in the production and reproduction of social systems, whilst acknowledging the existence of unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences (Bryant & Jary, 1991). The danger of this heightened awareness is that emerging facilitators may fall into the immobilised awareness state described by Kirk and Broussine (2000). This was certainly never Giddens' desire, because his intentions were to create individual agents who were able to act "knowledgeably and intentionally" (Kilminster, 1991, p. 79). Knowledge and awareness, without the capacity to act because of fear or a sense of disempowerment, is not the goal of critical facilitator education approaches. However, one of the inherent dangers of critical facilitator education is the potential for 'paralysis of analysis' where the critical examination results in fear and disempowerment. Thus, excessive critical reflexivity has the potential to render well intentioned emerging facilitators ineffective, by allowing them to lapse into what Giddens described as *chronic reflexivity*.

In a critique of critical reflection in an organisational context, Reynolds (1998) identifies a number of other problems with critical reflexivity. He suggested it can be seen as elitist, legitimising the superiority of a culture that is traditionally white, male and Eurocentric, and it can exclude those who are less intellectually inclined. There is always the danger of increased critical awareness undermining shared understandings, laying the grounds for inaction or pessimism. To prevent emerging facilitators lapsing into chronic reflexivity, Kirk and Broussine (2000) provided some practical suggestions to help



emerging facilitators practice with authority and confidence in the context of an increased political awareness. First, facilitators should acknowledge their partial awareness and accept that they are not fully aware. Second, they ought to engage in reflective practice and give attention to their own development. Third, facilitators should practice *reflexivity*, which means “actively noticing in the moment, during the facilitation, what seems to be going on in themselves and in the group, and intervening or not as a consequence” (p. 20). Fourth, facilitators should acknowledge the complex, unpredictable, and surprising nature of their role, and they should leave open spaces and not use excessive structure to create more certainty and control. Finally, emerging facilitators should exercise care about the process and for the people in the process. A facilitator who does not care in this way will not “be able, however technically competent, to facilitate the learning of individuals and groups effectively and ethically” (p. 21).

Smyth (1996) provided similar advice to developing teachers to critique their practice, and “locate that practice in the broader social, political, and economic context in which it is inextricably embedded” (p. 50). The four steps he suggested are also applicable to emerging facilitators: 1) *Describing*: using journals and diaries to build up an account of their practice as a way of gaining access to the knowledge, belief and principles; 2) *Informing*: uncovering the broader principles that are informing practice so as to develop defensible practical principles grounded in largely tacit knowledge for complex situations; 3) *Confronting*: subjecting those theories to interrogation that challenges their legitimacy; 4) *Reconstructing*: encouraging practitioners to construct their own portrayals of their practice and deny the artificial separation of thought from action, of theory from practice.

Writing from an adult learning perspective, but also of relevance to facilitator education processes, Mezirow (1990) suggested “a set of rules, tactics and criteria for judging” (p. 361), so as to generate a stronger critical awareness of the presuppositions that shape beliefs. From the perspective of Burbules and Berk (1999), *socially critical* education goes dangerously close to prejudging what the conclusions of critical reflection might be, instead of allowing people to come to their own conclusions. However, socially critical facilitator educators would respond that the failure to focus on social injustices under the

pretense of impartiality, would simply enshrine many conventional assumptions in a manner that intentionally (or not) teaches political conformity (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

In part one of this chapter I have provided an overview of the facilitation literature using four approaches to facilitator education. The theoretical underpinnings of these approaches, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration and Ling et al.'s typology of reflection (2002), have been presented and used to interpret the facilitator education literature. The next section of this chapter will consider the implications of the literature from the group counsellor education field for facilitator education. The group counsellor education literature is comprehensive in its discussion of strategies that may be used to develop emerging group counsellors and hence, can contribute to a fuller understanding of the theories and practices of facilitator education.

### **Part 2: Group counsellor education and its relevance to facilitator education**

In this section of the chapter I will present a summary of the four main strategies used to educate group counsellors, as described in the group counselling literature. The four strategies of didactic instruction, observation, experiential participation, and experiential group leadership will be critiqued and their relevance to the theory and practice of facilitator education highlighted. The literature pertaining to facilitation does not provide extensive discussion of the strategies that can be used to teach facilitators. Hence, the four group counsellor education strategies can provide a lens through which to interpret the practice of the facilitator educators in this study.

Unlike facilitator education, group counsellor education occurs primarily within the higher education sector, and more specifically in universities worldwide. In their review of literature on the training and preparation of group counsellors, Stockton and Toth (1996) found that whilst the therapeutic value of groupwork has been well established, there is a "dearth of literature addressing questions of how group leaders can best be taught relative to established standards" (p. 274). As one of the strongest advocates for group counsellor education, Stockton stressed the need for programmatic research in the area of group counsellor training. Since the early 1990s, his primary research focus has been on developing more productive ways to train group leaders (McDonnell, Toth, & Aldarondo, 2005). However, as with the facilitator education literature, the literature on group counsellor education is not strongly grounded in empirical research, and Stockton

recommended the efficacy of alternative methodological approaches, such as naturalistic inquiry, because of their amenability to the complexity of group work (McDonnell et al., 2005). The last decade has seen a growing section of the group counselling literature addressing the issue of training, development and/or education.

The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) has over the last 20 years made a significant contribution to the professionalisation of the groupwork field through the development and publication of its foundational documents (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2004). Some of the key documents include: ASGW Best Practice Guidelines (ASGW, 1983), ASGW Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers (ASGW, 1999) and the ASGW Professional Standards for Training of Group Workers (ASGW, 1983, 1990, 2000). According to Wilson et al. (2004) these documents have helped to enhance group workers' professional recognisability; identify common values; provide a common frame of reference for training goals; and guide curriculum design, implementation, and assessment (Wilson et al., 2004). Wilson et al. (2004) explained, "each document has specific utility in teaching group work. Each has the potential of strengthening group work training and serving as an impetus for future development of training interventions" (p. 28). The ASGW documents articulate what every counsellor should know, and they provide a language for group counsellor education programs to articulate their philosophies of training, educational objectives, specific competencies, and the cumulative nature of curriculum.

Writing from a social work perspective, Berger (1996) reported that there are few empirically based guidelines to establish the best method for teaching groupwork. He maintained, "research based knowledge is needed to gain a better understanding of how social work students study group work, the relative weight of various criteria and the effectiveness of different ways of teaching group work" (p. 89). Despite general consensus in the literature on the need for more empirical research into the best strategies for developing group counsellors, group workers, and group psychotherapists, there is some agreement on the core elements and purposes of any program that seeks to prepare candidates for work in these professions. The purposes of teaching group work, as identified by Berger are: to provide students with a theoretical understanding of group processes and group development in various kinds of groups; to help students develop practice skills to facilitate groups, assess specific situations, and implement strategies to

prevent group blockages; and to educate students about values and ethical aspects of group work. Hence, the need to develop intellectual understanding of the complexities of group work, is balanced with the need to develop practice skills.

The literature is united in its claims that high quality group counsellor education utilises some combination of the following approaches: didactic instruction; observation; experiential participation; and experiential group leadership (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; McDonnell et al., 2005; Morran, 2005). These approaches are seldom used singularly and they are typically integrated in a manner that “provides students with rich multi-dimensional learning experience and accommodates different learning styles” (Berger, 1996, p. 81). The first of the four group counsellor education strategies, didactic instruction, will now be discussed.

### ***Didactic instruction***

The Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers for the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW, 1983, 1990, 2000) espoused the importance of knowledge competencies, skill competencies, and clinical experience competencies. Didactic instruction includes traditional approaches such as lecturing, class discussion, analysis of excerpts and vignettes, and watching videotaped group sessions. This theory-centred approach focuses on cognitive learning and is typically enriched by illustrative experiences. According to Berger (1996), didactic approaches make it easy to monitor the content and pace of learning according to interests, abilities, and educational needs. Such approaches do provide a stable, structured learning process, but they may seem remote, non-practical, and/or sterile to some emerging counsellors.

One of the primary purposes of didactic instruction is to assist emerging group counsellors develop a theoretical orientation. Making this orientation explicit helps the emerging group counsellors “make sense of the many facets of group process, provides [them] with a map giving direction to what [they] do and say in a group, and helps [them] think about the possible results of [their] interventions” (Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 8). Intentional facilitator education concurs that practitioners should base their interventions on some theoretical foundation of explicit values, beliefs and concepts.

There has been, for some time, discussion in the group counselling literature (Clarkson, 1996; Haas, 1997; Hollanders & McLeod, 1999; Kazantis & Deane, 1998; Norcross, Beutler, & Clarkin, 1998; Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006) about the place of *integrated* theoretical orientations, which synthesise a number of individual theoretical orientations versus single theoretical orientations, which are sometimes seen as being too restrictive. In the facilitation literature there does appear to be a range of theoretical models on which facilitators can base their practice, but only a minority of authors are explicit about the theories underpinning their practice (for example, Dick, 1991; Dick & Dalmau, 1999; Schwarz, 2002). What is contentious within the group counselling field is the practice of *technical eclecticism*, which “combines techniques from different schools without necessarily subscribing to the theoretical positions that spawned them” (Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 6). These concerns about the theoretical laziness of technical eclecticism are similar to the concerns expressed by some facilitator educators (Robson & Beary, 1995; Schwarz, 2002; Weaver & Farrell, 1997) about technical facilitator education approaches. Another strategy described in the group counsellor education literature is observation and in the next section a description of this strategy is provided.

### ***Observation***

A number of authors have suggested that emerging group counsellors can derive great benefit from watching an experienced practitioner working with a group. Observation allows students to watch experts (live in action or on videotapes) and compare their efforts with others' interventions (Barlow, 2004). Observation will usually involve two parts: observation, then discussion with the counsellor educator and preferably the group leader too. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) were adamant that a “post meeting discussion is an absolute necessity in training, and there is no better time . . . than immediately after the meeting” (p. 546). These post meeting discussions should focus on the emerging counsellors' observations, answer their questions about the underlying reasons for certain interventions, and use the clinical material as a springboard for discussion of fundamental principles of group therapy. Alternatively, a time of private reflection for several days, possibly including journaling, may be helpful before sharing findings at the post-meeting discussion. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) recommend observation of a group for at least four months to allow for changes to occur in group development, interactional patterns, and perceivable intrapersonal growth.

The use of videos for student observation can be effective because they can be used in their entirety or as vignettes “for the purposes of furthering students’ understanding of group dynamics, group stages, the overall group process, and the formulation of necessary leadership skills” (Kreiger & Whittingham, 2005, p. 287). Such videos allow counsellor educators to demonstrate group leadership skills prior to an emerging counsellor’s first group leadership experience or when necessary in place of such an experiential component.

Berger (1996) suggested that some emerging group counsellors may find observation too educationally passive, but Yalom and Leszcz (2005) argued that although some may find observation sessions unstimulating, “boredom is inversely related to experience; as students gain in experience and sophistication, they come increasingly to appreciate the many subtle, fascinating layers underlying every transaction” (p. 546). Organising observation opportunities for students can be difficult at times and it also requires group counsellor educators to solve the logistical problems of finding groups to observe at times and locations that suit the emerging group counsellors.

Observations of experienced facilitators could also make a potential contribution to the facilitator education process. It would help with technical facilitator education by allowing emerging facilitators to see how skills and strategies can be successfully applied with groups. Emerging facilitators could also observe how experienced facilitators work intentionally with groups and in post-observation discussions they could discuss the experienced facilitators’ rationales behind their actions. The emerging facilitator could also observe how experienced facilitators use their presence in the facilitation process. In the next section a discussion of the importance of experiential participation in group counsellor education is provided.

### ***Experiential participation***

Experiential participation in a therapeutic group offsets many of the shortfalls of observation as an educational strategy. Barlow (2004) suggested that emerging group counsellors must experience the power of groups as a participant, because it helps them to cope with the “multiplicity of leadership roles” (p. 117). In experiential approaches, the class of emerging group counsellors is typically facilitated as a group, with an experienced group counsellor operating as a coach and role model. Yalom and Leszcz

(2005) reported that this method is widely accepted as an essential component of group counsellor education and that one half to two thirds of training providers include it. The professional standards for preparation in groupwork actually require group experience in the role of a client (Morran, 2005). Some of the benefits include skill development, learning to give and receive feedback, and providing opportunities to develop and practice empathy, self-disclosure, confrontation, and self-growth (Morran, 2005). Group counsellor educators experience first hand the joys and troubles of group life, and the power of a group to wound and heal. They “learn about the role of the leader by becoming aware of [their] own dependency and [their] own, often unrealistic, appraisal of the leader’s power and knowledge” (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 553). The experience may be more effective if attendance is voluntary, which is apparently the approach taken by about half of the group counsellor training programs (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 553).

However, experiential participation is not without problems because it blurs the fine line between learning and therapy. Numerous authors (Akos, 2004; Anderson & Price, 2001; Berger, 1996; Davenport, 2004; Furr & Barret, 2000; Kottler, 2004; Morran, 2005; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) have expressed concerns about the dual roles of group participant and emerging counsellor, invasion of privacy issues, and vulnerability due to the power differential between emerging group counsellors and faculty. Some of these problems can be avoided by making sure that group counsellor educators with an evaluative, supervisory, or administration role are not responsible for facilitating experiential components.

Morran (2005) maintained that experiential participation works because it provides a more affective experience in contrast to the cognitive development associated with didactic training, but “continued scrutiny and evaluation of experiential training is necessary to ensure effective pedagogical practices promote competent group workers” (p. 338). Research by Anderson and Price (2001) found that emerging group counsellors understood that participation in such group sessions is a vital part of their education and that some discomfort might be unavoidable. Anderson and Price recommended that group counsellor educators remain sensitive to emerging group counsellor fears and apprehension about participation, but that feelings of discomfort should not necessarily be construed negatively. In spite of these difficulties, Kottler (2004) was blunt and to the point:

How can you ask group members to open up, to share themselves in honest ways, to own and work on their issues, when you are not willing to do the same? Would it be easier for students in such an experience if a faculty member were not in the room? Certainly, but I am not so sure that easier is better. That is a lie; I am certain that easier is not better. (p. 52)

The issues with experiential participation identified in the group counsellor education literature have potential implications for facilitator education and especially for person-centred facilitator education. By definition, emerging facilitators in this approach must engage in deep personal exploration because of the emphasis on “being with” and “being in” the group (Hunter et al., 1999). As explained by Ringer (2002) the emphasis on maintaining a dynamic presence in a group is demanding and also blurs the line between therapy and facilitator education. This raises two issues for person-centred facilitator educators. First, the discussion above suggests that the nature of person-centred facilitator education processes should be explained to emerging facilitators before participation starts. Secondly, person-centred facilitator educators have an important responsibility to create a safe container in which the educational process can occur (Ringer, 2002). The fourth and final group counsellor education strategy, experiential leadership, will be discussed in the next section.

### ***Experiential leadership***

Experiential leadership can take the form of leading a group of peers or it may involve a supervised practicum placement with ‘real’ participants. Experiential leadership of peer groups provides a ‘hands on’ chance to practice group leadership and develop confidence. If this process is well managed by the supervising leader, the emerging counsellors leading the sessions can receive immediate feedback about performance from the group, and deal with real life situations yet feel relatively protected and safe. However, it does require the emerging counsellors to risk self-disclosure and tolerate their own (and others’) limitations, which may be a potential block for some (Berger, 1996).

Yalom (1995) argued that experience leading a group is not enough because “without ongoing supervision and evaluation, original errors may be reinforced by simple repetition. For this reason every course must include a supervisory experience” (p. 515). Supervision is not a simple process and the abundance of data available in the



supervisory process requires that both student and supervisor must be highly selective in their focus. The relationship between the supervisor and student is critical and Yalom and Leszcz (2005) recommended one hour of debriefing per session, preferably the following day, to review the emerging counsellor's group leadership. Although empirical evidence supporting this training method is sparse, Starling and Baker (2000) claimed the positive effects of participation in group supervision include: decreased confusion and anxiety during group practicum experiences; greater clarity around supervisees' goals; and increased confidence for the student group counsellor.

Emerging facilitators who plan to participate in some supervised group leadership will benefit more from the experience if they have mastered some of the basic facilitation skills and strategies common to technical facilitator education approaches. Raelin (2000) suggested that the advanced training of certain skills may help emerging facilitators to be more effective when they complete training and start to experiment with group facilitation back in their workplaces.

The four group counsellor education strategies described above do not always occur in isolation and a number of authors provide examples that combine several strategies. Some examples of these combined approaches are provided in the next section.

### *Some examples of combined strategies*

Hensley (2002) described the use of the two-way fishbowl method where some students participate in the group counselling experience and some students observe. The two-way fishbowl

provides the conditions necessary for students to view group process from several vantage points: class participant, leader, observation team member, and group member. Each role provides students with a different lens through which to view and then reflect upon the evolution of two working groups. (p. 284)

Cox, Banez, Hawley, and Monstade (2003) used a process called 'reflecting teams' which involves: a) trainees with the supervisor discussing a particular issue while others listen; b) reflecting team members sharing thoughts and questions about what they heard; c) trainees and supervisor respond to reflecting team's comments; d) group as a whole

processes the reflective team experience. Cox et al. explained that this approach showed “promise as an innovative and effective strategy for enhancing the experiential component in the training of group workers” (p. 90). They attribute the success of this approach to: the collaborative and supportive atmosphere it creates; the emphasis it places on listening first and then responding; the opportunity it provides for the expression of multiple perspectives; and the opportunity to observe one’s own process.

A comparative analysis of the four different approaches to group leader training and development conducted by Berger (1996) found that no approach is recommended specifically over others. However, based on anecdotal reports from colleagues, feedback from students, and his own experimentation, Berger suggested the following issues be considered when selecting educational strategies. The phase of the student’s professional education is important. Novices are more suited to didactic approaches first, and more advanced students are well suited to observation and experiential participation. Class size influences the choice of method because observation and experiential participation are more suited to small classes whereas didactic approaches can still function with larger classes. The existence of extremes amongst the student population will create the need for more structure. The preferred learning styles of students and the level of emotional intensity they can tolerate will influence methods chosen. Finally, the professional philosophy, mission, and values of the teachers and their employing organisations, will also influence the methods chosen.

The four approaches and methods are not entirely new to the facilitation literature. For example, when discussing the preparation of facilitators for work within organisations, Raelin (2000) explained trainers typically used a didactic component on group theories and intervention methods, practice sessions perhaps using videotaping, and learning teams to support novice facilitators as they experiment in their workplace settings. Other authors in the facilitation literature (Heron, 1999; Kirk & Broussine, 2000; Mezirow, 1990; Schön, 1988; Schwarz, 2002; Smyth, 1996) have also discussed the efficacy of one or more of these four teaching approaches explained in the previous section. However, the facilitation literature lacks critical debate and robust discussion about the respective strengths and weaknesses of these strategies. This study will describe the degree to which the facilitator educators in this study use these teaching strategies. For example, the

efficacy of observation as a learning strategy for emerging facilitators seems to be underrated in the facilitation literature.

Anderson and Wheeler (2005) identify the existence of a researcher-practitioner gap in the fields of group and organisational psychology and it seems to be also present in the facilitation field. They suggest that:

Closing the divide will require the integration of two distinct value systems. Academia, which emphasises rigor and scientific caution, does not necessarily support the emphasis on action and solution of practical problems, which at times can be overvalued by industry. (p. 547)

The International Association of Facilitators (Pierce et al., 2000) identified the task of building and maintaining professional knowledge as a core competency for facilitators. Empirical research should play a role in the development of this body of knowledge and an understanding of what constitutes good practice. Facilitation research, which is high in both relevance and academic rigour, can also play a role in closing the researcher-practitioner gap within the facilitation field. Yalom's and Leszcz's (2005) recommendations for the professional development of group psychotherapists may also be applicable for facilitators and facilitator educators. They encouraged practitioners to maintain an open, self critical, inquiring attitude towards research. They make their position clear: "if the group therapy field is to develop coherently, it must embrace responsible, well-executed, relevant, and credible research; otherwise, group therapy will follow its capricious, helter skelter course, and research will become a futile, effete exercise" (p. 563). All of these characteristics are consistent with the discursive consciousness encouraged by Giddens (1984).

In the final section of this chapter the theoretical interpretive framework for this study will be summarised and its efficacy to interpret the data collected in this study will be considered in the light of the literature review in the preceding sections.

### **Theoretical interpretive framework**

The literature reviewed in part one of this chapter allowed for an overview of the range of approaches to facilitator education to be provided. The strengths and weaknesses of these different approaches to facilitator education were discussed. In part two of this chapter the strategies used in the group counselling literature to train and develop group counsellors have been summarised. The issues associated with the use of didactic

instruction, observation, experiential participation, and experiential group leadership were discussed and their potential applications to the facilitator education process considered. Through the review of the literature in parts one and two of this chapter, an interpretive framework has been distilled. The model of the dimensions of facilitator education, shown in Figure 3, is a synthesis of the key concepts that represent the current wisdom in the literature pertaining to this study and forms an important part of the framework that will be used to interpret the findings reported in chapter 4.

The four approaches to facilitator education, based on the theoretical frameworks of Ling et al. (2002) and Giddens (1984), proved useful to describe and classify the different approaches to facilitator education in part one of this chapter. The ‘nested boxes’ model, shown in Figure 3, emerged as my preferred way of graphically portraying the relationships between the four different approaches to facilitator education, which are called dimensions in the framework. Each larger dimension implies an extension on the smaller dimension, which nests inside it. In this respect, while the model implies there is a progression in the depth and complexity of the facilitator education process, it allows for multiple entry points. For the purposes of this research the term dimension is understood to refer to “an aspect or facet of a situation, problem” as it is described in the Australian Oxford Dictionary (Moore, 2004).

For example, a person with knowledge, interest, and or experience in critical education (for example, Freire, 1973) or community development in developing countries (for example, Phnuyal, Archer, & Cottingham, 1997) may gravitate towards the critical facilitator education dimension. However, they may also have to ‘double back’ and engage with the smaller facilitator education dimensions in order to master certain competencies, gain specific knowledge, or develop certain attributes or qualities.

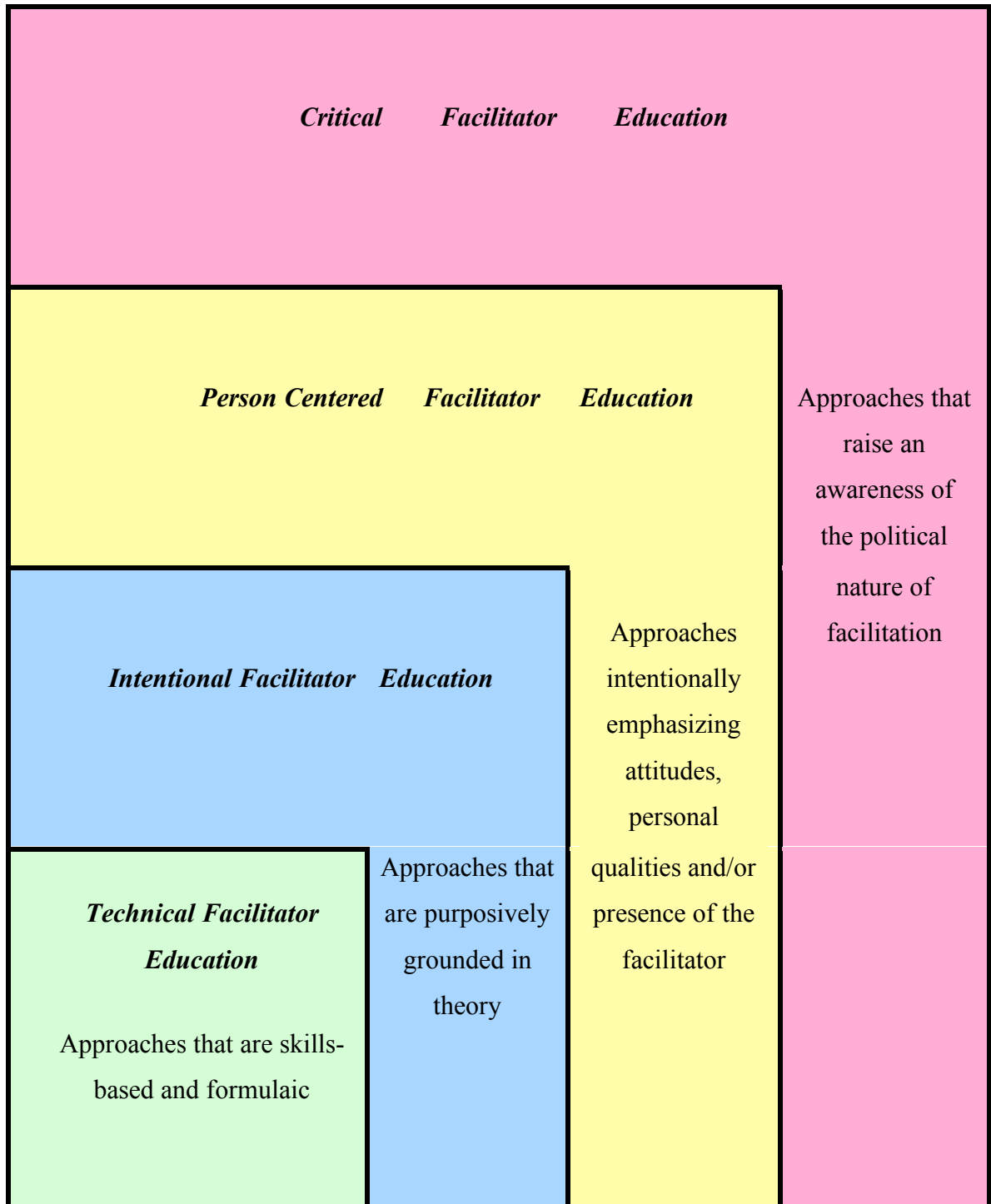


Figure 3. The dimensions of facilitator education

The theoretical framework reflects the way an emerging facilitator would typically develop an increasing depth of skill, knowledge and experience as they move from technical facilitator education to critical facilitator education. Literature on the nature of

expertise (Chi, Farr, & Glaser, 1988) has suggested that experts are often able to function with greater speed and effectiveness because they have mastered, to a level of *automaticity* (Flor & Dooley, 1998), skills or processes required to perform particular tasks. The same may be true for emerging facilitators and a degree of mastery in the smaller dimensions would likely assist the facilitator to function more effectively in the larger dimensions of facilitator education shown in the model. Systematic skills training is an important part of facilitator education and if provided early in the development of an emerging facilitator, it can help him/her to more effectively focus on the other facilitator education processes (Raelin, 2000; Smaby, Maddux, Tores-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999).

### ***Issues with the theoretical framework***

Whilst the theoretical interpretive framework depicted in Figure 3 is based on the distillation of the concepts found in the literature, not all of the facilitator education literature fits neatly into a single dimension of the model, and there were overlaps because some approaches to facilitator education described focus on more than one dimension. Also, categorising some of the literature was difficult because many authors do not provide explicit information about their stance on facilitator education. In such cases, my perception of the authors' implied assumptions, values, and theories about facilitator education were used to assist the classification process. This interpretation process is acknowledged as a potential source of error in the classification of the literature, but it was difficult to avoid given the absence of discursive consciousness in some author's work. Hence, it remains a limitation of the model.

Another issue to emerge from the literature review in part one of this chapter was the apparent tension regarding the possible interpretations of intentionality. As discussed earlier, some authors advocated a discursive consciousness and yet others have argued a place exists for practical consciousness, or tacit intentionality. At present there appears to be support for both positions and they may both contribute to an increased understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in facilitator education. However, there is a fine line between the extreme end of practical consciousness and unconsciousness (Giddens, 1984), which in some cases may just be theoretical laziness. This study will specifically address the degree to which the facilitator educators involved encourage their emerging facilitators to practice intentionally.

The use of the term ‘critical’ facilitator education in this study is potentially confusing, and clearly, critical thinking should not occur only within critical facilitator education approaches. Many authors, whose work was classified as intentional and person-centred facilitator education, also emphasised the importance of critical thinking. Ling et al. (2002) warned developing teachers to be avoid being “uncritically enculturated into existing teacher culture without also being exposed to the means by which they may reflectively and critically hold this culture up to scrutiny” (p. 5). This warning is also relevant to facilitator education. It is important to be clear that the term ‘critical’ in critical facilitator education is used because of its grounding in critical theory (Habermas, 1984, 1991). In this respect, critical facilitator education seeks to go beyond the examination of false beliefs and target those beliefs, theories, and practices which are repressive, partisan, or implicated in the preservation of an unjust status quo (Burbules & Berk, 1999). The degree to which facilitator educators emphasize an exploration of issues like rank and power will be a specific focus in this study.

There were two other difficulties experienced with the development of the theoretical interpretive framework in this study. First, only a small proportion of the facilitation literature is grounded in empirical research and while the profession may not be well suited to positivistic studies, naturalistic or interpretive methodologies have the potential to strengthen and deepen the understanding of facilitation theory and practice. Second, whilst there is ample discussion of the skills, theories and practice of facilitation there is less discussion in the literature about the processes and strategies that facilitators can use to develop their skills, understanding and experience. For this reason, this study will examine whether the four strategies used extensively in group counsellor education are also relevant to facilitator education.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have presented a review of the facilitation literature and identified four approaches to facilitator education: technical, intentional, person-centred, and critical facilitator education. A review of the group counsellor education literature was provided to highlight some of the strategies that may be used to help emerging facilitators develop their skills, knowledge, and competence. The strategies identified included didactic instruction, observation, experiential participation, and experiential group leadership. Finally, a theoretical framework, distilled from the literature, was presented and will be

used to interpret the findings of the study in chapter 4. In the next chapter I will provide a rationale for the research paradigm, methodology, data collection and analysis, ethical implications, and method of reporting chosen in this study.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter I will provide a rationale for the interpretivist research paradigm used in this study and a description of how this paradigm shaped the methodology chosen. The concurrent processes of data collection, reduction, and analysis used in this study will also be outlined followed by a description of the intended audience, study timeline and ethical issues. This chapter is presented in the past tense, but the design of the study was determined before the data collection process commenced. The past tense is used because it allows me to describe, and provide a rationale for, any deviations from the planned methods of data collection and analysis. Before proceeding, a brief restatement of the research problem and the study purpose will be provided.

#### **(Re)statement of the research problem**

The primary purpose in this study was to describe the theories and practices of facilitator educators with a view to providing greater clarity about the processes used to develop facilitators and the thinking behind the use of those processes, because this is lacking in the literature. The specific questions that were explored in the study are listed below.

- What are the primary outcomes that facilitator educators are trying to achieve with the emerging facilitators in their programs?
- Which elements or components of facilitator education programs do facilitator educators consider important to the achievement of these outcomes?
- What theoretical foundations inform the practices of facilitator educators?
- What importance do facilitator educators place on understanding the values and/or theoretical foundations that underpin their practice?
- What importance do facilitator educators place on helping their emerging facilitators to understand the values and/or theoretical foundations underpinning their practice?
- From the perspective of the emerging facilitators, what were the important elements of the facilitator education process that assisted with the development of their skills, knowledge and experience?

The review of the literature pertaining to facilitation, presented in the previous chapter, provided a framework for examining and interpreting the theories and practices of a number of facilitator educators in Australia and New Zealand. Two specific gaps, evident in the literature, were addressed in this study. Firstly, although some sections of the literature pertaining to facilitation do provide a theoretical grounding for the skills and strategies they recommended, the majority of authors provide few references to underpinning theory. In many cases it is not clear if this omission is intentional or whether the facilitator educators are operating at Giddens' (1984) levels of practical consciousness or unconsciousness. Consequently, the theoretical influences guiding the practice of the facilitator educator in this study, where they exist, were explored in detail.

Secondly, there appears to be a lack of clarity in the literature with regard to the way that emerging facilitators actually develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. In contrast, the group counsellor education literature is more explicit about the strategies that are used to develop group counsellors. In this study clarification was sought as to whether facilitator educators practice and demonstrate discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) concerning the means by which their emerging facilitators develop their skills, knowledge and experience as a result of participation in their programs. In the following sections of this chapter I will explain how the research paradigm, approach, methodology, and methods chosen were consonant with achieving the aims of this study.

### **Research paradigms**

Research is focused on understanding the world, yet it is also “informed by how we view the world, what we take understanding to be, and what we see as the purposes of understanding” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 3). ‘Good’ research is systematic, controlled, empirical and self-correcting and researchers also bring their own biographies to the research situation and their participants behave in particular ways in their presence. Furthermore, “highly reflexive researchers will be acutely aware of the ways in which their selectivity, perception, background, and inductive processes and paradigms shape the research” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 141).

One of the difficulties with the research methodology literature is the bewildering array of theoretical perspectives, and to make things even more confusing, terminology is often used inconsistently and/or contradictorily. Even in recently published research texts

(Burns, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003d; Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Silverman, 1997) it is common to see methodological terms, such as 'qualitative' and 'quantitative,' used to describe paradigms. In this research I agree with Cohen et al. (2000) that qualitative and quantitative methods can be used within different paradigms and it is important to recognize the difference between methodologies, methods, and paradigms (Cohen et al., 2000; Crotty, 1998). A paradigm "provides a way of looking at the world ... [and] it exerts influence on a field of study by providing the assumptions, the rules, the direction, and the criteria by which 'normal science' is carried out" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 7). However, paradigms are not discrete entities; they are theoretical constructs representing clusters of assumptions and broad orientations, and each paradigm encompasses a range of approaches (Candy, 1989).

All researchers are guided by highly abstract principles, which combine beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and which shape the way the researcher sees the world and acts in it. It is the combination of these ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises that constitute a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a).

Ontological assumptions concern the very nature or essence of reality and the social phenomena being investigated. At one end of the ontological continuum, *realists* believe that "objects can have an independent existence and are not dependent for it on the knower" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 6). *Idealists*, on the other hand, believe that "reality is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 11).

Epistemological assumptions concern the very basis of knowledge: its nature and forms; how it can be acquired and communicated to others; and whether it has to be personally experienced. Knowledge can be seen as hard, objective, tangible (*positivism*) or knowledge can be seen as personal, subjective and unique (*interpretivism*) (Cohen et al., 2000; Schwandt, 2001). Methodological assumptions range from *nomothetic*, which seek generalisable laws, to *idiographic*, which search for "understanding of the way the individual creates, modifies, and interprets the world in which he finds himself" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 7).

Within each paradigm the use of mixed methods makes perfectly good sense because “methods are not necessarily tied to any one particular paradigm” (Candy, 1989, p. 5). However, it is uncertain to what degree a researcher can blend different paradigms and “commensurability is only an issue when researchers want to ‘pick and choose’ among the axioms of positivist and interpretivist models, because the axioms are contradictory and mutually exclusive” (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 267). Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) stated that researchers cannot easily move between paradigms as they represent belief systems attached to their worldviews. They explained that researchers are situated in specific contexts and that they approach the world with a set of beliefs and ideas, which shape their research questions, and which in turn lead to particular forms of data collection and analysis. The researcher’s *weltanschauung*, or worldview, unavoidably shapes their research endeavours (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

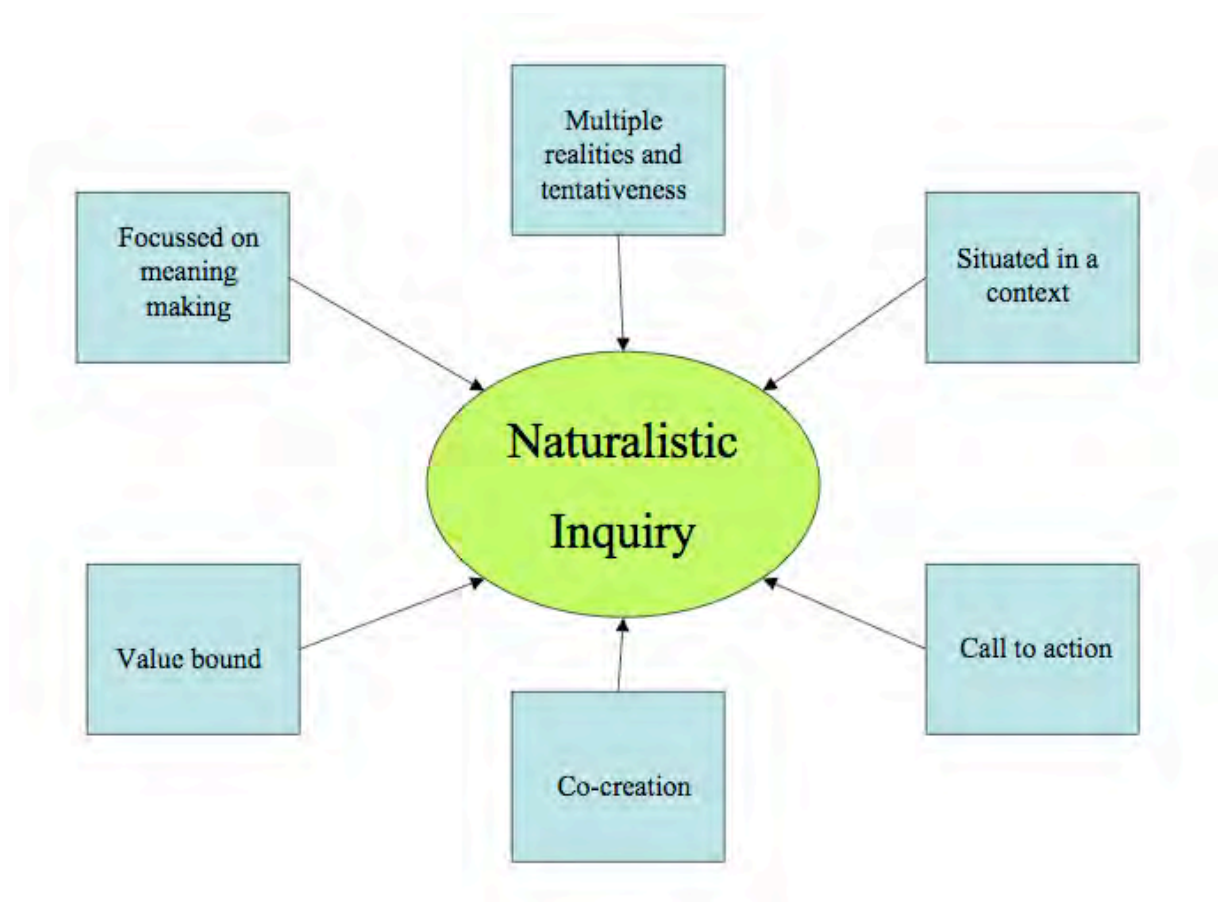
Cohen et al. (2000) were critical of sections of the research methodology literature that fail to appropriately recognise the importance of researchers identifying their research paradigm, because one’s research paradigm is the foundation upon which everything else is constructed. According to Mertens (1998), “a researcher’s theoretical orientation has implications for every decision made in the research process, including the choice of method” (pp. 3-4).

### ***The interpretive paradigm and this study***

The interpretive paradigm, and a naturalistic inquiry approach, were chosen as the most appropriate for this study and the reasons for these choices will now be provided. Inconsistencies in the way language is used in research texts make it difficult to succinctly articulate the paradigm on which this research study is founded. Many different terms are used, sometimes inappropriately, for example, ‘qualitative research,’ to describe the interpretive paradigm. There are also different approaches within the broader interpretive paradigm including: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, realism, hermeneutics, ethnography, ethnomethodology, and naturalistic inquiry (Cohen et al., 2000; Mertens, 1998). Naturalistic inquiry best describes the theoretical foundation of this study and the defining characteristics of the interpretive paradigm and naturalistic inquiry important to this study, shown in Figure 4, will now be discussed in detail.

Focused on meaning making

Within the interpretive paradigm knowledge is gained by direct experience through the physical senses, and cognitive reasoning is used to imbue those experiences with meaning. Interpretive research is traditionally concerned with finding out how people make sense of the things they do (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Ezzy (2002) explained, “the interpretive process at the heart of qualitative data analysis involves trying to understand the practices and meanings of research participants from their perspective” (p. xii). Schwandt (2003) used the term *empathic identification* to describe the process of grasping the subjective consciousness or intent of participants from the inside. This requires the researcher to “get inside the head of an actor to understand what he or she is up to in terms of motives, beliefs, desires, thoughts, and so on” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 296).



*Figure 4. The defining characteristics of naturalistic inquiry within the interpretivist paradigm as used in this study.*

A naturalistic inquiry approach was used in this study because the emphasis was on studying facilitator educators in their natural settings, and my intent was to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings the participants gave them.

Interpretivist research,

attempts to elaborate or develop a theory to provide a more useful understanding of the phenomenon. The focus on meanings makes qualitative research difficult to do well, because meanings are more 'slippery' than quantitative statistics. Meanings are easily disputed, more malleable, and manipulated. However, despite these difficulties, theories that focus on meanings provide rich rewards in explaining and understanding human action. (Ezzy, 2002, p. 5)

In this study, I sought to understand how facilitator educators made sense of the things they did in their facilitator education programs. Together, we developed an understanding of the theories that guided their practice as facilitator educators and then compared these ideas with the dimensions of facilitator education model derived from the literature.

#### Multiple realities and tentativeness

Research conducted within the interpretive paradigm does not assume there is a single objective reality, but rather that there are "multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" of which the researcher must be aware (Mertens, 1998, p. 11). Interpretive research leads to a "rich awareness of divergent realities rather than to a convergence on a single reality" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 12). The researcher is not compelled to press into coherence the diversity of views, a restraint that can prevent the unintentional eradication of minority views. The "singular voice of omniscience" can be avoided in interpretive research by including multiple voices within the research report (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 580).

Within the interpretive paradigm it is acknowledged that the theories researchers develop never perfectly capture the complex realities of participants' lives.

The researcher is never finished exploring, searching, examining and theorising. New depths, complexities, subtleties, and uncertainties are continually uncovered. . . . No interpretation of qualitative data is ever complete. Interpretations are always somewhat uncertain and open-ended. (Ezzy, 2002, pp. 23-24)

Theories that are developed are always provisional, uncertain, and “analysis is like a dance in which the interpretations of the observer and the observed are repeatedly interwoven until a sophisticated understanding is developed” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 25). This study addressed the lack of clarity in facilitator education theory and practice, giving voice to the way facilitator educators made sense of their practice. Despite the limitations of not being able to perfectly articulate meanings, the perspectives of the facilitator educators played an important role in the refinement of the dimensions of facilitator education model. This, in turn, has contributed to greater clarity in facilitator education theories and practices.

#### Situated in a context

From an interpretive paradigm perspective the real world is too complex to be reduced to a set of observable laws, and developing understanding of the real workings behind reality is valued more than generalisability (Gray, 2004). Ezzy (2002) argued that truth is always historically, culturally and socially created and interpretive research does not attempt to arrive at absolute laws that apply to all people. According to Gray (2004), “phenomena can only be understood within their environment or setting; they cannot be isolated or held constant while others are manipulated” (p. 23). Hence, interpretivist researchers “go to the people; they do not extricate people from their everyday worlds” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 9). Although theories generated within interpretive research are always a product of particular historical and cultural situations it is still useful to describe and analyse behaviour within relevant cultural and historical periods as these add a context to better equip the reader to understand the phenomena.

Also, meanings are not static, they are constantly changing, and with each social situation there will be different nuances depending on contexts. The importance of contexts to the understanding of meaning is reinforced by Schwandt (2003).

In order to understand the part (the specific sentence, utterance, or act) the inquirer must grasp the whole (the complex of intentions, beliefs, and desires or the text, institutional context, practice, form of life, language game, and so on), and vice versa. (p. 299)

The findings of this study were not intended to be generalisable, but rather they will contribute to the development of an understanding of facilitator education in two particular contexts: the fields of experiential education and business management.

### Value bound

Naturalistic inquiry in the interpretive paradigm is bound by the values and perspectives of the researcher. Consequently, and it is not possible, or desirable, for me to separate my life from my research. Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 10) suggest that good interpretivist researchers develop an “exquisite sensitivity to personal biography” because they value their unique perspectives as potential sources of understanding rather than as something to be purged.

Rigorously conducted qualitative research does not pretend to be uninfluenced by preexisting understandings, theories and assumptions. Rather, it actively engages these preexisting understandings, theories and assumptions allowing them to be transformed and changed so that new theory can be developed. (Ezzy, 2002, p. xiii)

Hence, interpretive researchers do not pursue a facade of objectivity, but they do practice reflexivity, which means that they critically inspect the whole research process including the careful examination and consideration of their own values, biases, and theoretical dispositions and monitor their thoughts and actions accordingly (Schwandt, 2001). Gergen and Gergen (2003) recommended that researchers be clear and explicit about their

historical or geographical situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and “undoings” in the process of the research endeavour, the ways in which their choices of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and/or the ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view. (p. 579)

Lincoln and Guba (2003) encourage interpretivists to practice self interrogation regarding the ways in which our research efforts are shaped and staged around the “binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives” (p. 283). As a co-creator of the research findings, the interpretations in this study have been influenced by my values and my personal biography.

### Co-creation

One aspect of the interpretive paradigm most appropriate to this study is the challenge for the researcher and the participants to work together to explore meanings and develop understandings. In naturalistic inquiry participants and researchers



are bound together by a complex web of unique interrelationships that results in the mutual simultaneous shaping . . . [and] this complex web of interrelationships provides a context that at one time both restricts and extends the applicability of the research. (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 16)

The choice to use the term *participants* in this study, rather than respondents or subjects, is deliberate because it removes any suggestion of a hierarchical, unilateral, or colonialising relationship with the researcher. The issue of control is important in this study and participants were encouraged to take an active role in the research process by nominating questions of interest, discussing emergent theories, participating in member checking, and sharing the findings. Lincoln and Guba (2003) explain that entrusting the participants with more control “is a means of fostering emancipation, democracy, and community empowerment, and of redressing power imbalances such that those who were previously marginalized now achieve voice or ‘human flourishing’” (pp. 268-69). This study constitutes an attempt to involve participants in developing a project of mutual interest, blurring the line between the researcher and subject, and sharing control over representation (Gergen & Gergen, 2003).

The interpretive paradigm allowed me to address concerns about *voice* (Lincoln & Guba, 2003), and in this study the facilitator educators were not only involved in the analysis of data but also in the presentation of research findings. The interpretations presented in this study are the product of a partnership between the facilitator educators and myself. The facilitator educators contributed to the findings of this study by nominating questions of interest, discussing emergent themes, and sharing the emerging findings with others at conferences. For example, at the 2005 Australasian Facilitators’ Network annual conference in Perth, two of the facilitator educators in this study agreed to collaborate in the presentation of some of the preliminary findings of this study.

### Call to action

Some researchers from the positivist and post positivist paradigms view action as a form of contamination of research results. However, for interpretivists, contributing to action is a meaningful and important outcome of the inquiry process (Lincoln & Guba, 2003).

This shift towards connecting research, policy analysis, evaluation, and/or social deconstruction . . . with action has come to characterise much new-paradigm inquiry work, both at the theoretical and at the practice and praxis-oriented levels. (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 268)

Although some researchers may consider action the domain of communities other than researchers and their participants, Lincoln and Guba (2003) claim the movement from understanding and interpretation towards social action as one of the most conceptually interesting shifts to occur in research. The findings of this study will hopefully encourage both the facilitator educators and readers to review and modify, where appropriate, their own practice.

The interpretivist research paradigm as used in this study, and its relationship with other paradigms, is discussed in the following section.

### ***Comparing and contrasting with other paradigms***

#### **Positivist and interpretive paradigms**

The experimental sciences are often portrayed as the crowning achievements of Western civilization, and it is often assumed that 'truth' can transcend the influence of opinion and personal bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). According to Denzin and Lincoln, research from the interpretivist paradigm is often considered an assault on this tradition of value free, objectivist research which presumes a stable, unchanging reality that can be studied using empirical methods.

Erlandson et al. (1993) provided a succinct summary of the differences between what they call the prevailing (positivist) paradigm and the naturalistic approach. The positivistic paradigm holds that there is a single reality that is ascertainable through the five senses, which is subject to universal laws of science, and is manipulable through logical processes of the mind. Erlandson et al. (1993) contrasted this with the naturalistic paradigm which assumes there are multiple realities, affirms the mutual influence that researcher and respondents have on each other, and maintains that relevance cannot be sacrificed for the sake of rigour. Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) concurred and suggested that, by definition, qualitative research within an interpretive paradigm places emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not suited to being measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency using experimental examination. The critical paradigm offers some central perspectives on both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms and they will now be discussed.

### The critical and interpretive paradigms

Unlike the positivists, critical theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas (1984; 1991) and his predecessors from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, did not agree that the foundation of truth and knowledge lay in some external reality. They located “the foundations of truth in specific historical, economic, racial, and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalisation” (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, pp. 272-73). However, their criticisms also extended to the interpretivist approaches. No matter how skilfully and systematically an interpretivist researcher describes the perspective of the participant, some advocates of critical theory (for example, Habermas, 1984, 1991) would argue that such interpretations may not account for the way the external features of social reality influence participants, perhaps unknowingly.

Researchers within the critical paradigm seek to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality, to uncover interests at work and interrogate those interests, to be transformative, and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society (Cohen et al., 2000). Critical researchers aim to be intensely practical and they aspire “to bring about a more just, egalitarian society in which individual and collective freedoms are practised, and to eradicate the exercise and effects of illegitimate power” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 28). Thirty years ago, it was common for positivists to argue that rigorous methods of research were “politically or valuationally neutral” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 593). However, although most researchers now concede that they can no longer claim neutrality and ideological or political innocence, critical researchers go a step further. Their intention is to do more than just understand society, they want to change it. They aim to contribute to a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members (Cohen et al., 2000).

It is not just the positivist paradigm that has been under fire from the critical paradigm researchers and Gergen and Gergen (2003) suggested that if research “is politics by another means, then we should pursue the inquiry that most effectively achieves our ends. . . . It is this realisation of the political potentials of methodology that now leads to significant tension within the qualitative sphere” (p. 594). Subsequently, there are numerous examples of interpretivist researchers adopting a transformative or emancipatory agenda and many recent texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d; Ezzy, 2002; Hertz, 1997; Kvale, 1996) have blurred the lines of distinction between the

interpretive and critical paradigms. Schwandt (2003) observed there are also interpretive researchers who are “committed to the task of interpretation for purposes of criticising and dismantling unjust and undemocratic educational and social practices and transforming them” (pp. 314-15).

Critical theory itself is not beyond criticism and Cohen et al. (2000) argued that the link between ideology critique and emancipation is not clear and ideology critique has not been shown to be a pre-requisite. Critical theorists also need to become more constructive and generate a positive agenda even if their ability to address power issues is restricted because of limitations in their locus of control (Cohen et al., 2000).

#### Criticisms of the interpretive paradigm

Researchers from different paradigms provide the most acerbic criticism of interpretivist research. The positivists and post-positivists are likely to be critical of: the abandonment of scientific procedures of verification, the pervading influence of researcher bias, the impact of the research and researcher on the context, how the power imbalance of the researcher shapes behaviours and events, and the unfaltering faith in the wisdom of participants (Cohen et al., 2000). Proponents of the critical paradigm may also hold that interpretivist researchers perpetuate the status quo by failing to interrogate imbalances of power and work towards a more egalitarian society (Cohen et al., 2000).

Lincoln and Guba (2003) suggested that interpretive research is entering an age of greater spirituality, reflecting ecological values and respecting non-Western perspectives. Lincoln and Guba also look to increasing reflexivity regarding how our inquiries are shaped by our own historical and gendered locations. Gergen and Gergen (2003) encourage researchers to consider ‘rights of representation’ by considering whether they empower the participants in their research or whether participants are used for personal or institutional gain.

If we first abandon the long-standing scopic metaphor of *re/search* and replace it with the relational metaphor of *re/present*, then those formally serving as the subjects of the research and readers of the research outcomes become relational participants. And if we abandon the traditional goal of research as the accumulation of products - static or frozen findings - and replace it with the generation of communicative *process*, then a chief aim of research becomes that of establishing productive forms of relationship. (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 598)

### **Methods of data collection**

Researchers operating within the interpretive paradigm utilise a wide range of interconnected, interpretive practices in order to develop a better understanding of the issues being explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). Cohen et al. (2000) described interpretivists as *methodological omnivores* because of their readiness to use the method that best fits the purpose. This typically includes some combination of field notes, participant observation, journal notes, interviews, diaries, life histories, artefacts, documents, video recordings, and audio recordings. In this section the details of the methods of data collection used in this study will be outlined in two parts. First, the details of the interviews and participant observation conducted with the facilitator educators will be presented, followed by details of the qualitative surveys conducted with the graduates of their programs. These three primary methods of data collection were chosen for this study because of their compatibility with the characteristics of the naturalistic inquiry and the interpretivist paradigm, shown in Figure 4, and because they provided the opportunity to collect the kind of data that would best answer the research questions identified for the study. The methods allowed for strong rapport to be built between myself and the facilitator educators, which helped me to better understand the rationales underpinning their theory and practice.

#### ***The interviews and participant observation with facilitator educators***

In a naturalistic study, such as this one, “interviews and observations build understanding in an interactive way . . . [and] the researcher cannot treat these two sources of data as independent of each other” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 99). The interviews guide observations and the observations suggest probes for follow-up interviews. This potentially enriches both data collection processes and provides a basis for analysis that would not be possible with only one source. The characteristics and implications of using interviews within an interpretivist paradigm will now be considered.

#### **Interviews**

Kvale (1996) presented two alternate positions on in-depth interviewing, the mining metaphor and the traveller metaphor. With the miner metaphor, knowledge is a buried metal waiting to be uncovered, uncontaminated by the miner. The image of the miner “casts the interview as a search-and-discovery mission, with the interviewer intent on detecting what is already there inside variably co-operative respondents” (Holstein &

Gubrium, 1997, p. 116). The interviewer's goal is to create an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication and procedures must be followed to ensure interviewer neutrality so that the unadulterated facts and details can be obtained.

The traveller metaphor, which was more appropriate to this study sees the researcher on a journey that may lead to new knowledge, or new ways of self-understanding. The meaning of the stories discovered can emerge for the researcher or the participant. The traveller perspective acknowledges the participants as active makers of meaning and they constructively add to, take away from, and transform the facts and details. The interviewer's challenge is to activate, stimulate, and cultivate the participants' interpretive capabilities. The objective is to "provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 23).

#### Semi-structured, in-depth interviews

The particular style of interviewing used in this study was semi-structured, in-depth interviewing. Such interviews were well suited to this study because they focus on the everyday life world of the participant, try to understand the meaning of what is said and how it is said, focus on specifics not general opinion, focus on certain themes but do not use structured or standardized questions, and clarify and describe ambiguities, and they produce new insights, awareness, and change for participants (Kvale, 1996). A well conducted interview "is a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people's views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours" (Gray, 2004, p. 213). It also helps people to make explicit things that had previously been implicit by encouraging participants to articulate tacit perceptions, feelings, and understandings (Arskey & Knight, 1999). This is especially important given the fact that much of the facilitation literature is not explicit about the way that facilitators can develop their skills, experience, and knowledge.

In my initial interviews with facilitator educators I was guided by the set of questions shown in Table 2, which were developed to elicit responses that would address the research questions identified in the study. The order of questions sometimes changed and additional, unanticipated questions were sometimes added. Hence, my semi-structured

interviews were a mixture of conversation and embedded questions, but as recommended by Erlandson et al. (1993), I waited for the most appropriate time to ask the questions, allowing the questions to naturally emerge over the course of an interview. More interviews with the facilitator educators were conducted as required and in response to data collected in the participant observation phase of the study. The emerging issues in the programs being observed determined the content and focus of these interviews. As recommended by Erlandson et al. (1993), the interview plan for the preliminary interviews was memorised as well as written on paper so that I could take advantage of the participant's spontaneity.

*Table 2.*

*Preliminary interview questions*

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1. Background questions
    - a. How did you get involved in the area of facilitator education?
    - b. What attracted you to this kind of work?
    - c. Where did you learn about facilitation yourself?
  2. Exploratory questions
    - a. How would you summarise your approach to facilitator education?
    - b. What are the aims of your program?
    - c. What are the critical aspects of your program that make it successful?
    - d. What aspects of your program do participants find challenging?
- 

Some of the primary advantages of semi-structured interviews identified by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003) were true for this study. Semi-structured interviews combined structure with flexibility and covered required topics but in an order that suits the participant. They also allowed responses to be fully probed and explored whilst being interactive in nature. They allowed new knowledge or thoughts to be created and provided opportunities for me to “explore fully all factors that underpin participant answers: reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs” (p. 141).

### Interviews as negotiated texts

In recent times the term *feminist* interviewing has been used to describe “attempts to be more reflexive and interactive, aiming to take a non-hierarchical approach which avoids objectifying the participant” (Legard et al., 2003, p. 140). In this approach the roles of researcher and participant are defined less starkly and reciprocity is emphasised. In this study it was acknowledged that “interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 62). In this respect, the findings reported in the next chapter are as much a product of the social dynamic as they are of participant responses. Holstein and Gubrium (1997) also challenged the traditional view of the interview as a pipeline or neutral conduit for transmitting knowledge. I viewed the research interview as a social encounter in which knowledge was constructed and I acknowledge that I was “deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents” and my participants and I were “necessarily and ineluctably active” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 114) in the process.

Ellis et al. (1997) used the term *interactive interviewing* to describe a particular form of semi-structured interviewing where in “the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories in the context of a developing relationship . . . the distinction between ‘researcher’ and ‘subject’ gets blurred” (p. 121). This level of researcher involvement would be questioned by positivist researchers, but Ellis et al. maintained that it not only helps respondents feel more comfortable sharing information, it also helps to close the hierarchical gap between researchers and participants which promotes dialogue and removes the feeling of interrogation. Behar (1996) supported this view that the interviewer, writer, and participant are not distinct entities, and she maintained they are intertwined in a deeply problematic way. In this study there was a definite attempt to work with the facilitator educators to describe their practice and develop a robust understanding of their practice and the theoretical foundations underpinning that practice. My professional role as a facilitator educator certainly helped me to engage with them and develop a high level of rapport by making astute observations, asking intelligent questions, and helping them to develop higher levels of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) about their practice.



Fontana and Frey (2003) lamented the lack of reflexivity about the interpretive process and they are critical of common platitudes “that the data speak for themselves, that the researcher is neutral, unbiased, and ‘invisible’” (p. 87). This study reflects their view that “interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place” (p. 91). Fontana and Frey call for more participatory, democratic processes, which refrain from the common practice of researchers exploiting participants for the purposes of self promotion. In this study there was a motivation to deliver on the promise that there was ‘something in it’ for the participants beyond the standard research discourse of ‘making a contribution to the field.’

### Interviewing effectively

The interviewing protocols used in this study conformed to the characteristics of higher quality interviews identified by Kvale (1996). Typically, such interviews generate more spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from participants. They involve shorter questions and longer answers and provide opportunities for follow up by the interviewer to clarify the meaning of answers. The majority of the interpretation is also done in the interview so that the participant verifies answers straight away. My experience and training as a facilitator allowed me to cope with the demands of in-depth interviewing which Legard et al. (2003) identified as: the ability to listen, digest and comprehend responses from participants; a clear and logical mind; and a good memory. Another significant challenge for effective interviewing is the requirement to demonstrate respect for participants as individuals and the ability to establish good rapport, because these qualities help to put participants at ease and create a climate of trust. I was also careful to practice humility, which Legard et al. (2003) defined as “the ability to be recipients of the participant’s wisdom without needing to compete by demonstrating their own” ( p. 143).

Hermanns (2004) identified three dilemmas novice interviewers face: the dilemma of *vagueness* because guidelines and recommendations for interviewing practice are vague yet much is expected from them; the *fairness* dilemma because the interviewer wants to get as much information from participants as he/she can but yet also treat them respectfully; and the dilemma of *self preservation* because he/she must refrain from appearing as wise and omniscient as they perhaps believe themselves to be. Some

common interviewing errors include the tendency to dominate discussion through suggestive questions, using evaluative statements or comments, and inflexibility stemming from fear and uncertainty (Hopf, 2004). Being mindful of these issues was critical in the preliminary interviews used to negotiate the facilitator educator's involvement in the study, and the importance of the quality of the relationships I established with the participants cannot be understated. In the early stages of my research I encountered scepticism from a number of my participants about the negative impacts my presence as a researcher may have on their facilitator education programs. If I had not been able to demonstrate a genuine respectfulness and humility, I suspect they would not have agreed to participate. In these preliminary interviews it is probably true that I was actually being interviewed myself, and the facilitator educators' decisions to participate in my study hinged on the outcome of those early discussions. The details of the observation method of collecting data completed with the facilitator educators will now be discussed.

### ***Observation***

Observation has been described as the base of all research methods in the social and behavioural sciences (Angrosino & Mayes de Pérez, 2003) and it involves "the systematic observation, recording, description, analysis, and interpretation of people's behaviour" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2000, p. 186). Observation in a research setting is commonly associated with ethnographic methodologies, and has its origins in British anthropology and the Chicago School of Sociology (Gray, 2004; Lüders, 2004). In this study, observation was important because it allowed me to "generate data through observing and listening to people in their natural setting, and to discover their social meanings and interpretations of their own activities" (Gray, 2004, p. 241).

### **Characteristics of observation**

Observation as a method, according to Schwandt (2001), allows the researcher to see things from the perspective of the participant with an appropriate level of detail and attention to the social and historical context. He explained, "although some general theoretical framework initially shapes the making and interpretation of observations . . . efforts are made by the observer to avoid premature imposition of theoretical notions on participants' perspectives" (p. 179). Observation allowed me to discover the "here-and-now interworkings of the environment via the use of the five human senses" (Erlandson

et al., 1993, p. 94), which was important for discerning the motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, and unconscious behaviours of the facilitator educators.

### Observational roles

Observational roles are reported to vary along a continuum from *complete participant*, *participant observer*, *observer participant*, to *complete observer* (Patton, 1980). In this study, I had initially planned to operate primarily as an observer participant, but this role was not acceptable to any of the facilitator educators in this study. Due to the experiential nature of the facilitation programs observed in this study the role of observer participant was not considered appropriate by the facilitator educators because it would have differentiated my role from the other course participants and been a potential source of distraction. The participant observer role, which the facilitator educators were happy for me to assume, allowed me to discreetly record field notes without interfering with the group process. However, fulfilling the dual roles of participant and observer was problematic. There were times when my participation role compromised my ability to fully observe and on more than one occasion some of the other course participants expressed disappointment that my role as an observer compromised my ability to fully participate. Hence, I concur with Patton (1980) who explained “the challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the program as an insider while describing the program for outsiders” (p. 128).

The observations conducted in this study provided opportunities to see the way the facilitator educators conducted their training. In particular, they allowed me to see the facilitator educators’ theory in practice, and specifically any incongruencies between espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Erlandson et al. (1993) explained that capturing the essence of a participant’s life world in a naturalistic study requires observations to be conducted over a sufficient period of time. The primary foci of my observations were the strategies used by the facilitator educators to assist the emerging facilitators to develop their skills, knowledge and competence. Secondary foci included the sequencing of the program, key elements of the facilitator education process, references to theoretical foundations, and potential omissions from the facilitator education process.

### The use of field notes

Field notes are the “backbone of collecting and analysing field data” (Bailey, 1996, p. 80) and they are an essential component of good research observation. Bailey outlined a number of criteria for taking good field notes and three distinct kinds of field notes were used in this study. First, I used *mental notes* in my head to remind me to revisit certain thoughts. Second, *jotted notes* were used as cues for mental notes or key phrases, quotes or other easily forgotten details. Thirdly, *full field notes* included direct quotes, a chronological log, thoughts previously forgotten, analytical ideas and inferences, impressions and personal feelings, and things to think about and do. In this study, I became proficient at each of these elements, particularly recording direct quotes from the facilitator educators. I also adopted the practice of completing only one side of each page of my field notebooks, leaving the other page free for annotations at a later stage.

Wolfinger (2002) suggested that the research methodology literature has paid scant attention to the process of recording field notes and a stronger emphasis on pragmatics was warranted. One notable exception is the work of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) who explained there are two strategies that researchers can use when writing field notes: the *salience hierarchy* or *comprehensive note-taking*. This study utilised the salience hierarchy strategy because it allowed me to initially focus my observation and field notes on the items considered most interesting or telling, given my knowledge of the literature and data previously collected through interviews and other observations.

On the issue of knowing which observations to annotate, Wolfinger (2002) suggested that tacit knowledge is perhaps the most useful guide and he maintained that field notes inevitably reflect the researcher’s background knowledge. Although this approach is congruent with the researcher-as-instrument approach typical of naturalistic research, the reliance on tacit knowledge to guide observation is contentious. However,

Most social scientists have long recognised the possibility of the observers affecting what he or she observes, but careful researchers are nonetheless supposed to adhere to rigorous standards of objective reporting designed to overcome that potential bias. (Angrosino & Mayes de Pérez, 2003, p. 108)

Moreover, it is now widely acknowledged within the interpretive tradition that researchers do not operate at a distance from their subjects and the relationship between

researchers and their participants is often described as a dialogue (Angrosino & Mayes de Pérez, 2003). Denzin (1997) encouraged researchers using observation to be aware of how race, gender and ethnicity might influence their inquiry. However, rather than seeking to minimise the effects, he recommended researchers creatively integrate these factors into their observation and written representation.

In this study I was aware that my gender and my position as a lecturer in a university had the potential to affect my relationship with the facilitator educators or the other emerging facilitators, my fellow participants in the programs. The danger was that some of these participants would prejudge me according to preconceived notions of other males or university lecturers. The only way to address the potential concerns these issues could create was to make sure that my behaviour was congruent with the characteristics of naturalistic enquiry shown in Figure 4. For example, this meant valuing the perspective of the participants, acknowledging the existence of perspectives other than my own, seeking to describe rather than evaluate or judge, and demonstrating respect for the opinions of others. Building the necessary levels of trust and rapport with the facilitator educators and emerging facilitators took varying amounts of time. For example, one facilitator educator required three preliminary meetings or interviews before he/she was happy to allow me to participate in his/her program.

#### Sampling strategies and issues

Cohen et al. (2000) summarised the wide range of sampling strategies that interpretive researchers can use to identify suitable participants as convenience sampling, critical case sampling, norm-extreme sampling, typical case sampling, unique case sampling, reputational-case sampling, and snowball. They encouraged researchers to carefully consider whose accounts are more important than others, who is competent to act as an informant, how knowledgeable informants are, and who is reliable. Sampling conducted on theoretical grounds results in a more sophisticated understanding of the research issue and the two most common strategies, convenience samples and snowball samples, are possibly the least desirable (Ezzy, 2002). Ideally, sampling in interpretivist research is purposeful, which means there is a “clear criterion or rationale for the selection of participants, or places to observe, or events, that relates to the research questions” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 74). Therefore, unlike the positivist researcher, I targeted a specific group, with the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population.

In this study, a form of *reputational-case sampling* (Cohen et al., 2000) was used and I specifically sought involvement from facilitator educators involved with two distinct types of training programs: longer programs (20+ days of contact) and shorter programs (1-3 days of contact). One of the variables of interest in this study was the length of the program and in particular the relationship between program length and the emphasis on the different dimensions of facilitator education. To this end, facilitator educators involved in either shorter (1-3 days) programs or longer (20+ days) programs were targeted to participate to explore the influence of program length.

The facilitator educators convening programs in Australia in 2005 were approached based on their profile in the field as a result of: their contribution to the literature (books and/or journals); their delivery of reputable facilitation training courses; and/or their involvement in facilitation conferences, meetings, and list-serves. For convenience, the sample was limited to courses in Australia and New Zealand. Of the five organisations involved in the study, three were based in Australia, one in New Zealand, and one in the USA.

Although representativeness of the sample used in this study is not a primary concern in interpretivist research, the majority of facilitator education courses available in Australia and New Zealand in 2005/2006 were involved in this study. Two of the three known facilitator educator organisations providing longer facilitation programs in Australia and New Zealand participated. Although it is difficult to determine the exact number of shorter facilitation courses offered in 2005/2006 in Australia and New Zealand, the three shorter facilitation training courses, and their respective facilitator educators, used in this study were the only ones publicised through the Australasian Facilitators' Network or readily available through online searches.

This section has discussed the methods of data collection used with the facilitator educators and described how these methods were suitable given the research questions and paradigm adopted in this study. The next section will describe and discuss the use of qualitative surveys to collect data from the graduates of the facilitator educators' programs.

### *Qualitative surveys*

To provide another perspective on the facilitator education process, and a source of triangulation, a sample of the graduates of the facilitator educators' programs was invited to complete a survey. The survey involved three open-ended questions. The first two questions sought to establish the processes within the training program that the graduates found most helpful to their development as a facilitator. The third question asked the graduates if they had any suggestions on how the program could have been run differently to more effectively help them in their development as a facilitator. The questions used were piloted with a small group of emerging facilitators in one of the courses I observed and the input from this group led to refinements, which clarified the intent of the questions.

Of the five organisations involved in this study, four were able to distribute surveys to a sample of their course graduates. The fifth organisation was not in a position to provide assistance with the distribution of the surveys at the time. Given privacy legislation, and the sensitive nature of participants' contact details to outsiders, two of the four organisations elected to distribute the surveys to a sample of their graduates on my behalf. The other two organisations gave me permission to contact a sample of their course graduates and they provided me with the contact details of their course participants. Table 3 indicates the approximate number of graduates, the sample size, and the response rate for each organisation. The one page survey and accompanying cover letter were sent to participants with a reply-paid envelope. These documents were approved for use by the La Trobe University Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee and copies are provided in Appendix B. One of the organisations, based in New Zealand, agreed to use an online survey to facilitate the completion and return of the survey. This was the easiest way to navigate around the challenge of organising reply-paid envelopes from another country. With this organization, all of their graduates were emailed an invitation to participate in the study and they were provided with a website address (URL) where they could enter their responses to the same survey questions online.

Table 3.

Graduate survey details

Organisation	Facilitator Educators	Approximate number of graduates	Surveys distributed	Responses	Response Rate %
A	Meg & Julian	100*	32	12	37.5
B	Rose & Bruce	556*	556#	80	14.4
C	Max	55^	25	5	25
D	Sean	80^	40	7	17.5
			<b>Total:</b>	104	
				<b>Average:</b>	23.6

\* These total numbers included graduates of their courses over a number of years.

# These graduates were contacted by email and invited to participate in the online survey

^ This number represents the graduates of a single course, or series of courses, provided in 2005

### Sampling strategies and issues

A random sampling strategy was utilised for the survey component of the facilitation course except for organization B, which elected to invite all of their graduates to participate using their email list. For the other organisations, because the number of graduates was quite low, the sample sizes varied between 32-50%. The exact sample size used for each organization was in part the result of negotiations with the facilitator educators. Organisation A had a lower sample size (32%) because they were not prepared to disclose the contact details of their graduates and their willingness to send out the surveys on my behalf was estimated to be higher if the sample size was kept small. This was not an issue with organisations C and D who provided me with the list of course graduates. In these cases, a random selection of up to 50% of the graduates on the contact list was sent a copy of the survey.

The next section of this chapter will discuss the issues of objectivity, reliability and validity and their relevance to this study.



### ***Interpretivist perspectives on objectivity, reliability and validity***

Interpretivist researchers accept that the concept of objectivity is flawed. Lincoln and Guba (2003) state strongly that “objectivity is a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imaginations of those who believe that knowing can be separate from the knower” (p. 279). Ezzy (2002) explained that for the interpretivist, claims of objectivity “pretend that our preconceptions and biases are not influencing our research when they actually are an unavoidable influence on research practices” (p. 53). In terms of reliability, “opinion is divided among qualitative researchers regarding whether this criterion has any meaning whatsoever in judging the accuracy of fieldwork accounts” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 226). There is a growing sense that dependability, demonstrated through careful documentation of procedures of data collection and analysis, is a better measure than reliability because of the way the researcher and participant co-create meanings.

Validity is a more troublesome construct, which is less easily dismissed by interpretivist researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2003), and for many, the “critiques of validity resonate with other long standing misgivings about nomothetic methodologies for their inability to reflect the complexities of human experience and action” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 577). The main issues that many interpretivists have with validity as a construct include: rejection of the realist notion that a direct, unmediated knowledge of the world is even possible; the belief that knowledge is a construction and not something ‘out there;’ and the association between validity and objectivism (Schwandt, 2001). The response to these issues varies and some authors (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003) have redefined or reconceived validity, whilst others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a; Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 2003) have emphasised alternate constructs such as trustworthiness, dependability, credibility, and authenticity.

In this study the focus was on “how meaning is constructed, the circumstances of construction, and the meaningful linkages that are made” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 117) and subsequently, the process by which knowledge has been created is as important as the integrity of the content. Hence, accurate replication was not the benchmark of reliability because the knowledge created was tied to the particular circumstances of production. Likewise, “the validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to

meanings held within the respondent, but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensive” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 117).

The semi-structured interviews used in this study contributed to validity by: building trustworthiness through rapport; seeking clarity, examples, and/or expansion when needed; allowing sufficient length for deeper responses; and using questions that are drawn from the literature and which have been piloted (Arskey & Knight, 1999). Other strategies used to improve the trustworthiness of the semi-structured interviews included the demonstration of what Gray (2004) called *consistency* and *accuracy*. Gray defines consistency as “showing how the research has been conducted and the plausibility of the researcher’s actions and analysis” and accuracy as “showing that the data is a fair representation of what informants have actually said” (p. 221). Gray also espoused the value of *neutrality*, but because this study has adopted a postmodern perspective of interviews as negotiated texts, neutrality was not considered to be an accurate or honest depiction of the interview process used.

To ensure that the findings of this study were sufficiently authentic, I have attempted to demonstrate rigour in both the methods used and the interpretation of the findings. On the issue of validity in the interpretivist paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (2003) presented a list of *authenticity criteria* which they claim are hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, or valid interpretive inquiry. Their first criterion, *fairness*, ensured that all stakeholders’ views, perspective, claims, concerns, and voices are apparent in the text. This study used member checks with the facilitator educators for all transcribed interviews and field notes summaries to enhance accuracy and fairness. The member checking process usually occurred through the use of emails and the discussion that occurred in these email communications became another source of data to be analysed. The second criterion of *ontological and educative authenticity* refers to a raised level of awareness by individual research participants and by others who surround them or come into contact with them. At all stages of this study I attempted to be open and explicit about the methods I was using, and the reasons for using them, with both the facilitator educators and the emerging facilitators. I was careful to outline the methods being used to increase the authenticity and fairness of the data being collected. This allowed me to demonstrate good research practice and correct some of the misconceptions they may

have held prior to participation in my study. The final criterion of *catalytic and tactical authenticity* referred to the potential of an inquiry to prompt research participants into action and discussions, and facilitator educators have indicated that their participation in this study has led to some important improvements in their courses.

Creswell (1998) listed eight procedures for enhancing the trustworthiness of findings in the interpretivist paradigm, based on a review of a variety of approaches. Some of them, including member checking and triangulation, have already been discussed. Other key strategies used in this study included: *prolonged engagement*, *thick description* and *auditing*. The issue of prolonged engagement was resolved in different ways with different participants. With the facilitator educators providing longer programs, it was easy because the participant observation component of the research provided extended periods of contact over the duration of the course and after the course. With these programs, there was definitely less pressure to record every single detail observed because the extended contact provided repeated opportunity for taking field notes, conducting informal interviews, and seeking clarifications about observations made. The shorter programs were more challenging because there was less time to do this, but from the initial contact with those facilitator educators and the member checking used in the writing of this thesis, the contact with all of them has at least occurred over a year.

In the next chapter of this thesis, the findings will be presented in a manner that provides thick description. Creswell (1998) identified the provision of thick description as a key to building trustworthiness, but it also serves the dual purpose of enabling judgements about the transferability of the findings from this study. In terms of auditing, several strategies have been used. A research journal and memos have been used to record the development of the research process, including meetings with supervisors. The findings, presented in the next chapter, also provide an audit trail by providing the exact details of each quotation ensuring that the conclusions developed are traceable and defensible.

Gergen and Gergen (2003) noted that discussion about validity in interpretive research has stimulated heated debates and bursts of creative energy. They described four innovations that have emerged to replace the traditional effort to discover and record the truth. First, in this study I have practiced *reflexivity* by relinquishing the “god’s-eye-

view” (p. 579) and I have sought to indicate how this study is historically, culturally, and personally situated. The second innovation, *multiple voicing*, involved replacing my singular, omniscient voice with the multiple voices of the participants. The third innovation, *literary styling*, is where stylised representation replaced “traditional realist discourse with forms of writing cast in opposition to ‘truth telling’” (p. 581). Finally, the idea of *performance*, where the researcher avoids the mystifying claims of truth and provides audiences with possibilities for rich engagement but a freedom of interpretation, will become more relevant when the findings of this study are made public.

In this study, trustworthiness has been demonstrated and enhanced through a number of channels. I sought to communicate my findings in a manner that empowered my intended audience and I have enabled others to check both my findings and my inquiry process (Erlandson et al., 1993). Methodological triangulation also helped to provide a degree of trustworthiness that might have otherwise been lacking if only one method of data collection had been used (Cohen et al., 2000). Before discussing the details of how the data were analysed and themes developed, in the next section I will briefly provide details of the intended audience of this study, timelines, and how ethical issues were managed.

### ***Intended audience for this study***

The findings of this study have potential implications for both the participants in, and leaders of, facilitator education. It is hoped that this study will first and foremost be beneficial to the facilitator educators involved. Guiding the facilitator educators on a journey of reflection exploring how they make sense of what they do, has hopefully been useful for their development and the courses they provide for emerging facilitators.

The findings of this study will also potentially be of interest to other stakeholders in facilitator education processes. Other facilitator educators will hopefully be guided and encouraged by the findings of this study. Experienced facilitators will hopefully be encouraged by the findings to reflect on their own development as a facilitator and consider future avenues and foci for professional development. The findings of this study will potentially help emerging facilitators to make informed choices about the facilitator education courses or processes they choose to participate in. The

dimensions of facilitator education developed in this study may have provided an important framework for emerging facilitators to consider which aspects of their skills, knowledge, or experience need further development.

Finally, as identified in the previous chapter, sections of the literature pertaining to the facilitation field demonstrate a disconnection between facilitation theory and practice. Many authors neglect to provide any theoretical foundation for their recommended practice of facilitation or facilitator education. It is hoped that this study will go some way towards demonstrating the way that theory can inform the practice of facilitator education. Finding ways to bridge this gap is challenging, but the literature has some suggestions on how stronger links can be established between researchers and research participants. I concur with Fine, Weis, Weeson, and Wong (2003, p. 169) that researchers have an obligation to “come clean . . . meaning that we interrogate in our writings who we are as we co-produce the narratives we presume to ‘collect,’ and we anticipate how the public and policymakers will receive, distort, and misread our data” (p. 195). Recently, a number of authors (Ezzy, 2002; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003) encouraged researchers within the interpretive paradigm to develop more appropriate methods of sharing research findings. I have already been able to do some joint conference presentations with two of the facilitator educators and more are planned. Already this is proving effective in bridging the theory-practice divide that seems to exist for some facilitation authors and practitioners.

### ***Timelines***

Facilitator educators were initially contacted and invited to participate in this study in January 2005. Data were collected in 2005 and 2006 using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The surveys of the graduates of the facilitator education programs were distributed in late 2005 and early 2006. Data reduction and analysis started immediately after the first interviews and observations were completed. Final analysis was completed in the middle of 2006 and this research report was completed in the final half of 2006.

### *Ethical issues*

Researchers within the interpretive paradigm tend not to have a well formulated set of ethical guidelines that can be applied across a wide range of disciplines. Miles and Huberman (1994) attribute this to interpretive researchers' emphasis on multiple realities and their personalistic, non-systematic approaches to ethical issues. Miles and Huberman suggest that ethical issues are nested in larger theories of how we decide what is appropriate. Of the theories they describe, I found Flinder's (1992, cited in Miles and Huberman) concept of *relational* ethics most appropriate because it emphasised caring and respect more than agreements and rules. From a relational perspective, researchers "stress equal-status collaboration; researcher and researched are now more symmetrical" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 289).

Traditional approaches to ethics in research seek to do no harm, in accord with the Hippocratic oath (Ezzy, 2002). This of course not only applies to the data collection and analysis phase but also to the reporting phase. Interpretive research,

aims both to hear the voice of the other and to respect the rights of the other. Respect for the other, and hence the ethical conduct of the researcher towards the participant, is integrally bound up with a practice that attempts to listen carefully to the experience and voice of the other. (Ezzy, 2002, p. 56)

In a recent discussion of ethics and politics in interpretivist research, Christians (2003) provided a succinct summary of the four key principles that guide the conduct of ethically sound research in most research institutions since the 1980s. The principles described by Christians were applied to this study in the following ways. First, "consistent with its commitment to individual autonomy, social science tradition insists that research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved" (Christians, 2003, p. 217). Hence, participation in this study was voluntary, without physical or psychological coercion, with the knowledge that withdrawal from the study was possible at any stage without prejudice. All agreements to participate were based on full and open information including: information about the anticipated duration of the study, proposed methods, possible risks, and the purposes of the study. With all facilitator educators numerous discussions were

held prior to the participant observation phase negotiating roles and clarifying expectations. This was critical to avoid what Miles and Huberman (1994) label *weak consent* because it usually leads to poor quality data as “respondents will try to protect themselves in a mistrusted relationship, or one formed with the researcher by superiors” (p. 291). The informed consent issue is less simple if the requirement for it discourages or prevents researchers from “confronting powerful, privileged and cohesive groups who may wish to protect themselves from public scrutiny” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 142). This was not an issue for this study.

Secondly, social science research codes of ethics uniformly oppose deception and the application of this principle dictated that the research design in this study was free from active deception. Whilst this study had no need for deception in any form, issues of broken trust were potentially a problem if participants read published research findings which they suspected was critical of some aspect of their practice. This was important because I did not want participants to feel that they have been misled. There were also potential long term *ecological* consequences if broken trust discouraged my participants from agreeing to participate in other research in the future.

The third issue raised by Christians (2003) concerns confidentiality and anonymity; and he explained that

codes of ethics insist on safeguards to protect people’s identities and those of the research location. Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. All personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity. (p. 218)

In reality, watertight confidentiality is difficult to guarantee in this study because the field is small. However, concerted efforts have been made in this study to preserve confidentiality by using pseudonyms for participants and disguising details of people or programs, which may be recognisable by those inside the facilitation profession. Naturally, if some of the research participants voluntarily choose to be involved in the presentation of the findings then they would forgo this confidentiality. Miles and Huberman (1994) provided some additional suggestions, which were adopted in this study. They suggest that

Using member checks to verify or extend interpretations and conclusions helps with anonymity problems, particularly if you begin with the most vulnerable respondents before moving more broadly; they usually (though not always) can spot information that would identify them and threaten their interests. (p. 293)

Finally, “ensuring that data are accurate is a cardinal principle in social science codes . . . [and] fabrications, fraudulent materials, admissions, and contrivances are both non-scientific and unethical” (Christians, 2003, p. 219). In this study I was also committed to avoiding the unintended consequences of ‘poor science’ which Miles and Huberman (1994) defined as “sloppy data recording; insufficient, selective, or misleading reporting of findings; unwillingness to share or retain data; undisclosed conflicts of interest; and inappropriate citation” (p. 294). This was achieved by using audits with the participants, colleagues, and supervisors to ensure the quality of data collection, data analysis, and the conclusions drawn. In this study I also sought to provide high levels of what Christians (2003) called *interpretive sufficiency*, by providing enough depth, detail, and nuance to permit the reader to form a critical consciousness.

In this section I have described the intended audience, the study timeline, and the ethical issues relevant to this study. In the final section of this chapter the details of the data analysis used in this study will be outlined.

### **Data analysis**

In 1994, Miles and Huberman noted that discussion of data analysis had been a weak area in the qualitative research literature, but that it was becoming more prominent in qualitative research texts. In more recent times, most research methods texts provide some discussion of the methods of qualitative data analysis (for example, Cohen et al., 2000; Gray, 2004; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Saunders et al., 2000). Saunders, et al. (2000) stated that the purpose of analysis is to establish a system that allows the researchers to transform the data they collect so they can: 1) comprehend and manage it, 2) merge data from different sources; 3) identify key themes and patterns; 4) develop and test these emerging patterns and relationships; and, 5) draw and verify conclusions.



In this study, the qualitative data analysis was understood to involve “organising, accounting for, explaining the data, in short making sense of the data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 147). This included: affixing codes to field notes from observations or interviews; noting reflections; sorting and sifting through materials to identify relationships, patterns, themes, differences, and common sequences; using these emerging relationships to inform additional data collection and elaborate a small set of generalizations; and establishing some constructs or theories where possible.

Regardless of which definition or process is used to describe data analysis within the interpretivist paradigm, there is a shift from description to explanation to theme development (Cohen et al., 2000). However, the process is not necessarily sequential, as explained in the next section.

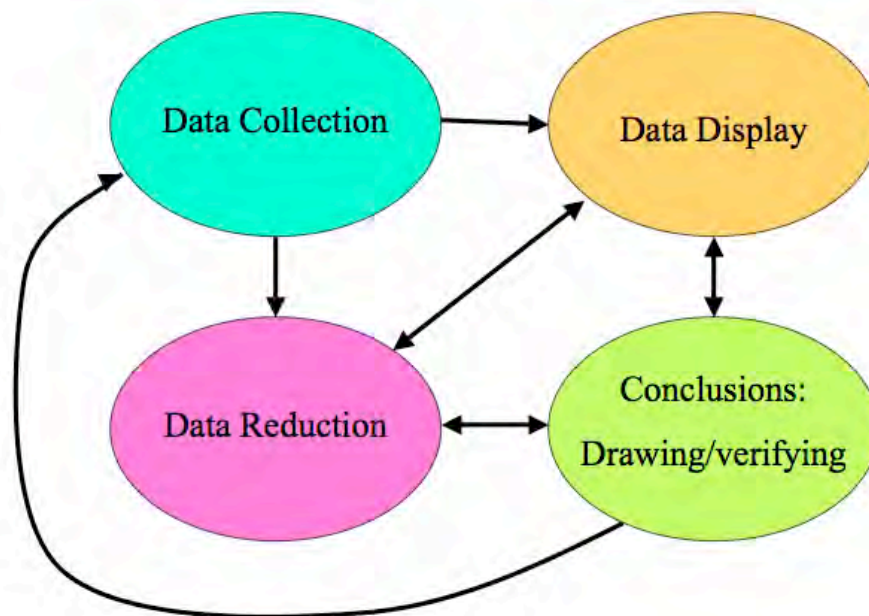
### ***The interactive process of data analysis***

Data analysis involves a combination of three concurrent flows of activity: *data reduction*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing and verification* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction is “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up notes or transcriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). In this study, this occurred continuously from the start of data collection and included writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions, and writing memos.

Data display is the “organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Miles and Huberman recommended the use of matrices, graphs, charts, networks, all of which help to “assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis the display suggests may be useful” (p. 11). Conclusion drawing and verification also commenced from the start of data collection, but as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), I was careful to hold “these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness, and scepticism, but the conclusions are still there, incoherent and vague at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded” (p.11). Throughout the data analysis process, these early conclusions were verified for their plausibility, sturdiness,

and confirmability. This typically occurred through discussions with the facilitator educator concerned either in person or via email.

As displayed in Figure 5 (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 12), data analysis, collection, and reduction form an interactive cyclical process with the drawing and verifying of conclusions. If analysis only begins after all the data have been collected, researchers may miss many valuable opportunities to collect pertinent information, because sometimes analysis reveals unanticipated issues and leads to investigate (Ezzy, 2002). This was certainly the case in this study, and particularly in the longer programs observed, where prolonged contact occurred.



*Figure 5. The Interactive Model of Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12)*

Rubin and Rubin (1995) explained that starting data analysis while interviewing is still underway helps researchers to focus future questions and observations on the themes emerging. As suggested by Ezzy (2002), the data gathered early in this study guided both the formulation of concepts, the sampling process, and the discovery of emerging themes. In this respect “the voice of the participant, rather than the voice of the researcher, will be heard best when participants not only provide the data to be analysed, but when they also contribute to the questions that frame the research and contribute to the way the data are analysed” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 64). For example, a discussion with one of

the facilitator educators about his unique approach to providing feedback to his emerging facilitators led me to explore the way feedback was provided with all of the facilitator educators.

Miles and Huberman (1994) called the cyclical or recursive process of data collection and data analysis throughout the research process *interim analysis*. Interim analysis in this study helped to develop a successively deeper understanding of the research topic and guided each round of data collection. Hence, in the longer programs observed, data were coded and analysed after each block was completed. This analysis highlighted areas that required further investigation. The data collected later in the process helped to refine developing theories and test inductively generated hypotheses. This process continued until the point of *theoretical saturation* was reached, which is the “situation in which understanding has been reached and there is no current need for more data” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 500).

### ***Data reduction***

#### Transcribing issues

Strategies to limit the total amount of data created were adopted in this study to make the process of data analysis more manageable and thus more effective. After interviews were conducted I listened to the recordings carefully a number of times, building my familiarity with the data. Using the counter system on my Sony MD recording device, I then returned to particular sections of the interview recording and selectively transcribed those sections of the conversation that were pertinent to the developing themes. The NVivo software package was used to create a database for all the data collected in this study. The software allows researchers to manage the large volume of data collected in research using qualitative methods. Once entered into the database, the data may be coded, sorted, searched, displayed, and analysed. The interview transcripts, notes from the non-transcribed interviews, and selected observation field notes were all entered into the NVivo database as well as the responses to the qualitative survey completed by the facilitation course graduates.

The decision not to transcribe verbatim all of the interview recordings is not necessarily common practice, but nonetheless can be considered defensible. Verbatim interview transcription could be seen as a hangover from the positivistic paradigm and moreover, even verbatim interview transcription is never a perfect process because transcripts are always imperfect 're-presentations' of oral communication processes (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 2003). Listening to the tapes a number of times before selectively transcribing emphasised my role as the 'research instrument,' and utilised my theoretical sensitivity to reduce the data. All the original interview recordings were retained so that they could be revisited if the data analysis required it and it was useful on several occasions to return to the original recordings to check that I had understood the facilitator educators' intent on an issue. The material that was omitted from the interview transcripts were discussions which were not directly relevant to the research questions, but which were important at the time to build rapport with the participant.

In a study aimed at exploring the issue of transcription quality, Poland (1995) identified three distinct threats to the quality of the interview transcription process. The first was deliberate alterations of the data by well-meaning transcribers. The second threat concerned the accidental alteration of the data including: errors caused by problems with sentence structure; the misuse of quotation marks; omissions; and words and phrases mistaken for others. The final threat is the unavoidable alterations to data caused by the differences between verbal and written communication.

Transcribing involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. . . . Transcripts are decontextualised conversations, they are abstractions, as topographical maps are abstractions from the original landscape from which they are derived. (Kvale, 1996, p. 165)

Kvale (1996) also noted that transcriptions lose the quality of conversations and hence some of the original meaning and richness, and are detemporalised because dynamic, living, ongoing conversations are made frozen and static in stable, written text.

Transcriptions also create potential for the lived meanings of the original conversation to fade away and they are a limited, linguistic constitution of a more complex reality. For these reasons, as recommended by Poland (1995), the transcriptions of interviews and field notes were reviewed by the facilitator educators themselves because they are the best people to check for the accuracy. This process, known as *member checks*, "provides

a mechanism for developing the dialogue with the research participant that is at the heart of the qualitative research process” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 68). The member checks also provided the facilitator educators with the opportunity to clarify their comments which helped to ensure that “respondents retain ultimate control over how their stories are reported and interpreted” (Poland, 1995, p. 305).

### ***Thematic analysis***

Thematic analysis is the process used to identify themes, essences or patterns within research data. These themes are often explicit in the data, meaning they “float with relative ease to the top of a well of words” (Roberts & Taylor, 2002, p. 427) when doing data analysis. Alternatively, themes may also be implicit in the data and not immediately recognisable and in these cases it can take some time before reflections on the data reveal connections and relevance to the total context. The early stages of thematic analysis require a high level of familiarity with the data and listening to the interview tapes several times helped to achieve this familiarity (Roberts & Taylor, 2002).

### **Coding the data**

The data were sorted and organised using *coding* which “disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 26). These chunks of data, or units of analysis, were as discrete as possible whilst retaining fidelity to the integrity of the whole. These units of analysis were allocated a *code*, which was typically a word or abbreviation that was sufficiently close to that which it describes so I could remember what it meant. The process of attaching chunks of data to these codes, or the disaggregation of the data into units, is called unitising (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once all material was coded, it was grouped together in the same place for comparison within and across categories to refine the development of themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

In this study, a combination of *a priori* codes and *inductive* codes were used (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). *A priori*, or pre-existing, codes emerged from the theoretical interpretive framework and research questions developed for this study. Böhm (2004) explained that when coding, “researchers use their background knowledge about the context of the textual passage being investigated and, in general terms, their knowledge about the area of investigation” (p. 271) to complete the task. Additionally, coding was

responsive to new data and inductive codes were developed as required, acknowledging the organic, dynamic nature of the coding process (Schwandt, 2001). The master list of codes grew as interim analysis proceeded and the NVivo software package allowed the details about each code to be easily stored. This emerging list of codes also guided the decisions about what to ask in interviews, and what to attend to in observations. The codes also guided decisions about what, and what not, to transcribe from the interviews and observations.

Schwandt (2001) observed that there is a tendency for researchers to code largely at the descriptive level rather than at deeper analytical levels that get to the crux of what is actually going on in a situation. He was also critical of the view that coding is a mechanical, straightforward, algorithmic process, which ignores prior conceptualisation and theoretical understanding. The coding process in this study was a combination of various coding systems outlined in the literature (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Saunders et al., 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

My first attempts at coding the data, which Strauss (1987) refers to as *open* coding, was followed by the process of *axial* coding which recognises the relationships and connections between categories and subcategories. These axial codes were symbolic overarching categories for related groupings, although some initial codes were assigned to more than one axial category to maintain the richness of the data. This process of making comparisons, within and between categories, known as *constant comparison*, was conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This process commenced with data collection and allowed the data to be compared “across a range of situations, times, groups of people, and through a range of methods,” and in this respect “the process resonates with the methodological notion of triangulation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 151).

When comparing material within and across categories, Rubin and Rubin (1995) encouraged researchers to ask: How uniform are examples? Do illustrations suggest some nuance of meaning in concept or theme? Are there contradictions? Which examples are more trustworthy? The comparison across codes allowed me to look for links that might otherwise be missed, by putting related ideas in proximity even though they were not raised that way by participants. The next step in the process of theme exploration, outlined by Rubin and Rubin, required me to step back and examine the smaller themes

to see what tied them together, if anything. Typically this involved looking for: explanatory concepts by picking out the words that participants frequently used that sound different from normal vocabulary; nouns or noun phrases that are repeated frequently and seemed to be expressing an important idea; and pairs or mates for existing terms.

To expedite the process of recognizing relationships and developing themes, the use of diagrams and modelling allowed me to explore relationships and develop hypotheses that explain relationships. Drawing diagrams, using the modelling function of the NVivo software, helped me to see links that I did not notice when examining the data in written form. As Richards (1999) explained, “visual representations of patterns and discoveries vary from tabular displays to free-form sketches, but they share the same goal of aiding the researcher to see things more clearly” (p. 145).

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) suggested that successful thematic analysis tends to emerge from a deep familiarity with the data that comes from strategies such as concept mapping. This process helped with the identification of key factors, issues, concepts, and areas for subsequent investigation. It was a watershed point in data analysis because it enabled me to pinpoint major themes, issues and problems and the avenues for further investigation became apparent (Cohen et al., 2000).

### ***Strengthening the data analysis process***

The research methodology literature provided a number of useful suggestions that were used to strengthen the data analysis process in this study. I adopted Johnson's and Christensen's (2004) recommendation to use memos to keep track of ideas so I did not have to rely on memory alone. Memos are “reflective notes that researchers write to themselves about what they are learning from their data” and they include “notes about anything, including thoughts on emerging concepts, themes or patterns found in the data, the need for further data collection, a comparison that needs to be made in the data, and virtually anything else” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 501). Ezzy (2002) maintained that a memo could include a new theoretical question, a hypothesis, or a summary of codes. Memos were also useful because they allowed me to create some distance between myself and the data, which assisted with the task of moving beyond purely

descriptive work (Böhm, 2004). The NVivo software package was able to create, store, code and retrieve memos like any other form of raw data.

Keeping a research journal was another effective tool that facilitated the interpretive process employed in this study. As explained by Ezzy (2002),

Understanding, interpretations and theories do not emerge from the data through some mechanical process. They are product of researchers thinking and talking about their research. Keeping a journal and regularly writing memos encourages researchers to reflect routinely on their emerging understanding of the data. . . . Interpretations are not found – rather they are made, actively constructed through social processes . . . [and] researchers make many choices during data collection that are integral to how the data are analysed and will be analysed. . . . Qualitative researchers should aim to make the interpretive process explicit and integral to their research, right from the beginning. (p. 71-74)

Miles and Huberman (1994) also encouraged researchers to document their research processes thoroughly. They explained that in addition to the purposes of auditing, “we need to understand more clearly just what is going on when we analyse data, to reflect, refine our methods, and make them more generally usable by others” (p. 12). Silverman (1993) is critical of data analysis that “fails to acknowledge the implicit theories which guide research in the early phases” (p. 47). In this chapter I have sought to provide explicit rationales for many of the choices made in the data analysis process, as they were recorded in my research journal.

Gray (2004) encouraged researchers to cultivate a theoretical sensitivity which refers to the ability of the researcher to give meaning to the data, and to establish which of the data are pertinent. In this study, I developed my theoretical sensitivity by knowing the literature well, understanding the field through my own professional and personal experience, and reflecting on the analytical process itself. According to Gray, an enhanced theoretical sensitivity ensures “that the creativity involved in qualitative research is harnessed in such a way that the interests of science are not impeded” (p. 339).

Another strategy used in this study to integrate the data analysis and collection was peer, colleague, and supervisor debriefings. Discussing the research while data collection was being conducted allowed a preliminary analysis of the data to occur and these meetings



were sometimes recorded, transcribed, and included in the memo files of the research study where appropriate. As suggested by Ezzy (2002) these meetings were effective in: stimulating ideas about meaning and significance; exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit; exploring the influence of my personal values and theoretical orientations on the collection and interpretation of data; providing an opportunity to explore and test theories and interpretations of the data; and allowing methodological problems to be discussed and resolved. As pointed out by Ezzy (2002),

Understanding does not come only from individual researchers locking themselves away and reflecting on their data. The responses of others to our interpretations are a central part of the process of developing a trustworthy account. (pp. 67-68)

#### Issues with computer-based qualitative analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is a “dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising” and computers are not able to perform these kinds of tasks, not now or perhaps ever (Basit, 2003, p. 143).

The computer cannot do the creative part of coding, such as setting up and modifying categories and figuring out in what categories each segment of an interview belongs. Nor can the computer label ideas as concepts or recognise themes, compare the separate concepts, find subtleties in meaning, or follow up on comparisons or nuances. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 241)

However, computer-based qualitative analysis software packages, like NVivo, do provide useful administrative and logistical support. The NVivo software package was effective for storing, sorting, retrieving, viewing, exploring and linking large volumes of data. In a comparison of manual and electronic coding, Basit (2003) found that the search facility of NVivo, and its ability to generate comprehensive reports, recompensed for the hours required to learn to use the software effectively. Basit concluded that the decision to use electronic coding is “dependent upon the size of the project, the funds and time available, and the inclination and expertise of the researcher” (p. 143). With regard to this study, the time required to develop more mastery of the NVivo software was easily offset by the benefits gained by being able to easily sort, search, and retrieve specific information from large volumes of data.

Computer based qualitative analysis programs can also create some problems. Kelle (2004) warns that although their increased efficiencies make it easier to process more data, volume of data is not the key quality criterion in interpretive research. Increased volumes of data do not necessarily increase validity, and they could actually be a deterrent to good analysis. Computer-based qualitative analysis software has also been criticised because the methodological assumptions that underpin the software can unwittingly influence the analytical process. They potentially ignore the pluralism of qualitative approaches because grounded theory approaches are frequently emphasized over others (2004). However, I did not find this to be a problem in this study. The software played an important support role but did not influence the research process in this study because I had already clarified my research questions, theoretical frameworks, research paradigm, and methods. If these processes had not occurred before data collection and analysis, the potential for such an influence would be stronger.

### ***Summary and conclusions***

In this chapter I have provided a rationale for choosing the interpretivist paradigm based on the characteristics of this study, and the intended audience was identified. The choice to use a relational ethics approach (Flinders, 1992, cited in Miles and Huberman) was explained to be most appropriate because of its emphasis on caring and respect rather than agreements and rules. The concurrent processes used to analyse the data in this study, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were explained in detail. The processes of the analysis used to identify themes, essences or patterns within research data were also explained. Strategies used to strengthen the data analysis process in this study were described, including the use of memos, a research journal, audits, and peer and supervisor debriefings.

In the next chapter I will present the findings of this study and the processes used to derive them. These findings will be interpreted using the interpretive framework developed through the synthesis of the literature pertaining to facilitation and facilitator education.

## **Chapter 4: Study Findings and Interpretations**

In this chapter I will present the findings of this study in a number of sections. First, a profile of the key research participants will be provided to allow the reader to get a feel for each of the facilitator educators who participated in the study. This will be followed by a discussion of each of the four major themes that emerged from the data. These major themes included: *important facilitator educator values and actions*; *the role of self-facilitation*; *key facilitation concepts*; and *critical elements of the facilitator education process*. The discussion of these major themes will include a thick description of sub-themes within each of these major themes. The findings within each theme will be interpreted using the theoretical interpretive framework (presented in chapter 2) and the relevant literature.

Throughout this chapter data are reported from direct quotations from transcribed interviews, interview notes (from non-recorded interviews), field notes from participant observation, survey responses from the course graduates, and email responses from facilitator educators. The quotations provided in this chapter were member-checked, and any errors in note-taking or transcribing were corrected. In cases where the facilitator educators have published books which they use in their programs, I have referred to these books as ‘course texts,’ in order to protect their anonymity.

### **Research participant profiles**

In this section I will introduce the facilitator educators who participated in this study; Figure 6 provides a summary of this information. A detailed profile of each facilitator educator will be provided, including a short personal history, details of the programs they offer and the range of emerging facilitators involved, and a diagram showing their program foci using the dimensions of facilitator education identified in the review of literature. The diagrams, portraying how the focus on different dimensions of facilitator education changes over time, allow me to demonstrate how the relative emphasis on each of the dimensions changes for an individual facilitator educator throughout his/her program. The diagrams also enable some comparisons of program foci between facilitator educators. As indicated in the previous chapter, pseudonyms have been used throughout this chapter to ensure anonymity.

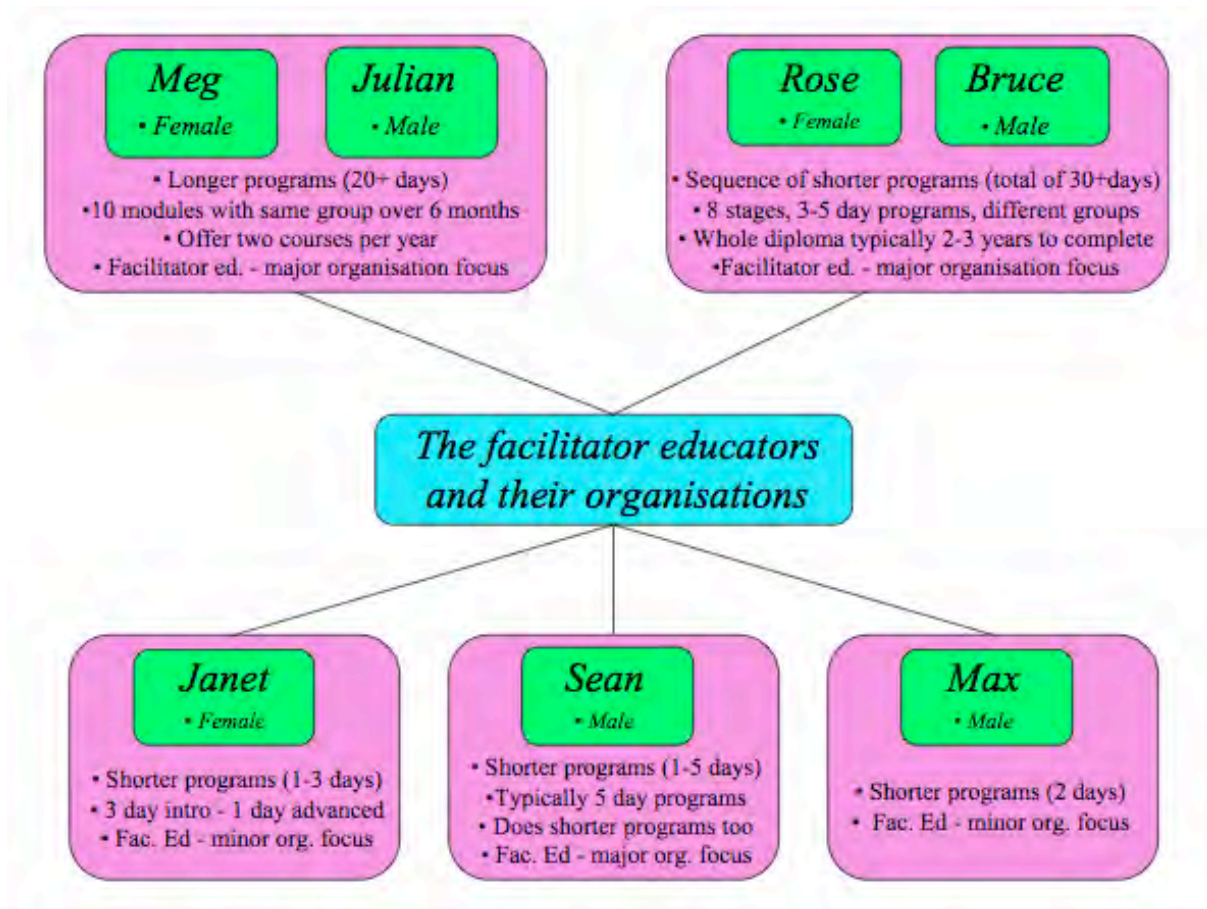


Figure 6: Overview of the facilitator educators in the study

### **Facilitator educators: Meg and Julian**

Meg and Julian are co-directors of an organization that provides facilitation consultancy and facilitator education programs. Currently, they draw clients from community-based organisations or corporate businesses and provide two facilitator education courses per year, each involving 20 contact days spread over a seven month period. The two programs they run each year are similar in terms of content and method. The diploma courses are accredited in Australia with the Department of Education, Science and Training. They have provided these courses for the last six years for between 12 and 24 participants with approximately 100 graduates by the end of 2005. Meg and Julian also run some shorter programs on facilitation to generate interest in their longer programs.

Meg was the primary person involved in this study, so in the description that follows I focus mainly on the details of her background. Meg came from a rural background but moved to the city as a teenager to train and work as a nurse. She became interested in groups through the social activism, non-violent action, and peace movements. After a career in nursing, she spent 12 years facilitating groups for a community-based organisation, during which time she developed a reputation as a competent facilitator. In 1983, she started working as a freelance facilitator based on her belief that “groups have incredible power for transformation” (Meg, Interview #1 notes, 23/3/2005). In 1995, she started teaching facilitation to social work students at a Melbourne university. Around this time there was no facilitation training readily available, so in 2000 she offered her first 20-day course in advanced group facilitation.

Meg and Julian utilise the full range of teaching strategies identified in the group counsellor education literature (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; McDonnell et al., 2005; Morran, 2005) in their courses. Didactic teaching occurs in the form of modules, presented in each teaching block of the program. A block is typically two days in duration except for one five-day residential component. They do not use any single textbook for their course, but handouts are provided and the emerging facilitators can access resources from their extensive library. Emerging facilitators get opportunities to practice facilitation experientially either with the larger learning group, one of the two smaller *practice groups*, or in *triads* (groups of three). The membership of the larger learning group, the practice groups and the triads is kept constant throughout the whole program to allow participants to develop the interpersonal relationships and group processes required to support the deeper personal exploration that their program encourages. Practice groups and triads meet on each day of the program and participants take turns at facilitating the smaller group. These sessions typically conclude with some feedback to the acting-facilitator from the other participants and from Meg or Julian. Collectively, each triad gets opportunities to facilitate the larger group process for approximately three full days of the program.

The dimensions of facilitator education emphasised by Meg and Julian in their diploma course are shown in Figure 7. In the diagrams for the facilitator educators the Y-axis of the diagram indicates the relative focus of their programs on each dimension of facilitator

education. My judgements about the relative focus of the programs were based on the comparative time spent on the different dimensions. The facilitator educators were then invited to comment on my analysis and make corrections as they saw appropriate. The X-axis of each diagram indicates the length of the program, however, because the programs of the facilitator educators were not all the same length, the scale for the X-axis differs.

Meg and Julian placed a consistent focus on technical and intentional facilitator education throughout their program with these dimensions representing about half their focus. Meg and Julian have an extensive list of 32 *key facilitation techniques* (KFTs) that emerging facilitators were encouraged to develop throughout the program. Person-centred facilitator education assumed the largest focus in their programs with a small focus on critical facilitator education. One of their modules, titled ‘Rank, Power and Diversity,’ focused on the critical facilitator education dimension, but it was presented as an extension of person-centred facilitator education. Drawing heavily on her interests in, and passions for, the women’s movement and non-violent action, Meg used the writing of Mindell (1995) to help her participants develop an explicit awareness of the issues of power and rank for facilitators.

Meg described facilitation as the “the art of pooling the wisdom of the group” (Meg, Interview #1 notes, 23/3/2005) and likened the work of a facilitator to that of an alchemist. Although she acknowledged that facilitation requires a “set of skills that are quite complex” (Meg, Interview #1 notes, 23/3/2005), the primary focus of their programs is on developing self-awareness and “becoming awake” (Julian and Meg, Interview notes, 16/6/2005), particularly through the use of a framework for understanding oneself, which they called the *Community of Selves*. This framework is based on Jung’s perspective of the unconscious (Neville, 2005) and Stone and Stone’s (1989) Voice Dialogue method. Meg and Julian intentionally rely on the group process to facilitate the development of their participants’ self-awareness.

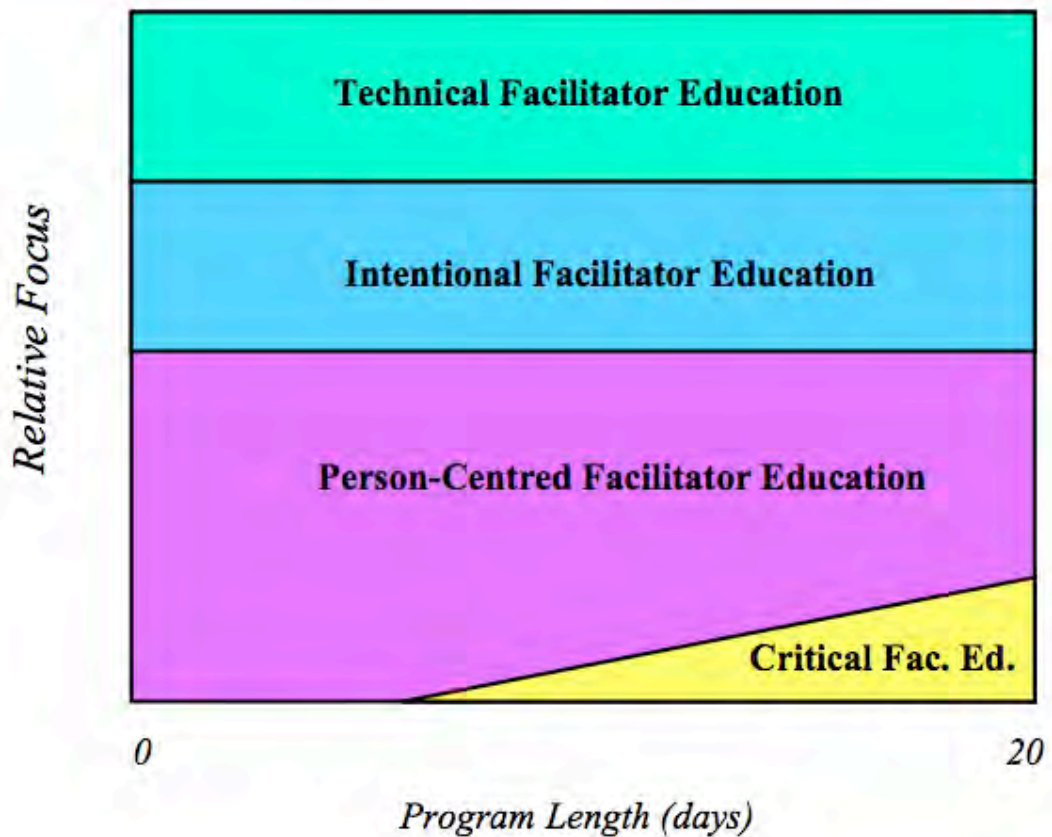


Figure 7: Facilitator education foci: Meg and Julian

Meg and Julian demonstrated a steady, and roughly equal, focus on technical facilitator education and intentional facilitator education for the duration of the 20 days of contact in their diploma course. Person centered facilitation was a strong focus for Meg and Julian throughout the whole program. Critical facilitator education was introduced near the middle of the course. Attention to critical facilitator education increased through the rest of the program.

***Facilitator educators: Rose and Bruce***

Rose and Bruce are the key personnel in their organisation, which provides facilitation, coaching, and facilitator education. Rose was one of the organisation's founders, but is slightly less involved in course delivery now than she has been in the past. Bruce joined the organisation in 1998 and after serving a long apprenticeship under the guidance of Rose, he is now one of the primary facilitator educators in their organisation. The organisation offers a sequence of eight shorter facilitator education courses (called stages), which range from two to five days in duration. Emerging facilitators who complete the sequence of eight stages can attain a (non-accredited) 'Diploma in Facilitation.' Notably, the composition of the groups in each of the stages is different and each shorter program is offered as a stand-alone course, although prerequisites apply for some of the later stages.

Rose indicated to me that her interest in groups and group dynamics developed through her leadership roles and involvement in school, sport and music. After graduating from university she worked as a professional musician in an orchestra where the "energetic relationships in groups" (transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005) became a source of fascination. Rose left the world of professional musicianship in her mid 30s, studied for a diploma in management, and began a career in local government where she focussed on arts administration and community development. Rose's interest in the use of consensus and co-operative processes grew through her work with local communities, and she identified her primary influences as the women's movement, the peace movement, and co-counselling (Heron, 2001). Much of Rose's work during these times was geared towards empowering local communities but after thirteen years of working within the local government sector, changes in the political arena impacted on the available funding and Rose co-founded a facilitation consultancy, which she continues to direct. As a self-described "personal development workshop junkie" (Rose, transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005), Rose made a conscious decision at one stage to develop expertise in co-counselling and she became a trainer in this field. She has co-authored numerous books on facilitation and in 2003 completed postgraduate study in the facilitation area to satisfy her desire for ongoing learning.



Bruce has worked as a group facilitator, coach, and organisational consultant for over 10 years and has experience with a wide range of organisations to assist with organisational and cultural change. Bruce is a director of the organisation and has worked as a facilitator educator in Australia and New Zealand since 1998. Bruce has postgraduate qualifications in dispute resolution, human resource management, and facilitation. He is a trained psychodramatist and has conducted research on the mediation of organisational conflict.

It was more challenging to illustrate the changes in program focus for the programs that Rose and Bruce provided, compared with the other facilitator educators, because I only participated in two of the eight stages of their overall diploma. My participation involved 10 days of training, which was one third of the overall contact required to complete their diploma. To assist with my analysis of the foci for their eight stages of their whole diploma, I convened a special interview with Rose, Bruce and another director of their organization to discuss my interpretations and develop an accurate representation of their whole diploma.

A unique feature of Rose and Bruce's courses is that many participants do not proceed beyond their stage one course. Consequently, they focus heavily on facilitation skills and theory in this stage, in order to meet the expectations of the emerging facilitators, and the organisations which sponsored them, even though ideologically they have a preference for a more person-centred facilitator education focus, as shown in Figure 8. Bruce explained,

Stage one ... is really just the doorway and the rest of the program, the diploma, is all about being present with each other in-the-moment, and engaging with each other in-the-moment, and engaging with what is emerging and much more of that kind of stuff. But a lot of people come to stage one and that is all they ever do. And so there is a need to get a skill-set [otherwise] ... their boss would say 'that's crap,' I am not sending anyone else on that course. So you need to give people a skill-set that they can then apply in a basic way of working. (transcribed interview #1, 16/8/2005)

The didactic components of Rose and Bruce's courses are well supported by Rose's books on facilitation and subsequently there is a strong theoretical grounding underpinning each of the stages of their diploma program. Figure 8 shows the increasing focus that Rose and Bruce place on person centred and critical facilitator education

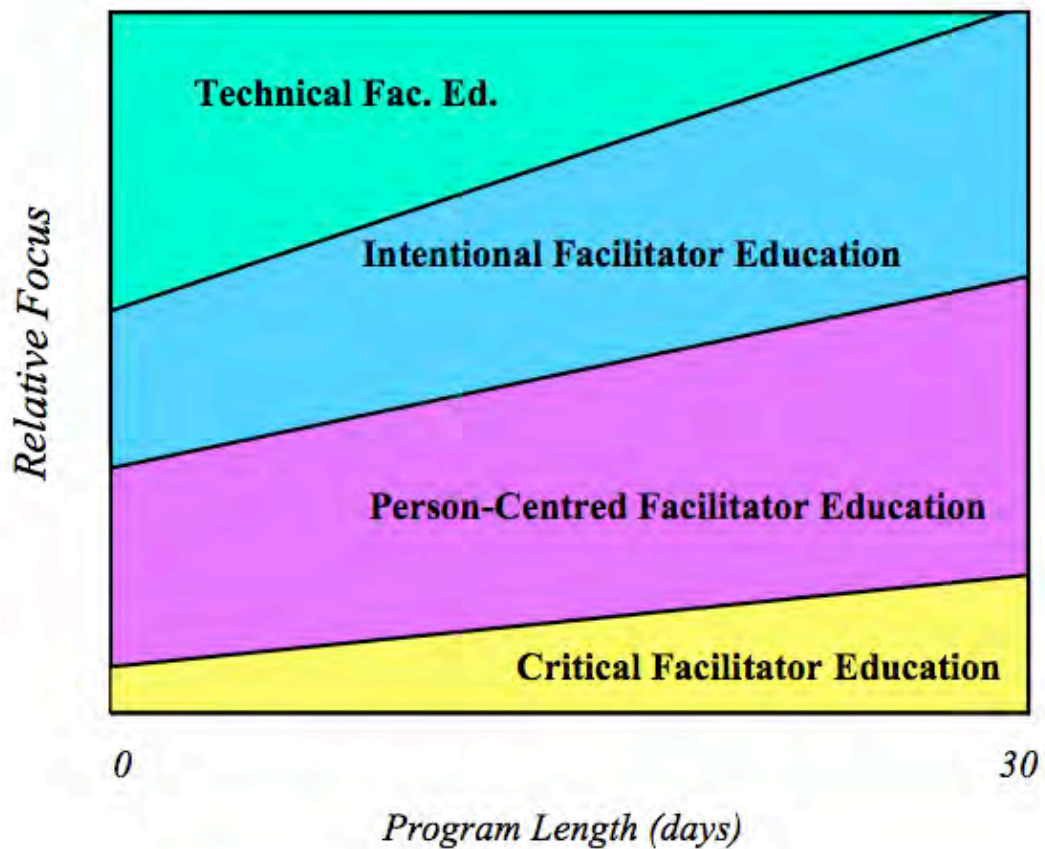


Figure 8. Facilitator education foci: Rose and Bruce

Rose and Bruce include each dimension of facilitator education throughout the numerous stages of their Diploma in Facilitation program. The focus they place on technical facilitator education early in their Diploma program reflects the fact that some emerging facilitators do not progress beyond stage one, or the first five days of the whole program. To this end, Rose and Bruce choose to meet the expectations of the emerging facilitators (and their employers or sponsoring organisations) in stage one by making sure that they graduate with some demonstrable skills. Correspondingly, their relative focus on person-centred and critical facilitator education increases throughout the Diploma of Facilitation as Rose and Bruce are able to spend more time focusing on what they consider to be the essential aspects of facilitation.

throughout their diploma. They encourage their emerging facilitators to develop their self-awareness and they attempt to engage the participants in an authentic experience of authentic community (Peck, 1988). Rose was adamant that “as a feminist, the personal is political, so I would feel like I had failed if [critical facilitation] wasn’t there somewhere” (Rose, transcribed interview #2, 11/8/2006). In the latter stages of their diploma program their emerging facilitators undertake self-directed projects and complete a facilitation practicum under their supervision.

Emerging facilitators in each stage of the diploma were provided with opportunities to practice facilitation experientially, even in the early parts of the stage one programs, and Rose and Bruce created a learning environment that supported risk taking and experimentation. Both Rose and Bruce utilised the coaching style derived from co-counselling as a way of providing feedback in-the-moment to participants.

***Facilitator educator: Janet***

Janet practiced law for six years before starting her own consultancy in 1996 providing mediation, facilitation, and training to a wide client base. She has extensive experience working in dispute resolution and the design of conflict management systems. Although training in mediation and facilitation are a passion for Janet, they are not the primary focus of her business. The facilitation training that she provides is another strategy she uses to serve the organisations with which she works. Her facilitator education program was three days long because the clients she attracts are usually not able to attend programs more than three days in length. She provides an optional fourth day of facilitator education for her graduates.

In her course materials Janet identified four levels of facilitator functioning and her intention within her program is to help individual participants progress on their journey through those levels. Despite the limitations of a shorter program, which she recognised, she encouraged her emerging facilitators to see the task of “working on themselves” (Janet, field notes day #2, 1/9/2005) as a never-ending journey. Her three-day program is delivered in two blocks separated by one month, which allowed participants to experiment with skills and theories before receiving some feedback and encouragement on the final day of the program. Janet acknowledged the difficulty of creating a safe

group environment in a shorter program and the challenge it created for effective person-centred facilitator education to occur. For this reason she offers a fourth, final day of training with an external consultant that provides participants with the opportunity to explore this dimension of facilitator education more fully. In the three days of the initial facilitator education program Janet focused primarily on technical and intentional facilitator education and she provided an introduction to person-centred facilitator education content, as shown in Figure 9. Emerging facilitators are then able to make an informed choice about participating in a follow up one-day program that focuses on person-centred facilitator education at a much deeper level.

In her program Janet used the full range of teaching strategies identified in the counsellor education literature (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; McDonnell et al., 2005; Morran, 2005). She has developed her own training manual with modules outlining facilitation theory and skills. She combined selected readings from the facilitation literature with some of her own models to strengthen the didactic component of her program. One unique aspect of her program was the use of a celebrity actor to participate in a live role-play to demonstrate a particular facet of facilitation. She explained that this allows her to provide powerful demonstrations of effective facilitation, which are otherwise difficult to organise. Janet also used experiential activities to provide opportunities for participants to experiment with different facilitation strategies. Janet used a mixture of coaching-in-the-moment and debriefing to facilitate the provision of feedback between the emerging facilitators and herself. She also used a guest facilitator educator, David, on the second day of the program I observed to introduce the emerging facilitators to another facilitation and coaching style.

It was challenging to develop an accurate interpretation of the foci of Janet's programs because I was only able to participate in the first two days of the four-day sequence of facilitator education she provides. To compensate, Janet provided me with some feedback on the analysis of her program foci shown in Figure 9. At the start of the program Janet primarily focussed on facilitation skills and theory, in order to equip the emerging facilitators with requisite skills. Her focus on person-centred facilitation increased over the second and third day of her programs and on the additional fourth day of training that she offered to the emerging facilitators, she used an external consultant who focused almost entirely on person-centred facilitator education.

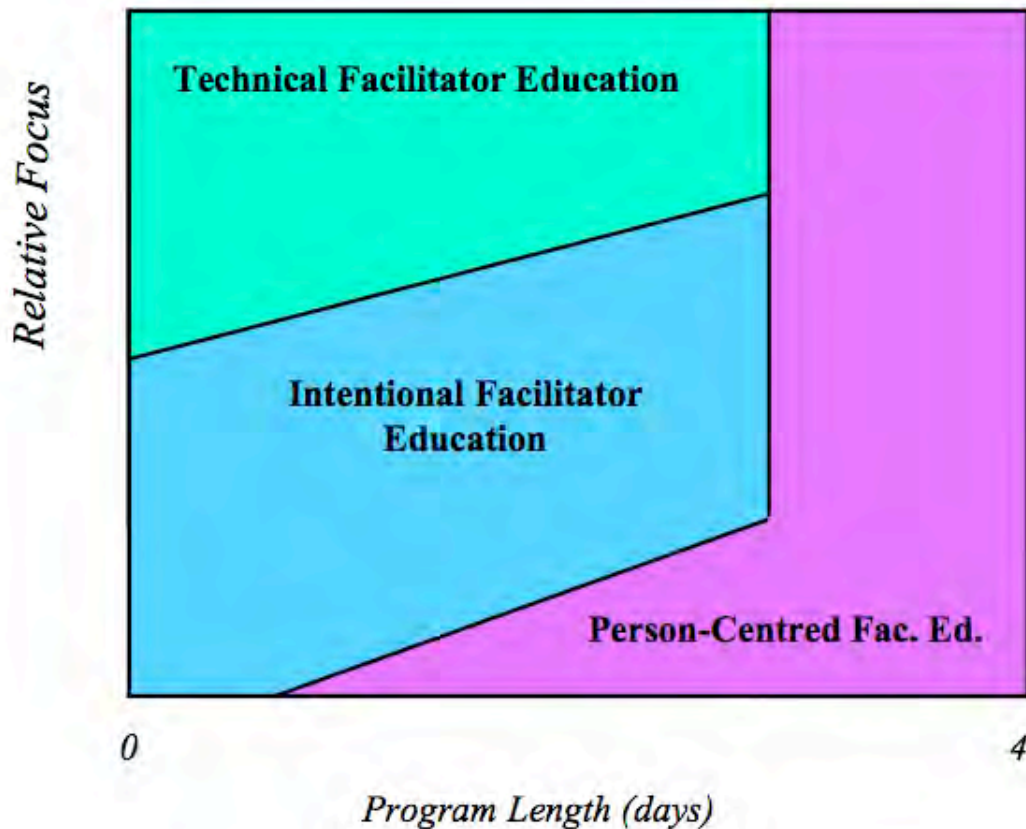


Figure 9. Facilitator education foci: Janet

*Janet demonstrated a changing focus over the four days of her program. Techniques and theory assumed the primary foci at the start of the program, but diminished in the latter stages. Corresponding with this reduced focus on technical and intentional facilitator education she increased her focus on person-centred facilitator education. The final day of her program was an optional day for those who want to explore the complexities of person-centred facilitation.*

***Facilitator educator: Sean***

Sean has completed postgraduate study in organisational psychology and is the president of his own facilitation consultancy, which he founded in 1996. He has been consulting, writing, and teaching about facilitation, managing change, and developing effective work groups for more than 25 years. Sean used a values-based, systematic approach to facilitation and provides facilitation consultancy as well as facilitator education programs. Prior to establishing his own consultancy he worked in the higher education sector in the field of public management. Sean cited the work of Argyris and Schön (1996) as a major theoretical influence on his approach to facilitation, and this was evident in the theoretical framework he presented in his workshops and books. Sean typically provides five-day facilitator education programs, but I was only able to observe him at a one-day workshop designed to introduce emerging facilitators to his facilitator education approach. Sean was able to provide some assistance in the classification of the foci for his longer five-day programs.

Sean's approach to facilitator education, shown in Figure 10, is predominantly focused on intentional facilitator education and person-centred facilitation. He was explicitly critical of technical facilitator education that is not grounded in explicit values and a firm theoretical foundation. Some of the theoretical concepts covered in his program included facilitation roles, theory-in-use, ground rules for effective groups, and a model for diagnosing interventions (course materials<sup>1</sup>, 2006, p. 25). The short duration of the one-day training program I observed, and the relatively large group of 30 participants, precluded extensive participation or experiential leadership opportunities. These same factors also limited the focus on in-depth, person-centred facilitator education, although Sean indicated this is much stronger in his five day program. There was some discussion about the way the facilitator's values shape his/her thinking, which Sean maintained influences his/her behaviour as a facilitator.

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<sup>1</sup> As explained earlier, further details of the published course materials cannot be provided without compromising the anonymity of the facilitator educator.

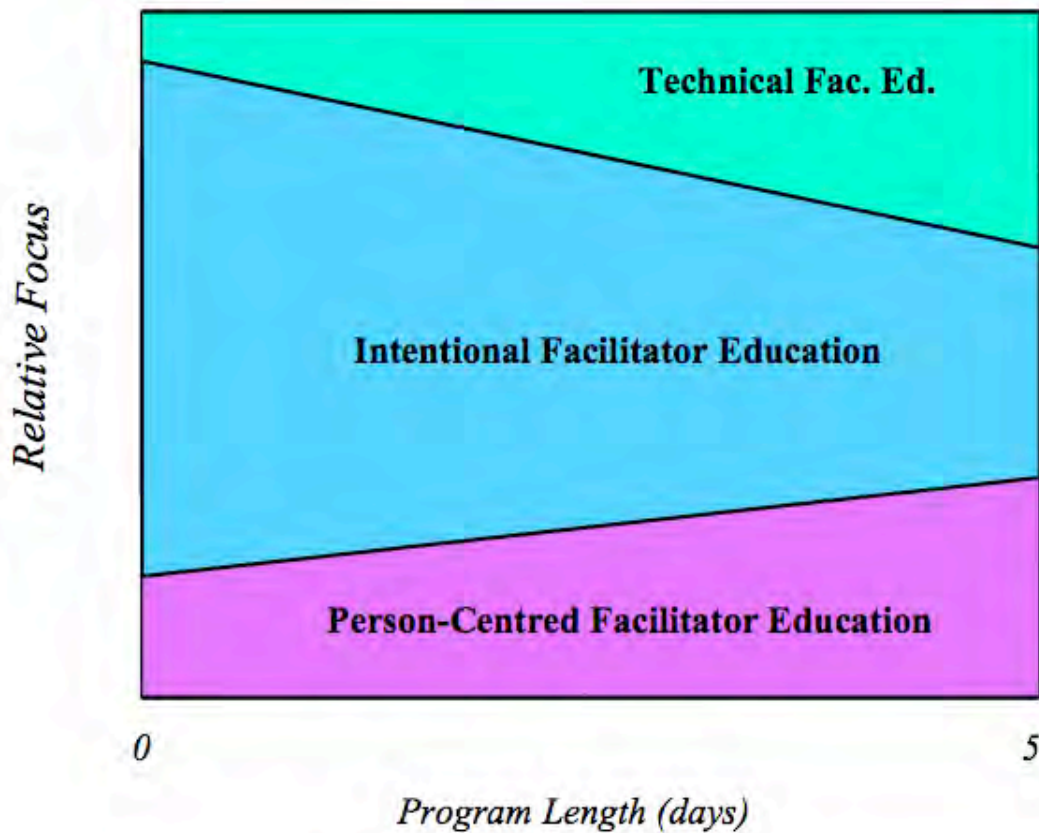


Figure 10. Facilitator education foci: Sean

*The primary focus in Sean's program was intentional facilitator education. He explicitly advocated the need for emerging facilitators to be discursive about their underpinning values and theoretical influences. Sean placed some focus on the skills and behaviour that an emerging facilitator needs to develop, based on his view that the values and thinking of a facilitator underpin his or her behaviour.*

In the one-day program observed, Sean utilised didactic teaching, observation, and some small group discussions. The course materials and his facilitation texts provided a comprehensive outline of Sean's approach to facilitator education. Sean did involve some of the emerging facilitators in role-plays and experiential leadership opportunities and he encouraged the other participants to become involved by observing carefully and providing feedback. Discussions with Sean indicated that his normal five-day program covers similar content to the one-day program I observed, but to a greater breadth and depth. On his longer programs he also uses additional teaching methods such as video, one-on-one coaching, group coaching with audio recorded feedback, written exercises, and small group role-plays.

***Facilitator educator: Max***

Max was first employed as an industrial psychologist, but after three years was seconded from the public service to work in the higher education sector. When his entrance to the world of academia was well received, he was encouraged to continue working at the same university. In the last 25 years he has authored/co-authored numerous books and articles on group facilitation (or related topics) and now provides organisational consultancy and runs occasional facilitator education programs. Max now works full-time on consultancies and other academic work including the two-day program I observed.

The program I observed involved a very large group of 50+ emerging facilitators and consequently Max used primarily didactic methods to introduce several theoretical frameworks for facilitation practice. Max also chose to focus primarily on intentional facilitator education as shown in Figure 11, although there was some focus on technical facilitator education. The large group size precluded extensive opportunities for coaching or feedback from Max. He did, however, use some structured exercises to create nine cohesive small groups to generate a sense of community and provide opportunities for self-disclosure and relationship building. Max used some of the other approaches identified in the counsellor education literature (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; McDonnell et al., 2005; Morran, 2005) to involve participants in the learning process. For example, after a request for a demonstration of his approach to



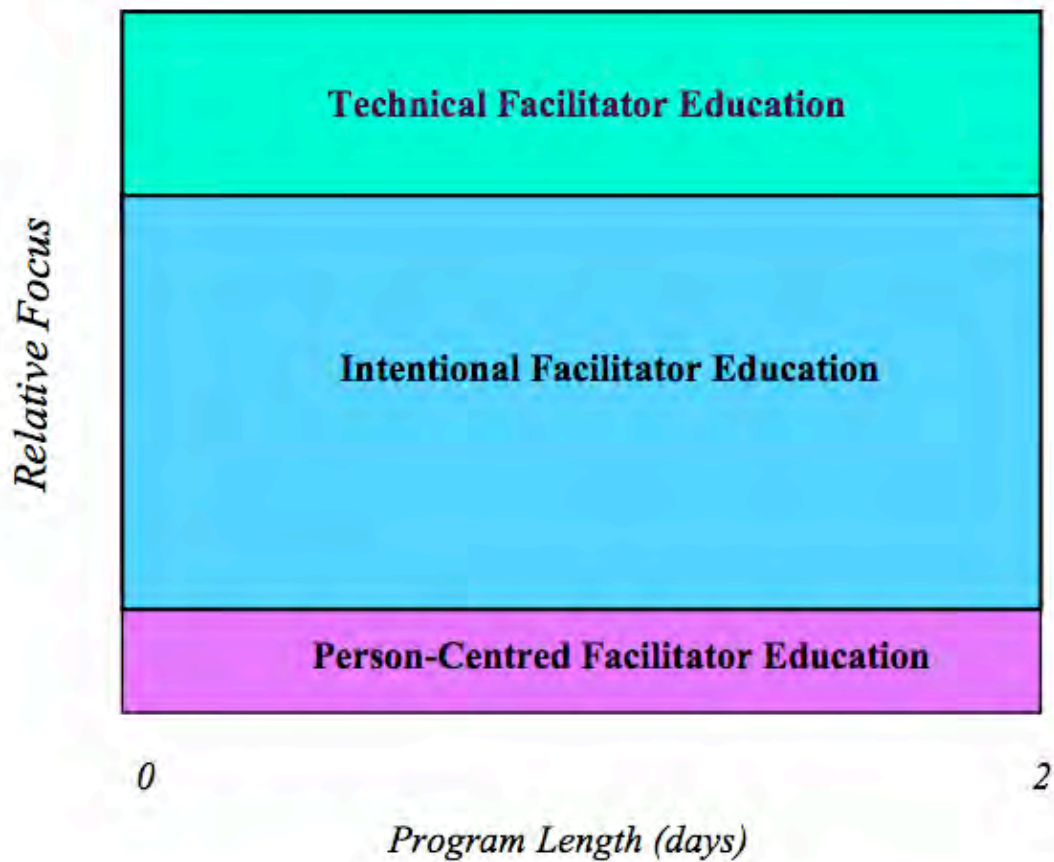


Figure 11. Facilitator education foci: Max

*The size of the group and the short duration of the program influenced the style of the facilitator education program that I observed Max deliver. His primary use of didactic approaches led to a large focus on intentional facilitator education for the duration of the program. He did place a smaller but steady focus on technical facilitator education and person-centred facilitator education, but the opportunities for practice and self-exploration were limited by the size of the group and the shorter duration of the program.*

facilitation, he used a fish bowl exercise, similar to the one recommended by Hensley (2002), to provide some of the emerging facilitators with a chance to participate in a role-play, whilst others observed. Despite the large size of the group of emerging facilitators, Max consulted the group regarding the content of the two-day workshop to make sure the program aligned with their interests. He also made good use of hypothetical case studies and narratives to involve the participants and make the theoretical material real for them. Although the large overall group size precluded extensive focus on person-centred facilitator education, Max did manage to facilitate a program that provided considerable space for reflection and the development of self-awareness, as demonstrated in Figure 11.

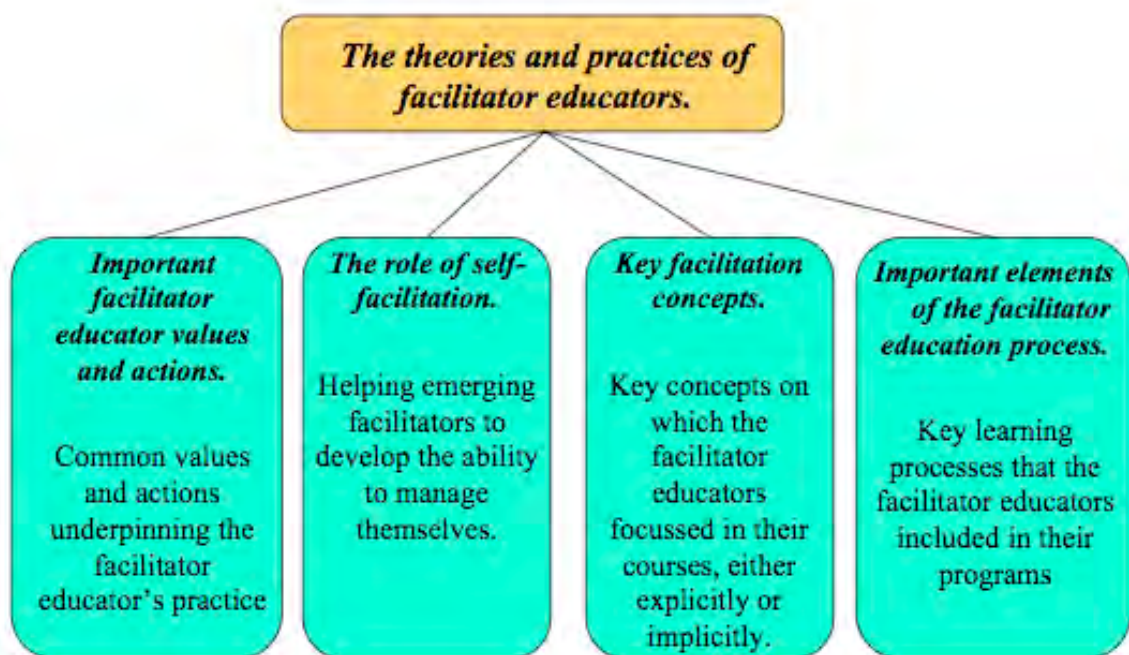
### ***Summary***

In this section I have provided a profile of each of the facilitator educators in this study. The purpose of the description provided in this section was to make it easier for the reader to interpret the findings that are presented in the following sections of this chapter. It is not the intent of this study to contrast the programs themselves, but rather to describe the facilitator education processes within each program.

The differences in the programs observed in this study allowed the facilitator educators to attract different clientele. For example, not all emerging facilitators have the time, resources, or inclination to attend the longer programs offered by two of the facilitator education organisations profiled in this section. Although the shorter and longer programs observed in this study varied in terms of depth of content, the processes used, and the nature of the learning opportunities, for the purposes of this study all of the programs provided facilitator education. The discussion that follows in the balance of this chapter is designed to address the impact of variables such as program length on the learning experience of the emerging facilitators.

## **Findings**

In the balance of this chapter I will present the findings of the study in four separate sections, one for each major theme (shown in Figure 12): important facilitator educator values and actions; the role of self-facilitation; key facilitation concepts; and critical elements of the facilitator education process. Typically, each of the themes contained several sub-themes, which emerged through a combination of the literature review and data collection processes.



*Figure 12. The major themes underlying the theories and practices of facilitator educators in this study*

The four themes, which will effectively allow for responses to be made to the research questions outlined in the previous chapter, were derived from the review of the literature and the data collected in this study. When describing the *important facilitator educator values and actions* theme, I will outline the values and actions underpinning the facilitator educator's practice. The literature is replete with suggestions for facilitation strategies but less detailed about the values and actions that promote facilitator education. In this theme an attempt is made to address the perceived gap in the literature.

In the discussion of the *role of self-facilitation* theme I will describe the importance of helping emerging facilitators to manage themselves when facilitating. This was not a strong focus of the facilitation literature in the past, although there have been a few recent publications which have addressed this issue (Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006). The need for self-facilitation was considered an important issue by the majority of the facilitator educators in this study.

My description of the *key facilitation concepts* theme addresses the primary theoretical knowledge which the facilitator educators in this study addressed in their programs. Some of the sub-themes in this major theme were identified in the literature review and some only emerged as important issues from the data collected. In my presentation and discussion of the final major theme, the *critical elements of the facilitator education process*, I will describe the key learning processes that the facilitator educators included in their programs.

The interpretation of the findings under each of these four major themes, including a discussion of the links to the literature and the dimensions of facilitator education, will be provided in separate sections. The conclusions of the study will be presented in the final chapter.

### **Important facilitator educator values and actions**

The facilitator educators in this study demonstrated some of the same values and actions, shown in Figure 13, including: *unconditional positive regard*, *commitment to coaching and supporting*, and the use of *role modelling* and *meta-facilitation*. The actions of the facilitator educators observed in the participant observation phase of this study were easily recorded. However, it was more difficult to interpret the values that facilitator educators shared because they were less overt. In this study, the potential errors that might result from high-level inferences about the values behind the observed behaviour were avoided by asking the facilitator educators about the reasons behind their actions. Hence, the discussion that follows is not my perception alone, rather it is a product of the co-creation process of interviews, member checking and participant observations with the facilitator educators themselves.

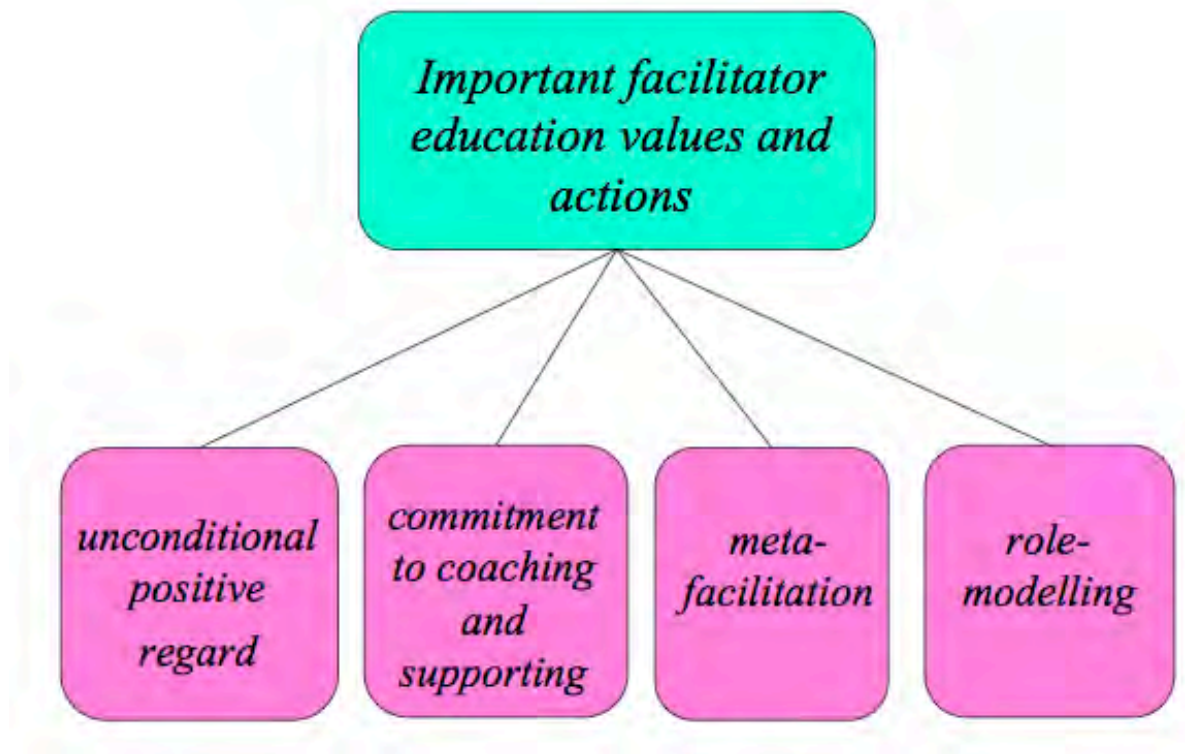


Figure 13. Important facilitator education values sub-themes

The sub-theme *unconditional positive regard* was derived from Rogers' (1983; 1989a) writing on person-centred teaching and counselling. The *commitment to coaching and supporting* sub-theme emerged from the observations of Rose and Bruce who developed their coaching approach based on the work of Heron's (2001) co-counselling. The *role-modelling* sub-theme emerged from the data collected from the facilitator educators in this study. The term *meta-facilitation* was not a term commonly found in the literature pertaining to facilitation and nor was it readily used by the facilitator educators in this study. However, it is an effective way of describing the process the facilitator educators used to enhance learning about facilitation by explaining to their emerging facilitators their reasons for doing certain things in their program. These four values are not presented as the conclusive list of the values and actions essential for effective facilitator education. Rather, they were four values and actions held by all of the facilitator educators who participated in this study. Each sub-theme will now be discussed in detail.

#### ***Unconditional positive regard***

In my observations of the facilitator educators' practice, and in ensuing discussions with them, it became apparent that they all demonstrated a consistent, positive belief in the

value and ability of their emerging facilitators. I was initially sceptical and considered this too good to be true. I suspected that the facilitator educators were saying and doing ‘all the right things’ because they were being observed, but their consistent demonstration of these actions, over extended periods in some cases, indicated the authenticity of these espoused values. For example, the following excerpts typified the Rogerian-like (Rogers, 1983, 1989a) unconditional positive regard that they demonstrated.

In her course text Rose encouraged facilitators to “Always approach group members as capable, aware and fully functioning people who are committed to the group purpose” (p. 37). She explained to me, “Yeah, I think I have had great belief in people, and what can happen.... I think that was something I was brought up with really” (Rose, transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005).

Meg taught that facilitators must value all people and their contribution because “as facilitators we get what we expect ... so watch out for goodness” (field notes, day #8, 21/5/2005). She indicated that there is always wisdom in the group and her preference was to assume good will, and trust in human beings. She described a powerful underpinning belief that good facilitators “must love all, and have an interest in all” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/2005). Meg explained to me how she chose to interpret negative behaviour from her emerging facilitators by acknowledging that “deep down there is wisdom in all of us ... [and] bad behaviour is just symptomatic of other stuff going on in people’s lives” (field notes, day #14, 14/8/05).

Sean explained he adopts a “basic assumption of competence” (field notes, 25/10/05) when working with groups and he rhetorically asked the emerging facilitators in his program, “Why should a group just use the facilitator’s data?” (field notes, 25/10/05). In this respect, Sean demonstrated a respect for the contribution that group participants can make and a respect for multiple realities; he explicitly stated, “I only have some of the data” (field notes, 25/10/05). He took the view that organisations are “mysteries to be unravelled - not problems to be solved” (field notes, 25/10/05).

Max demonstrated a similar perspective by commenting to me that he was looking forward to his facilitator education program because “there will be a lot of expertise in

the room” (field notes, 28/11/05). He demonstrated these values-in-action in his student-centeredness and in the way he communicated respect with patient and careful answers to questions. His actions demonstrated an awareness and value for emerging facilitators at various stages of development and an acceptance of, and accommodation for, different learning styles. He also welcomed contrary views with respect and when I quizzed him on this he replied, “I learn more from contrary views than from views which accord with mine” (email, 28/12/05).

The ability of Meg, Rose, and Bruce to demonstrate unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1983, 1989b) for their emerging facilitators for the duration of longer programs is congruent with the preference these three facilitator educators indicated for person-centred facilitator education. Similarly, the three other facilitator educators in this study also demonstrated a positive belief in their participants’ potential and these attitudes and values were central to the development of positive relationships with participants as a critical component of person-centered facilitator education (Hogan, 2002; Hunter et al., 1995; Hunter et al., 1999; Ringer, 2002).

### ***Commitment to coaching and supporting***

Another common feature of the facilitator educators’ programs in this study was their commitment to the coaching and supporting of the emerging facilitators, although the styles varied. Some facilitator educators used a “coaching in the moment” style (Bruce, transcribed interview #1, 16/8/05) whilst others used a more traditional approach to coaching that involved the provision of feedback and evaluation at the end of a session. The rationale for the difference in approaches was linked to what the facilitator educators considered most critical to the learning process. For example, Meg was passionate about the power of groups and maintains that what goes on in the group process is so important to all of the emerging facilitators that she avoids interrupting the group process and chooses to provide feedback later. Hence, Meg does not disturb the group process because of the important learning that it contains, not just for the practicing facilitator, but also for the other emerging facilitators in the group.

In contrast, Bruce and Rose gave feedback to the emerging facilitators in the middle of their attempts to practice facilitation without concern for the potential disruption to the group process. Bruce explained that although it is tricky coaching “in-the-moment”

(Bruce, transcribed interview #1, 16/8/05) he is committed to helping people this way. The concern for Rose and Bruce about waiting until the end of a practice session to give feedback is that it is too late for the emerging facilitator to do anything with that feedback and the most powerful learning opportunity is in the present. Rose explained that coaching in-the-moment is helpful because it “gets your brain engaged in a different way” (Rose, transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005).

Initially, when I first witnessed this style of coaching in Bruce’s program I observed that it created some discomfort for the practicing facilitator because the whole group process had stopped and all the group’s attention was on them getting coached. However, by the end of the program as the supportive learning environment developed, this style of coaching not only benefited the person involved, but it also demonstrated an effective way of working with a person in a constructive way. Rose explained that it also helps other emerging facilitators who witness the coaching to develop their own “discrimination” because they “start to see that they could have said that before [the facilitator educator] said it” (transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005). Bruce explained, “the secret is not to coach quietly, you have got to coach loudly, so that everyone’s a part of it” (transcribed interview #1, 16/8/05). He elaborated that his coaching in later stages of their diploma is “a lot more robust, and ... people are less concerned about stuff ups. In stage 1, particularly the first time people facilitate, I am really careful not to destabilize them, because you can just knock them off centre” (transcribed interview #1, 16/8/05).

Another significant aspect of Bruce’s coaching was that he was deliberately empowering with his emerging facilitators. He was careful not to foster excessive dependence on his input in the coaching situation and did not ‘rescue’ emerging facilitators who were experiencing difficulty by suggesting the ‘perfect intervention.’ At one stage he told the practicing facilitator wondering about the appropriate intervention, “What do you think, go with your gut” (field notes, day #4, 18/8/06). Bruce explained,

I have a responsibility as a facilitator trainer to use this lent authority to empower the person who lends, as they become empowered they then retrieve it from me so it is ... true that I am championing their freedom and autonomy. (Bruce, transcribed interview #1, 16/8/05)



Meg provided support between the various blocks of her seven-month program and typically about one third of the emerging facilitators contact her for some extra help at some point in her program. In the feedback on her program a number of graduates indicated they appreciated the “structured opportunity for timely feedback one-on-one with Meg” (survey response #5) about facilitation they had done outside the course. Another graduate indicated they valued the “opportunity to receive feedback from the head trainer, plus feedback from other group members” (survey response #23).

Janet provided support to her emerging facilitators and in one case asked, “How can I make it challenging but not drowning?” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05). On the same program, a guest co-facilitator used a coaching-in-the-moment approach to help one of the emerging facilitators to get back into the moment so she could re-experience the emotion and capture the learning. Later when I quizzed him on this coaching in-the-moment approach he acknowledged, “it provides rich data” and prevents everything becoming too “head based, in the mind,” which sometimes occurs with feedback given after the event (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05). He explained further,

... the skill is to evaluate the safety, you can build that by starting with their perceptions, but it does involve developing rapport and reading the participant responses, making sure the participant is comfortable with the level of vulnerability you are asking of them. (Janet’s program, field notes, day #2, 1/9/05)

On the one-day program I observed with Sean there were not many opportunities for him to demonstrate his preferred style of coaching, but during one fishbowl exercise he used a coaching in-the-moment approach with an emerging facilitator. On several occasions he stopped the exercise midstream to conduct some analysis of the situation with the rest of the emerging facilitators. Sean involved the emerging facilitators who were observing the process and solicited their feedback and observations. Sean also requested feedback from emerging facilitators in the exercise and he suggested they try an alternative intervention. When I specifically asked Sean about his preferred way of coaching emerging facilitators, he indicated that

It's a mix rather than one best way. We work with them in real-time, along side them, helping them reflect on their interventions. We also work with them after a session helping them to reflect on their interventions and the thinking that guided it. We also help them design interventions they are anticipating having to make. Another part is

modeling for them so they see what good interventions look like and how our thinking informs our interventions. Always, always, the coaching is based on moving back and forth among directly observable data (what the client and facilitator said and did), the facilitator's thinking, and the consequences that were created. (email, November 20, 2005)

The efficacy of in-the-moment feedback versus feedback provided during a time of post-activity reflection is inconclusive, and is likely to be a matter of personal style and preference. However, the critique of experiential education by Fenwick (2000) suggested that heavy reliance on post-activity reflection overemphasizes conscious, rational processes. The use of in-the-moment feedback, demonstrated by some of the facilitator educators in this study, has the potential to provide opportunities for the development of the intuitive competencies espoused by a number of authors (Ghais, 2005; Hunter et al., 1999; Luckner & Nadler, 1997) by encouraging less reliance on rationality and logic alone. Working in-the-moment with emerging facilitators also has the potential to help them to develop their ability to practice thin-slicing (Gladwell, 2005) or reflection-in-action (Schön, 1988, 1995).

### ***The use of role modelling***

The facilitator educators in this study modelled desirable facilitation behaviour as a teaching tool, extending beyond the demonstration of slick presentation techniques or facilitation strategies. Max, for example, demonstrated the effectiveness of an introverted, humble, and frequently self-evasive style. On numerous occasions he started to talk but then commented, "I'm not sure that that was the place to start" (field notes, day #1, 28/11/06). These small acts were powerful ways of reminding emerging facilitators that facilitation is not about slick, perfect, polished performances. Whilst there was no suggestion from Max that all facilitators should copy his style, for people who have only observed dynamic, upbeat facilitators, he provided an important counter to stereotypical image of perfect facilitation presented by some facilitation texts (Hart, 1991, 1992). At one stage in the program Max explained to the group that he suspected that the reason he was invited to facilitate this program was because he would model an approach to facilitation that many people would not have experienced before. Certainly, feedback from the graduates confirmed this view and some of the comments included: "Excellent modelling of process over the two days" (survey response #3) and "Max modelled what he taught" (survey response #7). The graduates of Sean's program

indicated they appreciated “watching [him] practice what he preached in a highly skilled way” (survey response #17). Another of Sean’s course graduates said he/she found it useful “evaluating what he did, and considering how I could apply it – I don’t often get to see other facilitators at work” (survey response #15).

Many of the graduates of Meg’s courses also spoke positively about the role model that she provided for participants, but some also commented that it would be helpful to be able to observe her actually working with a real group. Another graduate indicated he/she would have preferred having “more than one trainer throughout the course [because the] trainer is a role model and there needs to be a breadth of roles and techniques demonstrated” (survey graduate #8). Another graduate suggested that there would be value in bringing in other guest facilitators to allow the emerging facilitators the chance to experience another facilitation style. Janet used this practice in her program and she explained that it helps to model a different style because otherwise emerging facilitators could feel inadequate if their style differed from the single facilitator educator’s style.

As previously noted, Janet invited a professional actor to come and help with a role-play to demonstrate the skills of “scoping and preparing” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05) for a job. Using a well-known Australian actor not only added a bit of flair to the program, it also allowed Janet to more precisely demonstrate the skills she had just introduced to the group. With the help of a loose script, the professional actor allowed her to craft the exact demonstration that she thought was necessary to reinforce the principles she was trying to role model.

Hence, the facilitator educators demonstrated the effectiveness of role-modelling as a teaching strategy which is consistent with the value that group counsellor educators (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) place on the use of observation as a teaching tool. The emphasis placed on effective role-modelling is also supported by the findings of Arnold’s (2005) informal electronic survey of facilitators in 2003 in which she asked facilitators to share the strategies they used to build their expertise. The respondents indicated they “truly enjoy watching others in action” and that “as we observe others, we expand our horizons and learn more about ourselves and our possibilities” (p. 502). One specific form of role modelling used by the facilitator

educators involved the provision of rationales for their actions, or using what I have defined as meta-facilitation. In the next section I will discuss the findings in this area.

### ***The use of meta-facilitation***

Another common feature of the programs I observed was the use of meta-facilitation. All of the facilitator educators regularly promoted learning about facilitation by explaining to their emerging facilitators their reasons for doing certain things in their program. Meg argued that this is not only appropriate in facilitator education, but also in facilitation in general. She indicated that “we need to talk about what we are doing - it isn’t accidental ... I will often explain why I am doing certain things when teaching facilitation or even doing facilitation” (field notes, day #2, 19/4/05). Meta-facilitation requires the facilitator educators to make explicit use of what Schwarz (2002) described as their intentionality to promote learning about facilitation. In this respect, not only was the content of their programs educational, but commenting explicitly about the processes being used by the facilitator educators provided excellent opportunities for the emerging facilitators to learn. However, it would seem that effective use of meta-facilitation would only be possible for facilitator educators practicing intentional facilitator education; this issue will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Janet regularly explained to her emerging facilitators why she does things in certain ways. After a particularly sensitive session where some of the emerging facilitators were challenged by what she was inviting them to do, she carefully explained that her rationale was that she “wanted to take people to their learning edge, without making them run away or be defensive” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05). Bruce also used meta-facilitation extensively from the first session of his program and he worked hard to get the emerging facilitators to start thinking like facilitators. He involved the group in the analysis of what had worked in a session and he encouraged the emerging facilitators to grow accustomed to wearing two hats, that of the group participant experiencing the program, and that of the emerging facilitator who observes and analyses the program.

In effect, the use of a meta-facilitation strategy combines a number of the four primary teaching strategies described in the group counselling literature (Barlow, 2004; Berger, 1996; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; McDonnell et al., 2005; Morran, 2005). When the

emerging facilitators participate in an experiential exercise or didactic teaching, meta-facilitation also encourages them to effectively play the role of observer at the same time. The facilitator educator's use of meta-facilitation in this study provided rich multi-dimensional learning opportunities, which Berger (1996) argued increases effectiveness in group counsellor education by accommodating a range of learning styles. The effective use of meta-facilitation by the facilitator educators was enhanced by the high levels of self-awareness they demonstrated, which is one component of the self-facilitation theme discussed in the next section.

### **The role of self facilitation theme**

A recurring theme in many of the facilitator education programs was the importance of helping emerging facilitators to be able to manage themselves or practice *self-facilitation*. The research findings in this theme will be presented under the sub-themes of: *self-awareness focus*, *focus on being*, and *overcoming fears*, as shown in Figure 14.

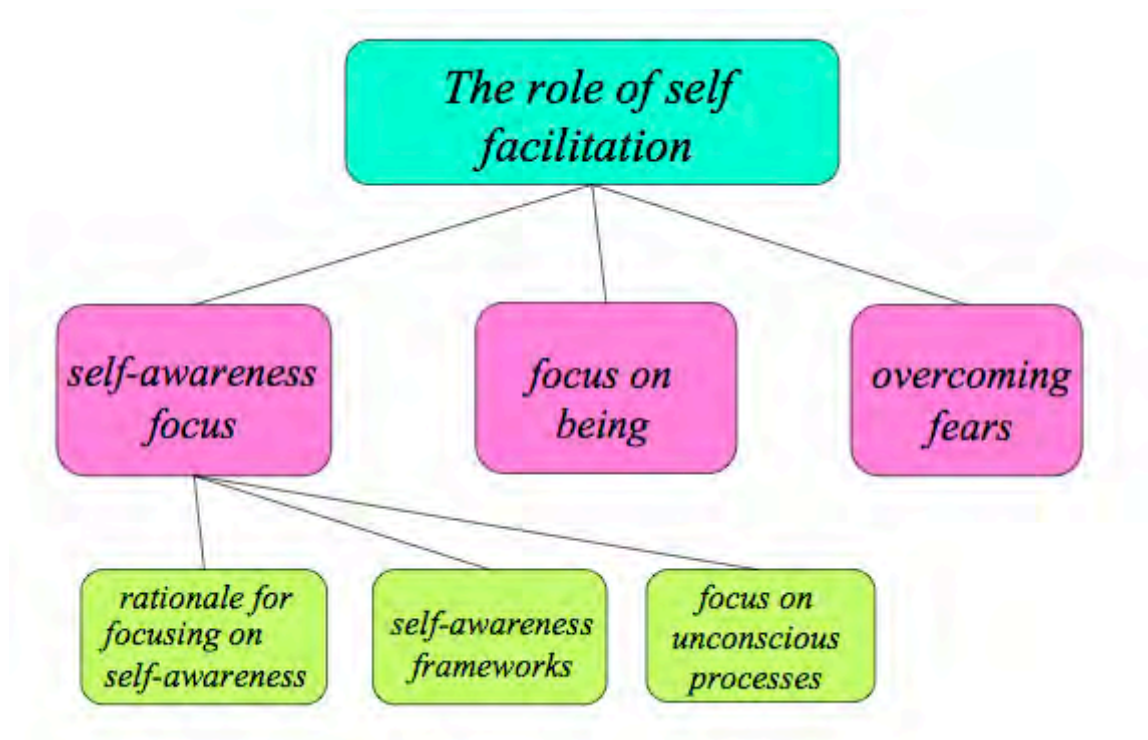


Figure 14. The role of self-facilitation sub-themes

Although the term self-facilitation is not commonly used in the facilitation literature, a number of the facilitator educators, particularly Meg, Rose and Bruce, use the term. For Meg, “facilitate first thyself” (field notes, day #1, 11/4/05) is one of her key ‘slogans.’ The sub-themes shown in Figure 14 emerged primarily from the data collected from the facilitator educators, although the need for facilitators to develop high levels of *self-awareness* was documented by Ghais (2005) and Jenkins and Jenkins (2006). The *focus on being* sub-theme was most emphasised by Rose and Bruce in their programs, although the idea of paying attention to the presence that a facilitator has in a group was discussed by Ringer (2002) and Jenkins and Jenkins (2006). The sub-theme of *overcoming fears* was discussed briefly by Kirk and Broussine (2000) and the fear of making mistakes and looking foolish was regularly raised as a concern by the emerging facilitators in the programs observed in this study. This sub-theme also involves discussion about the pressures that emerging facilitators put on themselves in what I labelled “the mythical quest for perfection” (field notes, day #14, 14/8/05). Each of these sub-themes will now be discussed in more detail.

### ***Self-awareness focus***

All of the facilitator educators focussed on helping their emerging facilitators to develop a greater self-awareness, although program length determined the extent of this focus. The longer programs, provided by Meg (20 days) and Rose and Bruce (30 days), enabled more opportunities to explore self-awareness, for two apparent reasons. First, the longer programs provided the time for the in-depth exploration of sometimes complex issues and second, the longer programs allowed the facilitator educators to develop a supportive group to enable this deeper self-exploration to occur. In the discussion of this sub-theme I will present the findings from participants in the following areas: *rationales for focusing on personal-awareness*, examples of the *self-awareness frameworks* used, and a discussion of the *focus on unconscious processes*.

#### **Rationales for focusing on self-awareness**

To some degree all of the facilitator educators articulated their reasons for focussing on self-awareness with the emerging facilitators. Meg was very clear that facilitation processes, skills, and tools are built on a firm foundation of self-awareness. She explained that emerging facilitators must have “an understanding of what pushes our buttons” (field notes, day #1, 11/4/05). For Meg, this especially applies to more difficult

facilitation contexts where high levels of interpersonal conflict are common, and in these situations, “if we can manage ourselves – we can manage the group” (field notes, day #1, 11/4/05). Julian, from the same organization as Meg, concurred with Ghais (2005) that helping emerging facilitators to develop self-awareness is more important and significantly more challenging than teaching skills and techniques. Julian explained that emerging facilitators typically

... want techniques, but it is what's between the techniques that is more important. Often people want more and more techniques to cover up for inadequate awareness and these over-structured facilitation sessions remove uncertainty and allow them to feel competent. But to ‘sit in the fire’ you must be ‘sitting in the wise seat.’ Techniques are often used to overcome any uncertainty and awkwardness and they can become a crutch. (interview notes, 16/6/05)

Rose views effective self-facilitation as essential to the development of emerging facilitators and she considers it a key component of her organisation’s approach to facilitator education. In her course text she explains, “You need to take on training yourself to be as fully conscious and awake as possible.... You need to be an Olympic athlete in self-awareness” (course text, p. 12).

The relatively shorter length of the three-day facilitator education program run by Janet lessens the focus she placed on the development of self-awareness. In a private discussion she also indicated that some emerging facilitators in her programs “are not up for this deeper stuff” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06) and they don’t come expecting such a focus. Subsequently, she offers an additional one-day course for emerging facilitators who want to focus more on developing their self-awareness. However, even in her three day course she discusses the need for facilitators to be able to “hold the space” and recognise the role of the “self as instrument” when facilitating (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06). So although Janet does not attempt intensive self-awareness work in her short program, she does explain the need for emerging facilitators to “work on yourself” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06).

Although Sean’s one day program adopted a more cognitively focussed approach to facilitator education, he still emphasised the need for emerging facilitators to become aware of any incongruence between their facilitation values, thinking, and behaviour. He

described this as the “know thyself” (field notes, 25/10/05) element of facilitator education and he maintained that emerging facilitators must be vigilant about their thinking. Sean concurs with Argyris and Schön (1996) and maintains that a facilitator can often be blind to his/her theory-in-use even though most other people can see it for what it is. Hence, exploring the discrepancy between an emerging facilitator’s espoused theory and their theory-in-use is the focus of Sean’s self-awareness work. The short nature of Sean’s program that I observed, and the size of the group present, apparently prevented more focus on self-awareness. However, during his five-day programs Sean discusses these issues in more detail.

Despite obvious program differences dictated by the time available, the facilitator educators in this study demonstrated agreement with numerous authors in the literature pertaining to facilitation that a focus on the development of self-awareness is important. Ringer (2002) encouraged group leaders to focus less on techniques and more on developing a conscious awareness of the presence they bring to groups. Hunter et al. (1995) encouraged facilitators to carefully consider who they were being for the groups they were working with. Hogan (2002) advocated personal development to help facilitators develop authenticity. The self-awareness foci encouraged by the facilitator educators in this study were also consistent with Goleman’s (1996) writing about the importance of developing emotional intelligence which could help emerging facilitators to monitor emotional states, particularly in difficult situations with groups. Finally, the emphasis on self-awareness for facilitator educators in this study was congruent with Jenkins and Jenkins’ (2006) encouragement for emerging facilitators to work hard on developing internal disciplines. Jenkins and Jenkins’ (2006) development path of ‘regarding myself,’ is also consistent with the self-awareness focus of the facilitator educators in this study.

#### Self-awareness frameworks

The facilitator educators used a variety of theoretical frameworks or approaches to develop the personal awareness of their emergent facilitators. Meg’s ‘Community of Selves’ model was used to help emerging facilitators to better understand some of the thoughts and feelings they experience when attempting to facilitate groups. The model was introduced on the third day of a twenty-day course, and from that point on in her course it underpinned much of the analysis, coaching, and discussion regarding the



development of self-awareness as facilitators. The model involves exploration of unconscious processes in facilitation settings and is based on the work of Freud and Jung. According to Meg, we have an inner community of selves that informs and guides the way we interact with the world in different contexts. At some level all selves contribute and play a part, but we also learn to subvert or control selves because we feel they need to be managed or subverted and, depending on how we have lived our lives, we learn which of our selves to “stick out the most” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05).

Meg uses the analogy of a bus with our many selves functioning like passengers. When we are facilitating, each of the passengers on ‘our bus’ has the potential to contribute wisdom to how our bus should be driven, but no single self is the best one to be driving our bus. Meg explains that our “wise one” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05) needs to be able to listen to the contribution that each of the selves brings, and to hear the wisdom those selves bring without allowing them to dominate or take over the driving of the bus. The key to managing the process well is to value the contribution that each of the selves brings. However, all selves “carry placards” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05), which were written at some stage in our lives to protect us or help us. Later in our lives it may be necessary to take down the placards and re-write them if the “advice” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05) they bring is no longer proving helpful. This approach is consistent with the conceptual approach used in Stone and Stone’s (1989) voice dialogue method, but they use the term *aware ego* to describe what Meg refers to as the wise one.

Meg encouraged the emerging facilitators in her program to do the “innerwork,” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05) necessary to process our reactions to the group dynamics when they are learning to facilitate. This call for innerwork is consistent with the approach recommended by Mindell (1995) and Ghais (2005). Meg uses a technique called *sociodramas* to foster a better understanding of the way an emerging facilitator’s ‘Community of Selves’ can interfere with the way he/she would like to facilitate. Sociodramas utilise other members of the group to portray and make tangible the negative influence that some of the facilitator’s selves may have in a re-enacted situation, which is similar to the strategies used by Stone and Stone (1989). Stone and Stone’s voice dialogue method provided a “Dramatically effective and frequently humorous tool for igniting and expanding the evolution of consciousness by helping us to explore our

subpersonalities, expand our awareness, and clarify the role of our egos in maintaining psychological health” (p. 48).

In her programs Meg places significant emphasis on being *awake*, and she used this term to describe the state of being fully aware of what is going on both inside the facilitator as well as in the group. She suggested that emerging facilitators can enhance their degree of “awakeness” (field notes, day #11, 15/7/05) by being clear on agreements with the group/client, by asking lots of good questions, and by detecting “dead rats” (unspoken group issues) (field notes, day #8, 21/4/05) before they become a problem. Part of becoming awake is to develop and nurture a strategy for “getting in touch with your wise one” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05).

Meg specifically addressed the issue of power using Mindell’s (1995) concept of *rank* to describe the different levels of power that people have in any given situation. Meg shares the concern of Kirk and Broussine (2000) that the exploitation of rank is frequently not intentional but a consequence of low self-awareness. Meg warns that another problem associated with rank is ethnocentricity, especially if the emerging facilitator is part of the dominant culture, and “we must be careful that we are not carrying the *assumption of rightness*” (field notes, day #11, 15/7/05). This is consistent with Warren’s (1998) concerns that facilitators are often unaware of their own biases and prejudices.

Janet used the adult learning concept of *learning edges* to enhance the self-awareness of participants. This process is like Vygotsky’s (1978) *Zone of Proximal Development* theory, where instruction bridges that gap between what is known and what can be known. Janet explained that adults learn differently from children, in that adults tend to learn more in bits, but that those tiny pieces of information can actually cause significant shifts in behaviour. The implication for emerging facilitators is that they do not need to learn a lot to develop their self-awareness, but that they need to work out where their learning edge is. Janet explained that emerging facilitators need to ask, “Where is the little piece of discomfort for us that will bring the big breakthroughs” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05). Janet’s views were consistent with the concept of *instructional scaffolding* (Vygotsky, 1978), because she maintained that her role was to support the emerging facilitators as they develop strategies to deal with challenging situations better. According to Janet, some people will be able to access the tools to do this “working on

yourself” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05) with no outside help. However, she did warn that once an emerging facilitator resolves one area of dysfunction, he or she will find another, which is why she maintained that the journey of becoming an effective facilitator is always interesting, albeit at times a little frustrating.

Janet advocated that emerging facilitators understand their motivations and this focus is pursued further in the one day program called *Polishing the Mirror* that she organises with an external facilitator. However, Janet was careful to explain that the “journey of self-discovery” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05) only starts with this one-day program and that her personal journey has been going on for three years. Another function of the self-awareness journey, according to Janet, is to help the emerging facilitators develop an awareness of how their worldviews shape their interventions. This is consistent with Schwarz’s (2002; 2005) call for facilitators to be intentional and explicit about the values and beliefs that shape their practice.

Rose and Bruce acknowledged that facilitation has more to do with who you are, and who you are being, rather than tools or techniques, which is consistent with the perspective provided by Jenkins and Jenkins (2006). In Rose’s and Bruce’s approach to facilitator education, self management is a core concept and facilitation training is “fast-track personal development because you keep finding out things you need to do better” (field notes, day #1, 16/8/06). In discussions with me about self-facilitation as the key to effective facilitation, Rose explained that emerging facilitators who find themselves getting ‘triggered’ need

some kind of a personal development method, some way of processing all that stuff. There needs to be a lot more work put into that among the facilitation community, ‘cos usually that is pretty much just ignored. But I think that people will have their own way of handling stuff that comes up, so I certainly wouldn’t like to say, or dictate, how people would work with it, but definitely, everyone needs some method. And it could be going for a walk in the bush, or meditation, or yoga. (Rose, transcribed interview #1, 20/8/2005)

Hence, Rose and Bruce are not prescriptive about the frameworks or tools emerging facilitators should use on their journey of self-awareness. Despite Rose’s background in co-counselling and Bruce’s in psychodrama, neither of them has formally integrated these approaches into the way their organisation delivers its programs. Rose indicated that her preference has been to allow emerging facilitators to find their own tool for

personal development, rather than to be prescriptive about the use of any single approach.

The emphasis placed on self-awareness in the facilitator education programs observed in this study seemed to be linked to program length. The longer programs observed in this study, facilitated by Meg, Rose and Bruce, placed more emphasis on developing self-awareness than the shorter programs. This observation is supported by Ringer's (2002) discussion about the importance of *containment* and the shorter programs observed in this study did not provide the necessary level of safety for the facilitator educators to engage their emerging facilitators in the same depth of self-exploration. Ringer explained, "adequate containment refers to group members having the conscious and unconscious sense of being firmly held in the group and its task" (p. 227), otherwise the potential of the reflective space will be reduced.

#### Focus on unconscious processes

A number of the facilitator educators focused on the unconscious processes at work in groups and the facilitation role. Meg uses her Community of Selves model to gently make "the underworld accessible without doing 10 years of psychotherapy" (field notes, day #3, 19/4/06). She indicates that exploration of these often dark recesses must be invitational and the "unconscious isn't dragged out," but rather "it must be invited out, teased out, getting permission to go there and with love" (field notes, day #3, 19/4/06). Meg's use of sociodramas was an effective way of helping the emerging facilitators become more conscious of some of their internal processes that were previously outside their level of awareness. She considered her framework for exploring the unconscious a "way of going deeply, lightly" (field notes, day #3, 19/4/06). In this respect, Meg was aligned with Ringer (2002), who encouraged group leaders to accept that rewards may come from greater understanding of unconscious processes and he sought to provide an avenue for such exploration without complex jargon or techniques.

Rose puts unconscious processes in groups on the facilitator education agenda in her course text in the following excerpt.

If you want group effectiveness and synergy, you need to know you can't get there without taking care of the multi-dimensional nature of the group. It's like an iceberg – probably 90 percent of what is really going on is submerged and will go unnoticed unless the facilitator or a participant draws attention to it, bringing it to the consciousness of the group as a whole. (p. 69)

Janet discussed in her program how unconscious processes can get in the way of effective learning. She indicated that “the reason it is hard to get to your [learning] edge is that you have a self-defensive mechanism” and that “these mechanisms are good at keeping us away” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05) from some important discoveries. In Janet's view, making explicit the aspects of facilitation that an emerging facilitator is finding most challenging exposes his/her self-protecting mechanism, moving it from the person's unconscious into his/her conscious level of awareness. This view is consistent with Jung's perspective of shadow selves (Neville, 2005) and the way they can disrupt a person's effective functioning.

Rose's and Meg's emphasis on helping emerging facilitators to develop an awareness of unconscious processes in themselves, others and groups is consistent with Ringer's (2002) approach to training group leaders, and Neville's (2005) discussion of unconscious processes in teacher education. There will be more discussion on the related concept of intuition in facilitation under the next theme of key facilitation concepts.

### ***Focus on being***

The overlapping and related concepts of *being-with*, *being real*, or *being in the moment* were included by many of the facilitator educators in their courses. The essence of this principle is that effective facilitation is about more than *doing* things with groups. The facilitator educators demonstrated that there are intrapersonal and interpersonal elements that the emerging facilitators must understand and practice even though our Western culture finds them elusive and slippery to describe. In the programs run by Bruce and Rose, they specifically teach emerging facilitators about the concept of *being-with* and they explain:

Being-with is a conscious act of connecting with others. Being-with is about being aware of your own sense of self and at the same time sensing the self of another.... It also involves having a strong respect for another's limits, boundaries and choices. (course text, p. 34)

In their entry-level course, Bruce explained to me, "I am trying to help them develop a way of being that is effective but also co-operative. And one of the things about that is being kind of real" (transcribed interview #1, 16/8/2005). When coaching an emerging facilitator in the midst of a difficult intervention with a fellow participant, Bruce countered the common view of technical facilitation by suggesting to the emerging facilitator that "it is not about doing something clever, it's about being with [another emerging facilitator] in your spirit and heart" (field notes, day #4, 18/8/05). Bruce encouraged this individual to "respond in your being" because the people we facilitate "need to know that we are there for them" (field notes, day #4, 18/8/05).

Meg explained to her emerging facilitators that the "key to good facilitation is about being real, being yourself" (interview notes, 16/6/05). Max explained that "when people experience others as people that is all it takes" (field notes, day #1, 28/11/05), suggesting that good facilitation is not about activities, but rather it is more about helping participants to make real contact with each other. Hence, being real is not only a goal for emerging facilitators because it helps their facilitation, but it is also beneficial because it role models an effective form of interpersonal functioning for the future recipients of their facilitation efforts. This focus on being real was one of the hallmarks of Rogers' (1983; 1989a) person-centred approaches to teaching and counselling.

In a discussion with emerging facilitators on Janet's program, we agreed that it was much more professional to be transparent about our needs as facilitators than to pretend they do not exist, or to try and ignore them. This is also congruent with Ghais' (2005) call for facilitators to be more authentic, and in her experience, "one of the most effective interventions I can make is to admit when a meeting is not going well and I don't know how to get it back on track" (p. 15). However, this works against the common demand that facilitators sometimes place on themselves, which is to know how to deal with every situation perfectly and immediately. Ghais suggested that being comfortable with your shortcomings actually can help a facilitator to improve the process or outcomes of

facilitation. This perspective is not supported by some of the technical facilitator education literature, which promotes concepts such as ‘faultless facilitation’ (Hart, 1991, 1992).

Rose and Bruce teach emerging facilitators to be comfortable with being in the moment by encouraging them to be fully “present” with the group so they can respond to group issues in “real time,” rather than feeling they have to implement some predetermined plan (Bruce, field notes, day #1, 15/8/05). Rose explains in her course text, “A facilitator doesn’t know what to say in advance. You listen for what needs to be spoken to facilitate the group. This is what you speak ‘in the moment’” (p. 48). Bruce claimed, “the trick is to stay in the present, don’t get tempted to go into the future, you can only facilitate in the present” and “interventions must occur in the moment” (field notes, day #4, 18/8/05). He explained to me that their diploma, “is all about being present with each other in the moment, and engaging with each other in the moment, and engaging with what is emerging” (transcribed interview #1, 16/8/2005). Rose and Bruce’s perspective is consistent with Ringer’s (2002) goal of helping facilitators to “become more comfortable with the experience of not knowing exactly what is going on, but remaining fully present in the experience” (p. 19).

### ***Overcoming fears***

The primary fear that emerging facilitators discussed regularly in the programs I observed was the ‘fear of failure,’ especially the failure to make the right intervention at the right time. This is consistent with the state of *immobilised awareness*, which Kirk and Broussine (2002) said occurs when a facilitator is fearful of getting it wrong, or fearful of making a difficult intervention. In the facilitation courses I observed, the emerging facilitators regularly expressed frustration and disappointment with their own mistakes and imperfections when trying to facilitate. This was despite the fact that the facilitator educators promoted a different perspective on mistakes and failures.

We never get to the point that we are so experienced that we never stuff up [and] good facilitation is about being robust enough to make mistakes ... humility is a significant characteristic of a facilitator and the opposite of being required to be the expert. (Meg, interview notes, 16/6/05)

Bruce specifically sought to create a learning culture that embraced risk-taking because it allowed emerging facilitators to learn more. He deliberately set out to create, “a place to

bring forth our brilliant and broken bits” (field notes, day 1, 16/8/06). This perspective on the role of mistakes to effective learning is consistent with the experiential learning literature (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Boud et al., 1993; Itin, 1999; Ringer, 2002).

As mentioned previously, Max not only talked about tolerance for mistakes, but he also role modelled an openness and ease when dealing with the awkwardness of recovering from a mistake. Max, it seemed, was comfortable to be quiet for five to ten seconds in order to refocus and start again. He explained further,

If I get really stuck, I just say, ”I am really stuck,” and I suggest we back away from it. I then usually ask for suggestions. If there are no suggestions, which gain agreement, I may then ask participants to join me in collecting information and analysing our process. (Max, email, 28/12/06)

One of the graduates of Max’s programs indicated in the survey that he/she found “the careful choice of words and language and the explicit backtracking to select a more correct phrase” (survey response #20) really helpful.

Janet took a different approach to managing the quest for perfectionism in emerging facilitators, by suggesting that “it is okay to operate with a limp, however, if you want to ‘run marathons,’ you may have to deal with it” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06). Her intent was that although perfection is not a prerequisite to effective facilitation, if emerging facilitators want to be able to facilitate more effectively in difficult situations (run marathons) then they may need to do the innerwork necessary to eliminate their limp (their imperfections) in the future. This is consistent with Mindell’s (1995) call for facilitators to embrace the innerwork required to overcome their ineffectiveness, whilst acknowledging the debilitating effects of seeking perfection.

The facilitator educators described the ‘fear of intervening’ as one of the most debilitating internal fears that facilitators must learn to deal with. Meg indicated that emerging facilitators regularly find it difficult to get up the courage to make the required intervention when working with a group. Janet used the term “decatastrophising” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06) to describe the process of learning to deal with these, often irrational, fears. She explained,



Many participants are fearful that they will make an absolute mess of things, that it will be disastrous, that they will look stupid or be unable to cope. Recognizing that this just doesn't happen much is crucial to debunking that myth. (field notes, day #2, 1/9/06)

Janet concurred with the early work of Clance and Innes (1978) on the debilitating effect of the *imposter syndrome* which causes unfounded feelings of inadequacy. Janet indicated that it is common for emerging facilitators, particularly women, to doubt their ability and right to be facilitating a group. Janet suggested that 60% of all professional women suffer from this lack of self-efficacy, a finding consistent with the Clance and Innes' work.

The difficulty of dealing with this fear of intervening is the tendency for the inexperienced facilitator to retreat to the relative security of "more structured facilitation" because of the stress and uncertainty of "facilitating in the moment" (Rose, transcribed interview, 20/8/05). Meg warned her emerging facilitators to "be careful that you don't overuse technology because it can be used to avoid debates or arguments and it can be used to avoid 'sitting in the fire' and missing the vibrant, robust discussion" (field notes, day #10, 18/6/05). This is consistent with Ringer's (2002) view that the "leader's role is aided less by technique than by a 'presence' aided by conscious awareness of one's own subjectivity" (p. 18).

In closing the discussion on this theme, self-facilitation is an essential component of the person-centred approach to facilitator education and is critical to developing positive interpersonal relationships between the facilitator and group which Rogers (1983) described as a key element of good teaching and counselling. The longer facilitator education programs of Meg, Rose and Bruce were better suited to providing emerging facilitators with the necessary time and group support to work on their self-facilitation. For Meg, Bruce and Rose, their longer programs helped to create learning groups which were "purposeful, bounded and safe" (Ringer, 2002, p. 194).

An issue within the theme of self-facilitation is the potential blurring between facilitator education and psychotherapy. Some of the sessions run by Meg, Bruce and Rose appeared more like therapy sessions for troubled individuals than programs designed to help people to develop as facilitators. This issue will be discussed further when the theme, the 'importance of the group process,' is discussed. However, similar concerns

have been expressed in the group counselling literature about the blurring of the line between group counselling training and therapy (Yalom, 1995). Kottler (2004) noted that despite the discomfort of experiential participation in group counsellor training processes for some participants, the potential benefits make the focus on personal development worthwhile. The next theme to be explored in this chapter focuses on the *key facilitation concepts* that the facilitator educators covered in their programs.

### **Key facilitation concepts theme**

The facilitator educators in this study demonstrated, either explicitly or implicitly, a commitment to the importance of several key facilitation concepts, which are shown in Figure 15. In some respects, these concepts represent key theoretical content or understandings that the facilitator educators taught their emerging facilitators, although I am not suggesting that this is an exhaustive list. The research findings in this theme will be presented under the sub-themes of: *clarity of facilitation roles*, *clarity of values*, *the need for intentionality*, and *the place of intuition*.

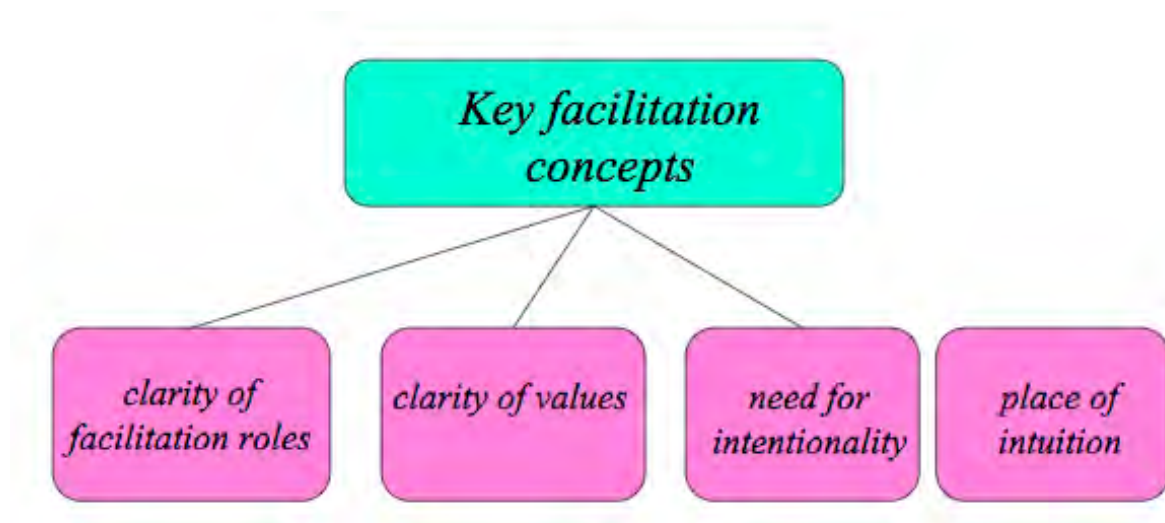


Figure 15. *Key facilitation concepts sub-themes*

The need for *clarity of facilitator roles* and *values* was mentioned by a number of the facilitator educators, but Sean was the strongest influence in the development of these sub-themes through his course materials and text books. The *need for intentionality* sub-theme was identified as an important feature of facilitation in the literature (Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Killion & Simmons, 1992; Robson & Beary, 1995; Schwarz, 2002, 2005)

and was adopted as a key descriptor in the dimensions of facilitator education used in this study. Similarly, the *place of intuition* was discussed in the literature in relation to decision making (Gladwell, 2005), the way professionals practice (Schön, 1988, 1995), and in the practice of facilitation (Ghais, 2005; Hunter et al., 1999; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Each of these sub-themes will now be discussed in more detail.

### ***Clarity of facilitation roles***

A number of the facilitator educators focused on the need for emerging facilitators to be clear and explicit about their role as facilitators with groups in the future, which is aligned with the stance of numerous authors in the literature pertaining to facilitation (Eller, 2004; Priest et al., 2000). Sean provided the clearest framework for understanding the range of facilitation roles possible in his course materials including: *Facilitator*; *Facilitative consultant*; *Facilitative coach*; *Facilitative trainer* and *Facilitative leader*.

According to Sean's description of these roles, all of them are experts on, or highly skilled in, the process of facilitation, but the thing that varies most significantly is their involvement with content. Two of the graduates from Sean's programs indicated that they found the language and discussion around the various roles of facilitators helpful and interesting. Sean's list is consistent with the way other authors have described the roles of facilitative coach (Davidson & Schwarz, 2005), facilitative trainer (McKinney & Beane, 2005), and facilitative leader (Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006).

Rose includes specific discussion in her programs on how the emerging facilitators can apply facilitation skills and knowledge they are learning to their own contexts. She explained, "It is true that a lot of facilitation is done as part of something else: the facilitative manager, the facilitative leader, or facilitative coach" (transcribed interview, 20/8/05). Sean warned his emerging facilitators that the facilitative leader role is the most difficult to play because of the full involvement in content and process. Max expressed similar concerns about the challenge of being involved in both process and content and he warned, "being a facilitator and participant is a difficult task [because it is] very difficult to facilitate when immersed in content" (field notes, day #2, 29/11/05). Janet also acknowledged that facilitators can successfully manage the dual role of content and process expert, but "this needs to be transparent, negotiated, and accepted in the scoping

stage” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05) of the consultation agreement with the client. She continued, “It is about knowing how to wear two hats, about being transparent, about knowing which one you are wearing, and being able to communicate that to the group” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05). Janet was adamant that facilitators “cannot be sorting out roles in the mixture of the process ... it has to be done beforehand” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05), but she also acknowledged that it can be “adjusted as required, with the permission of group” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05).

Bens (2005) was adamant that facilitators need to be explicit with participants about the nature of their role and this requires the consent of the group. She also suggests that engaging with content is a trap for novice facilitators and it can cause facilitators to lose their appointed role.

Despite these challenges, Sean maintained that a single facilitator can move seamlessly between the five facilitative roles he presented, as long as he/she does it transparently. However, he emphasised the need for consistency in all roles because this allows you to act with integrity. The importance of being transparent about the facilitative role does, by default, require the emerging facilitators to be intentional about their practice and this issue will now be discussed in more detail.

### *Need for intentionality*

The facilitator educators in this study agreed that there is a need for facilitators to be intentional, although there were differences in how they encouraged their emerging facilitators to practice in this way. Although the facilitator educators were able to provide rationales for their actions, it was my perception that for some of them this discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) developed more fully during their participation in my study. It was as if their participation in the research process helped the facilitator educators to clarify, and put into words, the theoretical foundations underpinning their practice. It is possible that the facilitator educators’ reflections on the questions posed to them helped to make conscious previously tacit knowledge. This was rewarding because it was the kind of outcome that I had hoped for.

Meg was committed to the principle of intentionality in facilitation although she preferred the term *being purposeful*, meaning “the interventions we choose need to be based on conscious purpose” (interview notes, 16/6/05). Meg and Julian maintained that “good facilitation is about choosing consciously ... [whereas]... the alternative is to react [unconsciously]” (interview notes, 16/6/05). Another one of Meg’s slogans is that the facilitator is at the service of the group, and “our values and principles need to guide our practice” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05). She explained that facilitators need “to be conscious, to know why, even if it begins as intuition ... we need to translate it to a why ... with an understanding of the purpose and results” (interview notes, 16/6/05).

Janet taught in her program that the primary role of a facilitator is “to deliver key goals and outputs in a meaningful and purposeful way” (field notes, day #2, 1/9/05). She explained that facilitators not only need to be explicit about their role with the group, they also “need to have a good reason for doing the things we do” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05). Max and Sean both share a common theoretical foundation in the work of Argyris and Schon (1996) and consequently, their views on intentionality are quite similar. Max explains, “my preference is to make my motives/action transparent, this allows the group to step up quicker” (field notes, day #2, 29/11/05) and be less reliant on the facilitator. However, Max acknowledged that there will always be “flaws in our intentionality, and gaps between our espoused theory and our theory-in-use” (field notes, day #2, 29/11/05). Sean is one of the more outspoken authors on the issue of intentionality in facilitation, and his writing was pivotal in the development of the intentional facilitator education dimension used in this study. In my discussions with Sean he indicated that whether or not the facilitator is aware of them, or can articulate them to others, every facilitator works from a set of values and assumptions and it is impossible not to. Sean considers the relevant questions for emerging facilitators to be:

- 1) Do you know what your values and assumptions in use are?
- 2) Can you articulate them to clients so they can make a choice about whether they want to work with you?
- 3) Do you have a way of identifying and closing the gap between the values/assumptions you espouse and the ones that you actually use? (email, 20/11/05)

I asked Sean how emerging facilitators developed the values that underpin his approach and he indicated that in his longer programs, “everything we do is related back to the core values/assumptions - the values are the foundation” (email, 20/11/05). Another key to Sean’s approach to facilitator education is transparency and he indicated,

This means that the facilitator is able to share his/her reasoning for the interventions he/she makes. In order to be transparent with your clients, you need to have access to your reasoning process. As you get more skilled in the approach you more quickly access your reasoning underlying any intervention you make. (email, 20/11/05)

The commitment to intentional facilitator education demonstrated by the facilitator educators in this study was aligned with the calls for intentionality made by numerous authors (Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Killion & Simmons, 1992; Robson & Beary, 1995; Schwarz, 2002, 2005) and all of the facilitator educators were able to provide some explicit theoretical rationales for their own practice. However, less evident in the practice of the facilitator educators were well constructed, explicit strategies for helping emerging facilitators to develop their own intentionality. Sean was the only exception, because his approach to facilitator education is so deliberately based on an explicit set of values and assumptions. The tension between intuition and intentionality was one of the contentious issues within the intentional facilitator education dimension and parallels the tension between practical consciousness and discursive consciousness in Giddens’ (1984) Theory of Structuration. The next sub-theme explores the place of intuition in the practice of the facilitator educators in this study.

### ***The place of intuition***

The need to be intentional is a prerequisite for facilitators to be transparent with participants about their practice. If a facilitator cannot practice at a level of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984), then explicit transparency is not an option. This concept refutes the notion of a facilitator completely relying on intuition to guide his/her practice, but does not completely dismiss the potential contribution that intuition may make when facilitating groups. Sean expressed the following perspective on intuition.

I think of intuition as the ability to act effectively in situations without having conscious access to the reasoning process that generated the effective behaviour. I think intuition is valuable and at the same time limiting. I don't know how to teach other facilitators (or my clients) what

I know intuitively but cannot articulate. My goal is to close the gap – as much as possible – between what I know intuitively and what I can explain, recognizing that there will always be a gap. (email, 20/11/05)

Despite the limitations that facilitation grounded in intuition presents in terms of intentionality, many of the facilitator educators addressed the value and place of intuitive processes with their emerging facilitators. Meg acknowledged that sometimes it is possible to know something without understanding why, but she recommends emerging facilitators use a particular strategy with their participants, “If you have a hunch, explore that hunch, if it is denied, okay move on, usually it will re-occur” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05). Meg encouraged the emerging facilitators to test intuitive hunches, and to collect more data. For Meg, the key to the successful use of intuition in facilitation is to be

... very tuned in and awake. The awakesness is the key to managing the process. There are no easy rules or recipes. It takes lots of judgement, and practice is very important ... Intuition needs to be grounded in the wise self. (interview notes, 16/6/05)

Janet suggests to her emerging facilitators that it can be hard to “trust your gut” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05) when it flies in the face of the other information. When she was coaching an emerging facilitator in a role play, she encouraged her by saying, “your gut is a good indicator, tune into it and trust it” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05). Rose and Bruce present intuition as one of the *essences* or *distinctions* of facilitation, in the second stage of their diploma program. Rose explained in the course text, “Being connected with and using your intuition is essential as a facilitator. Often you will need to act in the moment, with little or no time to think” (p. 76). Rose explains that intuition involves a whole lot of capacities, which our Western society is poorly equipped to understand. In her programs she presents a model that identifies twelve aspects of the whole-person and some of those twelve aspects, for example, *energetic* and *psychic* elements are not well accepted in Western culture. However, from her experience running programs in China she indicated that emerging facilitators there were more accepting of these dimensions.

I found that when I went to China at the beginning of this year and ... trained some facilitators there, I talked about the idea of the whole person and they said, “Yes, yes, yes of course, we’ve known that for 2000 years.” So in some cultures that is just taken for granted. (transcribed interview, 20/8/06)

The facilitator educators placed different emphasis on the need for intuition when facilitating groups. Rose, Bruce and Meg were more prepared to recognise non-rational elements in the facilitation process outside of conscious awareness. Their perspective was consistent with Gladwell's (2005) description of rapid decision making, or thin-slicing. Facilitators have to assess large amounts of information and make important decisions quickly and some of these decisions are made behind what Gladwell described as the "locked door" (p. 51) of our conscious mind. Sean was less accepting of Gladwell's assertion that "we need to accept the mysterious nature of our snap judgements ... [and] ... that it is possible to know without knowing why we know" (p. 52). Taken to an extreme, this reliance on snap judgements is equivalent to acting at Giddens' (1984) level of unconsciousness. However, Meg, Rose and Bruce considered intuition as another source of potentially valuable data that needs to be tested like all other data. This is actually similar to the process of *testing inferences* that Sean advocates within his approach. If the facilitator is able to transparently present his/her hunch or best guess of what might be going on in a group, then it does not matter if "the evidence we use to make decisions is buried somewhere in our unconscious, and we cannot dredge it up" (Gladwell, 2005, p. 50), especially if the group is encouraged to refute the facilitator's perception and provide an alternate view. This is congruent with Gladwell's assertion that "we are not helpless in the face of our first impressions ... [and] ... just because something is outside of awareness doesn't mean it's outside of control" (p. 96).

Hence, the person-centered facilitator educators in this study concurred with Gladwell (2005) that neither analytical nor intuitive decision-making is good or bad, but that both need to be used in appropriate circumstances. The challenge for facilitator educators, which Meg, Rose and Bruce demonstrated well, is to help emerging facilitators manage their intuition, thin slicing, or rapid cognition, to know "when to put the brakes on that process: when to consciously resist a particular kind of snap judgement" (Gladwell, 2005, p. 141). The focus on self-awareness and self-facilitation, typical of person-centred facilitator education, can help emerging facilitators "become expert at using our behaviour and our training to interpret – and decode – what lies behind our snap judgments and first impressions" (Gladwell, 2005, p. 183).



### *Clarity of values and thinking*

The fact that facilitator educators seemed to share some key values was discussed earlier, but there was less clarity around the place of values, or values education in the facilitator education process. Although some of the facilitator educators discussed the need for emerging facilitators to be explicit and intentional about the theories and values that guide their practice, the facilitator educators were less articulate about the process recommended to achieve that goal.

I asked Rose, “What processes occur either implicitly or explicitly to develop the emerging facilitator’s values? Do they develop their own values? Or do they end up adopting [the organisation’s] values?” Rose suspected that their emerging facilitators would demonstrate a wide range of values,

but if I had to take a guess at what they were doing, I would say they tended more towards kind of maybe, slightly left wing values, I would hope so (laughs) ... I think it is definitely value based, but I guess discovering the values on which it is based, has been part of my journey too. And I don’t know that I have totally got to the bottom of that yet. (transcribed interview, 20/8/06)

At one stage in her program Meg encouraged discussion in unsupervised, small groups to attempt to clarify what the emerging facilitators felt their values were. However, the values clarification process was quite loose and not covered in great depth. At one stage in my field notes I wrote,

We are encouraged to be clear on the place of our values in the course in order to practice intentionally, but there seems to have been little focus so far on the strategies to develop this awareness of the values that we currently hold. Without this I wonder if we just end up unwittingly copying Meg's facilitation strategies ... which is all well and good until things go wrong. Also, the facilitator may not be clear why they do certain things and how it fits their values, other than they saw Meg do it. (Meg, field notes, day #7, 20/5/05)

In a later discussion on this issue, Meg said she recognised the need for clearer values clarification in her program, because she held the view that “values underpin everything.... [and] it is important to know the purpose behind our actions – that we are grounded in principles and values” (field notes, day #8, 21/5/05). Reflecting on this issue I wrote,

We don't have to actually understand a value for it to guide our behaviour, but if we can become more aware of how they might be guiding us ... it increases our chance of intervening effectively. Without this awareness, our long held, core values might be shaping who we are being (unconsciously), even though our learned values are meant to be guiding what we are doing. (field notes, day #8, 21/5/05).

This is consistent with the perspectives of Gladwell's (2002) and Argyris and Schön (1996) who explained that our espoused theory or values are sometimes subsumed in times of stress by less admirable values or theory-in-use.

Of all the facilitator educators observed in this study, Sean most explicitly focussed on values. He encouraged his emerging facilitators to adopt the values and ground rules presented in his approach. However, Sean also acknowledged that it is possible to facilitate well from other values, but commented, "I'd need to know what those specific values are and how the facilitator operationalizes them in interventions to assess whether I thought these values led to 'good facilitation'" (email, 20/11/05). I asked Sean how he helps emerging facilitators develop the values necessary for effective facilitation. He replied that his approach

addresses values by having the facilitator be explicit about the values that guide his/her work, and by asking clients whether they want to work with the facilitator given this. Then the facilitator models the values, and in developmental work, helps clients see how their behavior reflects values that are congruent or incongruent with [his approach]. It's a combination of being taught and caught - to use your terms. In our longer programs, everything we do is related back to the core values/assumptions - the values are the foundation. (email, 20/11/05)

Sean's approach is similar to Gladwell's (2005) view that we have both conscious attitudes and unconscious attitudes. Gladwell warned that judgments can "tumble out before we've even had time to think" and because we "don't deliberately choose our unconscious attitudes ... we may not even be aware of them" (p. 85). Sean encouraged emerging facilitators to become more conscious of their attitudes and values by engaging in vigorous reflection with the help of others or a coach.

In the discussion on this theme I have highlighted some of the primary concepts that the facilitator educators taught in their programs. These included the clarity of facilitation roles, clarity of values, the need for intentionality, and the place of intuition. In the next

section I will discuss the aspects of the facilitator education process that the facilitator educators in this study deemed critical in their programs.

### **Important elements of the facilitator education process**

The facilitator educators in this study demonstrated a wide range of processes in their programs and in this section I will highlight some of the more pertinent aspects of their practice. Whereas in the previous theme, key concepts that the facilitator educators taught in their programs were discussed, in this theme the key strategies that the facilitator educators used to help their emerging facilitators learn those concepts are addressed. The research findings discussed in this theme will be presented under the sub-themes of: *the importance of the group process*; *the focus on theories and models*; *opportunities for practice*; *the focus on skills and techniques*; *learning centred focus*; and *strategies to optimise learning*. In some respects, these sub-themes, shown in Figure 16, could be interpreted as key learning processes that facilitator educators need to include in their courses.

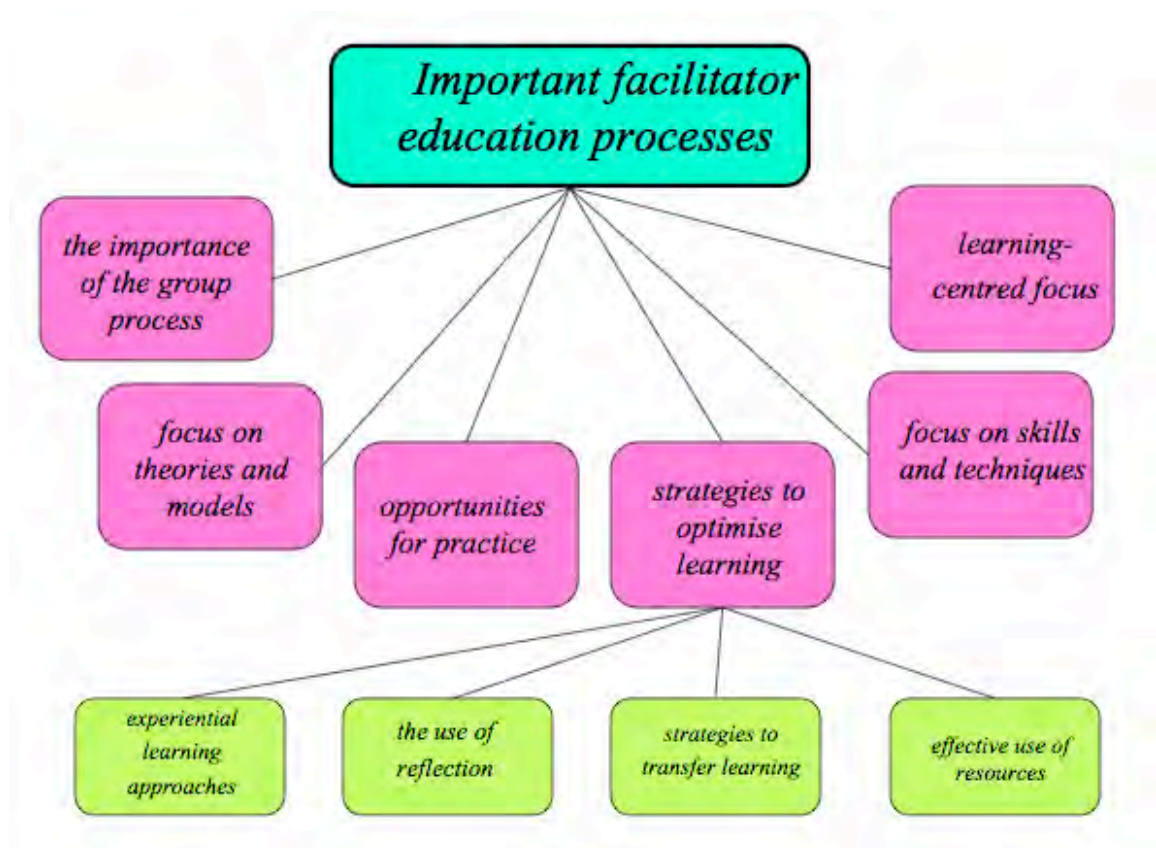


Figure 16. Important facilitator education processes sub-themes

Most of the sub-themes shown in Figure 16 emerged from the data collected during the study. For example, *the importance of the group process* was considered critical by Meg and it shaped the way she designed her whole program. Max and Sean provided the most *focus on theories and models*, but all of the facilitator educators discussed the importance of providing *opportunities to practice*, practicing in a way that *optimised the learning* of the emerging facilitators, and some *focus on skills and techniques*. Some of the sub-themes shown in Figure 16 have featured prominently in the facilitation literature. The literature reviewed in the technical dimension of facilitator education (for example, Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999) included discussion of the need to focus on skills and techniques. One of the key authors who shaped the development of the *learner-centred* sub-theme was Weimer (2002), who wrote extensively about student-learning centred teaching in higher education. Each of these sub-themes will now be discussed in more detail.

### ***The importance of the group process***

The facilitator educators in this study deliberately sought to create a supportive environment in which learning about facilitation could occur. However, the commitment to the importance of the group process itself varied. Each year Meg and Julian provide two 20-day programs, run over a seven month period, with the same group of participants for the duration of the program. The cost of these programs, in terms of time and money, would exclude some emerging facilitators. However, Meg and Julian argue that the length of the program and continuity of group membership are key elements of their program design. Other facilitator educators, such as Sean, Max, and Janet, were more pragmatic and were prepared to work with emerging facilitators for shorter periods of one to two days. Rose and Bruce, circumvent the problems of cost and time commitment by providing eight stand-alone shorter courses within their diploma structure, which emerging facilitators typically complete over a two to three year period. I was not able to find in the literature any recommendations stating the ideal length of a facilitator education program. However, a number of authors provided sober warnings that developing as a facilitator can be a long journey. For example, Jenkins and Jenkins (2005) warned emerging facilitators that developing the disciplines of a facilitator takes regular practice and time, possibly as long as one to three months for each of the nine disciplines they identify. On the contrary, some literature from the technical facilitator

education dimension (Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999) implied that learning to be a facilitator is simply a matter of applying certain skills and techniques. These approaches are in conflict with the developmental journey, which the facilitator educators in this study described as being necessary to develop competence as a facilitator.

The facilitator educators in this study used a range of group processes and activities to enable their emerging facilitators to learn about facilitation. Meg was passionate about groups and she described them as having “magic in their potential for transformation - far beyond any other mode” (field notes, day #3, 19/4/05). According to Meg, effective groups unleash power by providing the safety to disagree and the ability to embrace conflict when we encounter others who think differently. Meg and Julian used a five-day residential component in their program and many of the graduates indicated that this was a highlight of the program for them. For example: “Five day residential [was] fantastic for developing trusting relationships and experiencing group process” (survey response #2) and another said they appreciated “The opportunity to have extended time in the five day residential component to build trusting relationships with other participants” (survey feedback #23).

In contrast, the program run by Max had over 50 participants for just two days – a situation with limitations in terms of developing strong interpersonal group processes. However, Max did use some specific activities to offset these challenges by providing opportunities for the interpersonal development through the use of “story, self disclosure, legitimate personal expression and validation” (email, 28/12/05). Similarly, Bruce indicated that he is very interested in the

quality of the experience people are having in the program. Along side running a reasonably structured program, and coaching people to develop their *being-ness*, I am interested in the quality of authentic community people experience. I have found that if people experience very little authentic community they value their learning in the program rather lowly. If the program moves into authentic community early then the quality of the learning after this point is very potent and deep. These programs seem to have the most powerful impact on the participants. (Bruce’s feedback on field notes, email, 25/8/05)

Max shared a similar view that groups achieve positive outcomes “when people experience others as people, that is all it takes” (email, 28/12/05), suggesting that facilitation is about helping people to make real contact with each other. As well as providing an experience of group membership, some of the facilitator educators see the group process as one of the primary vehicles of learning for the emerging facilitators. Meg openly shared her view that what happens in the group of emerging facilitators in her program is “grist for the mill” (field notes, day #12, 16/7/05), meaning that personal and interpersonal issues in the group are ideal content for the emerging facilitators to practice working with. In her program Meg rarely used hypothetical situations or case studies because her preference was to work with the real dynamics occurring in the group. She explained that “exercises can be the sexy bits and we need to be careful not to overemphasise them to the detriment of facilitating the spaces” (field notes, day 11, 15/7/05). Similarly, Max indicated a clear preference to “work with real material and real people whenever possible” (email, 28/12/05). However, there is the potential for this approach to blur the line between facilitator education and psychotherapy as warned in the group counselling literature (R. D. Anderson & Price, 2001; Kottler, 2004). The inherent focus of person-centred facilitator education on individual and group issues was frustrating for some graduates of Rose and Bruce’s program. One person indicated that he/she found the focus on personal development inappropriate.

I found the emphasis on “emotional sharing” to be of concern, in that I fail to see how encouraging participants to share things that they have not even shared with family or partners – and the resulting emotional reactions – to be unrelated to the purpose of the course. I do not agree that such emotional openness with, usually, work colleagues and/or strangers, to be of value and have not found this a necessity before or since. (survey response #18)

Another graduate of theirs shared this view:

Most of my facilitation work is within a business context, where sometimes people have conflicting goals and priorities, I would have liked to spend more time working on “work related” situations. For example, at times we seemed to be helping people try to come to terms with quite personal and deep issues that were in my view well outside the scope of the course. (survey response #22)

However, whilst acknowledging it as a problem, some of their graduates also suggested a way that this problem could be addressed.

I think it would be useful to let participants know when first embarking on [your facilitation] training that this is not a “how to do” training but rather a “how to be” training. My first experience in Stage 1 was a bit prickly as I didn’t realise that I was going to be challenged, however, once through the first stage I was able to understand the next time round. I always come away from any training now as having a better understanding of myself, which in turn impacts on the people I work with. (survey response #17)

Many of the graduates of the programs provided by Rose and Bruce reported nothing but positive experiences. For example, “Looking back at the course (several years ago now) the key thing for me was having the opportunity to learn through personal exploration in a ‘safe’ group environment” (survey response #58).

The emphasis that Meg, Rose, and Bruce placed on participation in deeper personal and group exploration is congruent with the foci of the experiential component of group counsellor education (Barlow, 2004; Kottler, 2004; Morran, 2005; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) and is compatible with the intent of person-centred facilitator education (Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Ringer, 2002). First, it helps emerging facilitators to fully understand the issues associated with being a participant in a group themselves. Secondly, it is a critical part of any person-centred approach because it provides valuable opportunities for developing awareness. The professional standards for the preparation of group workers (Morran, 2005) require group workers to participate in group sessions as a client and one half to two thirds of group counsellor educators included experiential participation as part of their programs (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

The longer programs in this study, provided by Meg, Rose and Bruce, placed more emphasis on the use of the group interactions as a key learning tool. They also provided more opportunity for the development of supportive interpersonal relationships through the creation of a safe-container, which Ringer (2002) described as essential for personal exploration in groups.

### ***Focus on theories and models***

All of the facilitator educators in the study provided some rationale for their actions using a theoretical framework of some kind. Furthermore, they also indicated preferences for an integrated theoretical orientation rather than any single theoretical orientation, which is congruent with Schneider-Corey and Corey’s (2006) findings for group

counsellors. As a trained psychodramatist, Bruce based much of his practice on role theory, developed by Moreno (1946). He explained to me,

I assess what role the person is operating from, and how well that role is developed, and what other roles they have in their role repertoires, I am making a psychological assessment of the person's functioning, and I am coaching based on that. So I have got a really complex system of psychology or personality to come from. And it has taken me kind of eight years to develop that. (transcribed interview, 16/8/05)

Max and Sean both drew heavily on the work of Argyris (1996) or other authors who write from a similar perspective, like Robinson (1993). Meg based much of her practice on the process-oriented psychology approach (Mindell, 1995) and Rose on co-counselling theory developed by Heron (2001). Janet with her background on mediation based much of her practice in the writing from that field (for example, see Mayer, 2000).

However, although the facilitator educators practiced intentionally, some seemed to be more deliberate or intentional than others in their efforts to help their emerging facilitators to develop their own theoretical grounding. Max specifically asked the emerging facilitators in his group how much interest there was in the deeper theory behind his practice and roughly half of the group indicated that they were interested. Max was also careful to introduce theoretical models as 'frameworks' rather than recipes, which he explained allowed the emerging facilitators to customise those frameworks to suit their own contexts. He explained "my words won't work as well as using your own ... it will work better, be more genuine, if [you] use [your] own words" (field notes, day #1, 28/11/05).

It became apparent that the facilitator educators who had authored (or co-authored) books about facilitation (Rose, Max, and Sean) had a deeper and more intimate knowledge of the breadth and depth of the facilitation literature, and it was an advantage for them to be able to direct their emerging facilitators to their own books. Max and Rose were conversant with the facilitation literature and they provided many 'leads' for their emerging facilitators to enhance their understanding of theoretical frameworks, and at least one of the graduates of Max's program indicated that he/she appreciated the references to the literature.



Sean used a different approach to teaching his theoretical frameworks with his emerging facilitators. He has developed, in his books and programs, a theoretically grounded approach to facilitation, which he teaches and recommends his emerging facilitators use. This prescriptive approach produced a range of responses from his course graduates. Some were resistant to any focus on theory as expressed in the following evaluations of his program: “pitched too much at an academic level” and that Sean should “stay away from Argyris’ theoretical model and focus on the practicalities” (survey response #4). These comments highlight the challenge that facilitator educators face when introducing theoretical frameworks to some pragmatic emerging facilitators. However, some of Sean’s graduates were more receptive: “[I] was interested to learn how another facilitator incorporated Argyris and Schön’s work into their processes” (survey response #14) and “I thought Sean modelled the theory very well” (survey response #17).

Meg had a less explicit focus on theoretical frameworks in her programs and the emerging facilitators responses to this varied. All of the graduates of her program who returned their survey commented positively on the practical ‘hands on’ approach, but some expressed an interest in “more comprehensive notes on various subject areas.” Another suggested “lecture style and handouts could include more detail” (survey response #9) and “other theories about facilitation [could be] sourced and explored” (survey response #12). The danger of emphasising practical activities over a more detailed grounding in theory is that Meg may encourage a form of “technical eclecticism” (Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 6). One of her graduates expressed this very concern,

I would like there to have been more content associated with the types of techniques of facilitation and when to use each of them. While I know this was not the primary business of the course I am still feeling a little lacking in this area even though I have done an advanced course. (survey response #21)

Janet utilised a number of theoretical frameworks in her program and also provided selected readings from the facilitation and mediation literature in her course materials. Rose and Bruce used a range of professionally produced charts to reinforce the theoretical concepts covered in their program. These visually appealing charts were placed around the walls of the room and became reference points throughout the course.

### *Opportunities for practice*

All of the facilitation programs observed in this study provided opportunities for emerging facilitators to practice the skills and frameworks being taught. However, the longer programs run by Meg, Rose and Bruce were more able to provide extensive opportunities for practice. In Meg's program each emerging facilitator was provided with numerous opportunities to practice. Some of these opportunities provided significant freedom to design and implement a process while others were quite structured and focussed mainly on the management of a set agenda. In the practice sessions Meg always encouraged the emerging facilitators to try facilitating and not get bogged down in discussion because she wanted them to develop more than head knowledge, and she was openly critical of the 'neck up' approach.

Meg's graduates valued the opportunities to practice within and outside the program and more than half of the survey responses commented favourably on this aspect of her programs. One graduate said, "I had several opportunities after the training to assist or co-facilitate with Meg or Julian, these were hugely helpful in learning and building competence" (survey response #2). Another indicated that

The course demands that the learner actually implement processes ... [and] ... . For someone like me who has good intentions but is time poor, this provides important rigour that goes beyond good ideas. We need constant practice. (survey response #6)

Despite her shorter facilitator education program, Janet provided her emerging facilitators with numerous opportunities to practice over the two days I observed. Although she acknowledged that it can be harder to have a go at practicing facilitation with a learning group that you do not know really well, she put a positive spin on this by explaining that although "time is short and the situation is a bit contrived, which can lead to performance anxiety, it is useful to tap into this anxiety – experience it and work with it. It can be a useful learning tool" (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05).

Max attempted to get some of the emerging facilitators to have a go at practicing their facilitation, but there was some resistance and few willing volunteers. It is likely that this hesitation was linked to a lack of safety caused by the larger group and shorter program. When the graduates of courses provided by Rose and Bruce were asked what aspects of

the training process were most helpful to their learning, there were regular references to the opportunities to practice facilitation. Some of the comments included: “doing and reflecting and getting feedback” (survey response #28); “All the hands on practice in facilitating sessions” (survey response #31); and “Definitely the experiential approach with focus given to practice and being coached ‘live’ while facilitating the training group” (survey response #43).

Taking the opportunities to practice was difficult for some emerging facilitators. For example, “I have found the courses somewhat out of the ordinary and sometimes very challenging to participate in, but the results are worth the anguish!” (survey response #34). However, Sean was adamant that “our role [as facilitators] is not to make things comfortable for participants – we want to make things effective” (field notes, 25/10/05) and he indicated that the same is true for facilitator education. He explained that “taking away discomfort is part of the rescuing thing” and that discomfort is “part of the learning process and it takes a while for the penny to drop which is why we practice ... the notion that we get [things] right away is not helpful” (field notes, 25/10/05).

Although Arnold’s (2005) survey of 125 facilitators indicated that facilitators as a general rule are voracious readers, she indicated that “while training and reading are outstanding forms to build facilitation expertise, all respondents agreed on the importance of applying learned knowledge to real-life situations” (p. 504). This finding is consistent with my observation of the emerging facilitators and graduate survey responses, which indicated strong appreciation for the opportunities to practice provided by the facilitator educators. It is not clear whether the pragmatic inclinations of the emerging facilitators was a consequence of the facilitation education processes, or if their enrolments in the facilitator education programs were driven by pre-existing pragmatic inclinations.

### ***The focus on skills and techniques***

Meg presented her participants with a comprehensive list of 32 “key facilitation techniques” or KFTs (field notes, day #2, 18/4/05). She provided a steady emphasis on skills and techniques throughout her program but she was also “wary of skills and techniques being presented as recipes in the absence of intention and awareness” (field notes, day #4, 20/4/05). This was consistent with the concerns expressed by Hogan

(2002) that “every tool or technique must have a purpose and a ‘considered purpose’ at that” (p. 207). Meg expressed a dislike for the increased emphasis on technologies (skills, methods and strategies) at many facilitation conferences because they are too often overemphasized. One of her emerging facilitators supported this view when he/she commented, “I thought that when I came into the course, I was going to learn about techniques and theories – but the glue that holds it all together has been much more valuable to learn” (field notes, day #10, 18/6/05).

Janet provided a strong skills focus in her program, including presentation techniques and tools, which was a reflection of the corporate background of most of her emerging facilitators. One of her expressed intentions was to help the emerging facilitators in her program make some useful additions to “their toolbox” (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05). In the one-day introductory course run by Sean, he spent only a small time focussing on specific tools as shown in Figure 5. This is consistent with the intentional facilitator education focus he adopted in his programs. Sean explained to the group that behaviour begins with thinking and that techniques will not be enough, “You need to use those techniques in the right operating system [and the] ground rules are the operating system” (field notes, 25/10/05).

Hence, the facilitator educators in this study valued the importance of learning skills and techniques, but the focus on technical facilitator education was always kept in perspective with the other dimensions of facilitator education. Unlike some of the literature categorized in this study as ‘stand-alone’ technical facilitator education (Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999; Sharp, 1992), none of the facilitator educators in this study suggested that skills and techniques alone were enough to fulfil any of the facilitation roles identified by Schwarz (2002).

### ***Learning-centred focus***

Most of the facilitator educators in this study demonstrated a strong focus on learning with their emerging facilitators. Max demonstrated a genuine responsiveness to questions and requests from emerging facilitators and he was very explicit with them: “if you have an issue or concern, please say so at the time, rather than later, so I can actually do something about it” (field notes, day #1, 28/11/05). He indicated that he tries to “think of the workshop as being for the benefit of the participants, that helps me to be responsive

to what they say” (email, 28/12/05). Max was consultative with the emerging facilitators about the program focus. He asked them, “To what extent are you looking for input and activity? What would be the right mix for you?” (field notes, day #1, 28/11/05). Max not only negotiated program content but also shared responsibility for every stage of the process: program design, implementation, logistics, and evaluation. Max did not present the program as belonging to him, but rather to the emerging facilitators and he commented, “That’s the mindset I try to adopt when I’m facilitating. It helps me to remain open and non-defensive” (email, 28/12/05). When asked which aspects of the training process were more useful, one of Max’s graduates indicated he/she appreciated “The clarity and openness by which Max worked with us in collaboration in designing the process. The flexibility and adaptability this way of working brings” (survey response #24).

Meg was also responsive to the emerging facilitators in her program and she encouraged them to do the same when they were facilitating. There “always must be flexibility so I can respond to where the group is at ... I judge what needs to be covered first” (field notes, day #2, 18/4/05). Although Meg does work to a set agenda, she indicated that her priority is to be responsive to issues raised by the emerging facilitators. Meg’s course graduates liked the fact that “we had constant opportunities to revise and alter course content which ensured the process met my needs” (survey response #13) and another liked “exploring the concept of learning journeys and style, to encourage awareness of one’s own style and therefore take ownership of what is achieved” (survey response #22).

Janet sets some group goals based on information she collects from her emerging facilitators before her courses, but she also indicated to me that her intention was to help all of them progress towards their own goals and she has no expectations that the whole group will get to the same point together. Janet was also consultative about the program content and schedule, but expected the emerging facilitators to understand that the decisions they made would have consequences. Sean was more directive in terms of program content and he outlined “How I would like us to learn together” (field notes, 25/10/05). He also suggested a list of behaviours that would enhance the success of the program.

The learning centred focus of the facilitator educators in this study was congruent with Weimer's (2002) description of the characteristics of high quality, learner-centred teaching. The facilitator educators shared the *balance of power* by sharing decision making about teaching and learning strategies with the emerging facilitators. They understood the *function of content* and understood the need for discovery learning and reflective practice. They shared the *responsibility for learning* with the emerging facilitators and made sure that the *purpose and processes of evaluation* (where applicable) enhanced the emerging facilitators' learning.

### ***Strategies to optimise learning***

The facilitator educators in this study utilised a range of strategies in their programs to optimise the learning their emerging facilitators experienced. To discuss the strategies within this sub-theme, the following sub-headings will be used: *Experiential learning approaches, the use of reflection, strategies to transfer learning, and effective use of resources.*

#### *Experiential learning approaches*

The facilitator educators in this study demonstrated a range of perspectives on the use of experiential learning approaches. Max used some exercises and small group discussions, but avoided role-plays because people can be "too bloody-minded" (field notes, day #1, 28/11/05), whereas in real life people are much more prepared to move. Max used a fishbowl exercise like that recommended by Hensley (2002) in group counselor education. Although less experiential in his overall approach, Max made effective use of stories to build relationships with the emerging facilitators, especially given his preference for a less extroverted presentation style. Max explained to me,

Stories serve multiple purposes and appeal to people on multiple levels. (I think that's why they can be very effective in cultural change work.) I think that one of these purposes is that the stories help people relate to me as a person. (email, 28/12/05)

Certainly, one of the graduates from his program indicated that his program had reinforced "the power of story telling to develop trust and openness" (survey response, #20).

Meg used sociodramas, in conjunction with her 'Community of Selves' framework, to work through real issues with the emerging facilitators. The sociodramas typically focused on issues that emerging facilitators had encountered in their workplaces and they allowed for the identification and experimentation with alternate responses to difficult situations. Many of the graduates of her program commented on the efficacy of sociodramas to their learning. Meg used other experiential activities cautiously, but acknowledged that they "drop people down to a new level [and] expose a level of heart knowing" (field notes, day #1, 11/4/05). Notably, like Max, Meg did not like contrived exercises and her preference was to work with the issues that the emerging facilitators bring. She suggested to me that she has a fair idea of when some teachable moments will occur in her program and she is confident in her ability to notice them. However, she acknowledged that her teaching modules aren't always neat and tidy, and that material is often revisited.

Janet also used experiential 'warm up' exercises, but avoided calling them ice-breakers, as "many people have negative connotations of icebreakers because they find them awkward, embarrassing or uncomfortable" (field notes, day #1, 31/8/05). Instead, Janet encouraged the emerging facilitators to call them 'warm ups' and she provided links to resources the emerging facilitators could use after the program. Rose was one of the few facilitator educators who explicitly articulated a strong understanding or philosophy on experiential approaches. She explained in her course materials,

Training people in facilitation skills needs to be largely experiential. A good way for people to train as facilitators is for them to take on an apprentice role to an experienced facilitator. They learn by watching another facilitator work and asking questions, and getting more understanding that way. (p. 49)

Bruce argued that the success of role-plays in the facilitator education process is influenced by the degree to which the purpose of the exercise is clear. The two role-plays I observed in Bruce's program produced positive learning outcomes, although not the ones initially intended. This illustrated that you cannot always predict the learning that an experiential exercise will highlight.

Meg indicated a clear preference for action over discussion in her programs, because although many emerging facilitators find cerebral learning less confronting, it fails to

deliver the same richness that practical engagement and experimentation bring. One of Meg's graduates supported this perspective, "Somehow experiencing [interventions] rather than talking about them, helped my learning" (survey response #2). Meg's enthusiasm for moving beyond the cerebral is consistent with the criticisms that Fenwick (2000) raised about some constructivist approaches to experiential learning, which privilege rational cognitive functioning and separate the doing from the learning.

### *The use of reflection*

Most of the facilitator educators demonstrated a commitment to the importance of reflection in the learning process and they demonstrated a wide range of reflective tools or activities during, between, and after their programs. Max's approach to facilitator education emphasised "taking responsibility" (field notes, day #2, 29/11/05) and he encouraged his emerging facilitators to avoid blindly using models, theories, or skills in recipe-like fashion. In talk and action, Max wanted his emerging facilitators to customise his models and methods by reflecting on the material he presented. Meg persistently encouraged her emerging facilitators to reflect on their learning goals in their journals and she encouraged them to build in reflection times, during the program days and between blocks of the program. One of her course graduates indicated he/she appreciated the "Opportunities to reflect (journal) how they could apply processes into their current work" (survey response #2).

Meg also encouraged her emerging facilitators to make time to reflect when they are facilitating with groups, because learnings can be lost if reflection is left to the next day: "I don't know how we get to be great facilitators without good reflection time ... give yourself good space to access the fullness of the experience – the emotional as well" (field notes, day #7, 20/5/05). Janet discussed the importance of feedback and review, but warned against the bad habit of self-flagellation, and she encouraged the development of good review habits, including paying someone to assist in your development (coaching) because of the positive way it changes the dynamic of that helping relationship. Arnold's (2005) survey of facilitators also confirmed that some of the respondents supported the value of professional coaching because it helps to understand "who you are and how you show up in the world and with your groups" (p. 510).



Hence, the actions of the facilitator educators in this study agreed with the literature on experiential learning (for example, Beard & Wilson, 2002; Itin, 1999; Ringer, 2002), which emphasised the need for reflection to internalise and personalise learning. Meg was one of the few facilitator educators who expressed concerns about the possible overemphasis on rational, cognitive approaches to learning. In her programs, she tried to create an emphasis on both reflection and a reflection-in-action similar to that espoused by Schön (1988; 1995). In this respect Meg encouraged her emerging facilitators to develop discursive consciousness, but she acknowledged at times it may only be possible for them to utilise practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984).

### *Strategies to transfer learning*

The facilitator educators approached the challenge of learning transfer in various ways. For example, Max used quite deliberate strategies to help the transfer of learning from the first day of his program to the second in order to encourage his emerging facilitators to take more responsibility for their own learning. He did this because it “increases the likelihood that they will actually take some of it away with them. The literature on the transfer of learning from most workshops isn’t very encouraging” (email, 28/12/05).

Sean provided some clear guidelines for his emerging facilitators to transfer their learning, including strategies like using voicemail and email to practice diagnosing behaviour. He also encouraged the formation of learning groups where emerging facilitators can practice, debrief, or revisit difficult conversations. Bruce specifically discussed the need to understand the context for the effective transfer of learning, which demonstrated an understanding of the concerns that Fenwick (2000) and Misko (1995) raised about learning transfer. Bruce warned that emerging facilitators need to be aware that the culture where they use their newly developed facilitation competence may require a customized approach, which is a concern previously identified in the experiential education literature (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe 1997 cited in Beard & Wilson, 2002; M. Reynolds, 1997). Bruce also encouraged his emerging facilitators to find someone who could act as a sounding board, someone who could be there for them and provide ongoing support for their development as a facilitator.

### *Effective use of resources*

All of the facilitator educators made use of written resources in their programs in the form of a course text, course notes, or a course manual. Rose, Max, and Sean used books they had authored (or co-authored) as their course texts and this helped those facilitator educators to provide credibility and authority with their emerging facilitators as well as providing a text tailored to their courses. Another advantage of their author status was that Max and Rose both demonstrated a wide and deep command of the literature pertaining to facilitation, which allowed them to provide many leads for emerging facilitators to follow if they expressed interested.

It was apparent that the facilitator educators in this study understood the *importance of the group process* and the need to provide *opportunities for practice*. They demonstrated a range of *strategies to optimise learning* and there was a balanced *focus on theories and models* and *skills and techniques*. In the next chapter, some conclusions will be provided about the theories and practices of facilitator educators based on the interpretation of the data collected in this study.

### **Summary of findings**

In this chapter I have presented the major findings of this study under the four main themes: *important facilitator educator values and actions*, *the role of self-facilitation*, *key facilitation concepts*, and *important elements of the facilitator education process*. The themes and the sub themes, shown in Figure 17, are used to effectively describe the essential characteristics of facilitator education, according to the facilitator educators in this study. The findings I have presented in this chapter, under these themes and sub-themes, will allow me in the next chapter to revisit and respond to the research questions listed in chapter 1. These responses represent the conclusions that emerged from the study.

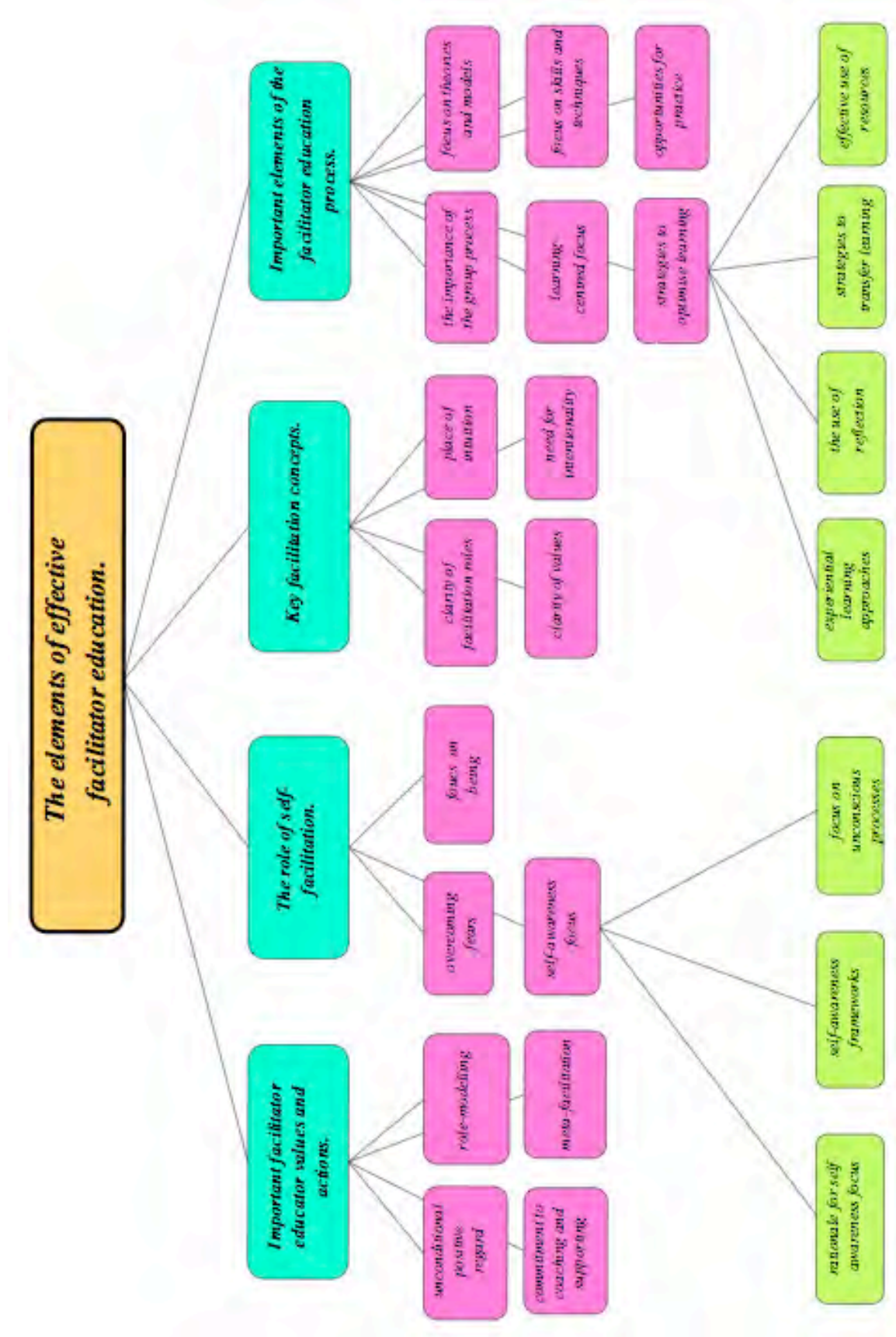


Figure 17. Major themes and sub themes for the study

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

In this chapter I will present the conclusions of this study by revisiting the research questions provided in chapter 1. The conclusions related to each of the research questions will be addressed in turn, enabling me to fulfil the broader purpose of this study, which was to describe the theories and practices of facilitator educators. I will close this chapter with some commentary on the efficacy of the theoretical interpretive framework adopted in this study and some suggestions for future research.

### ***Primary outcomes sought by facilitator educators***

In my first research question I asked, “***What are the primary outcomes that facilitator educators are trying to achieve with the emerging facilitators in their programs?***” The facilitator educators demonstrated through their balanced focus on the dimensions of facilitator education a commitment to develop reflective, intentional facilitators with high levels of self-awareness. This is in direct contrast with some of the literature pertaining to facilitation, which only encouraged emerging facilitators to develop skills and apply strategies in a step-by-step, recipe-like fashion (Bendaly, 2000; Bens, 2005; Eller, 2004; Hart, 1991, 1992; Havergal & Edmonstone, 1999). There was no empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of stand-alone technical facilitator education, or technical eclecticism (Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006), in this study or in the literature pertaining to facilitation and it is not clear why such practice is encouraged by the authors cited above. On the contrary, the view that facilitation prowess can be attained quickly by following recipes or learning new ‘tricks’ was debunked by the facilitator educators in this study and was also discredited by other authors in the literature pertaining to facilitation (Ghais, 2005; Hunter et al., 1999; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006). The proliferation of literature that promotes ‘stand-alone’ technical facilitator education does not accurately depict what is required to facilitate effectively, according to the facilitator educators in this study. Survey feedback from graduates also confirmed that emerging facilitators valued a balanced curriculum focussing on skills, processes, and theoretical foundations.

Some literature pertaining to facilitation ‘dumbs down’ the real complexity and challenge of facilitating groups and educating facilitators. Books or programs that encourage ‘stand-alone’ technical facilitator education should be critiqued in the facilitation

community. According to the findings of this study, such approaches to facilitator education do a disservice to the facilitation profession because they omit important elements of the facilitator education process.

Learning to facilitate with groups is not a quick or easy process, as evidenced in the findings of this study. Even the facilitator educators in this study who provided shorter programs of one to three days duration were careful to explain to their emerging facilitators that their development as a facilitator would not be complete at the conclusion of their program. Sections of the literature pertaining to facilitation have supported this view with sobering assessments of the time and commitment required to learn to effectively facilitate groups (Ghais, 2005; Hunter et al., 1999; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006, Ringer, 2002). The process “is a long-term journey” (Ghais, 2005, p. 26).

### ***Important elements of facilitator education***

The second research question was, “***Which elements or components of facilitator education programs do facilitator educators consider important to the achievement of these outcomes?***” Facilitator educators in this study, particularly those offering longer programs, placed a strong emphasis on the need to help emerging facilitators master self-facilitation, which is consistent with person-centred facilitator education. This program emphasis was based on the premise that facilitators must be aware of, understand, and be able to manage their internal reactions to the group, especially in challenging situations. It was the view of the facilitator educators in this study that without this ability to manage themselves, facilitators will have large gaps between how they planned to facilitate groups (their espoused theory) and how they actually facilitate groups (their theory-in-use), particularly when they feel threatened or challenged. This conclusion is consistent with the recommendations of Schwarz (2002) who based his approach on the work of Argyris and Schön (1996). Longer programs are better suited to achieve the goals of person-centred facilitator education, but the process of unlearning negative behaviours and thought processes that have been reinforced over long periods will not always be completed in the context of a program with a fixed time frame.

An important element of person-centred facilitator education observed in this study was the process of helping facilitators to be real or authentic with their groups. The emerging facilitators frequently shared the disappointment associated with not facilitating as well

as they believed they could or should. Expecting to facilitate perfectly places unnecessary pressure on facilitators, which hinders rather than helps their ability to function effectively. This finding was congruent with the debilitating state of anxiety that Kirk and Broussine (2000) identified as 'immobilised awareness,' caused by the fear of making mistakes. More importantly there was no evidence in the literature, or in the data collected in this study, to suggest that clients or group participants expect, or even want, their facilitators to 'perform' flawlessly. Authenticity as a facilitator also includes the ability to deal with his or her own imperfections. An openness and acceptance of one's fallibility has been described by sections of the literature (Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006), and the facilitator educators in this study, as a prerequisite to facilitate effectively. So, whilst it is not clear where the mythical quest for facilitation perfection originates, based on the data collected in this study it appears that it is time to actively discredit the efficacy of this pursuit.

Another important conclusion concerning the focus on self-facilitation, based particularly on some of the responses from survey graduates, is that facilitator educators must ensure that potential emerging facilitators understand that the elements of their programs that focus on person-centred facilitation can be challenging and confronting. However, this is no excuse for emerging facilitators to avoid the challenging nature of completing this 'innerwork' (Mindell, 1995). The difficult nature of this exploration was not considered a suitable excuse for emerging group counsellors to avoid participating in experiential groups, nor should it be so for emerging facilitators (Kottler, 2004). However, it is important that emerging facilitators are able to make an informed choice about their participation in courses with a person-centred facilitator education focus, based on full disclosure of the content and processes involved. Emerging facilitators must understand that in person-centred facilitation a large part of learning to facilitate groups is spent working on themselves.

Through this study, I concluded that facilitator education programs must provide opportunities for practice, reflection, coaching and feedback. It is not enough to discuss facilitation strategies and theories; actual practice, supported by coaching and feedback, is essential to the development of facilitation mastery. However, given the fears and anxiety expressed by the emerging facilitators in this study about failing or 'getting it wrong,' a supportive group environment is important to enable the effective use of this

experiential learning. Again, longer programs offer the most potential for providing an appropriate level of ‘containment’ (Ringer, 2002) for such risk taking to occur.

Of the two coaching strategies observed in this study, the use of in-the-moment feedback provides better opportunities for emerging facilitators to learn effective interventions in ‘real time’ as they practice. The effectiveness of in-the-moment coaching is not well documented in the literature pertaining to facilitation or experiential education. However, as a consequence of this study the adoption of this coaching practice has been one of the most positive developments in my own facilitator education practice.

### ***Theoretical foundations and underlying values***

In the next three research questions I asked, “***What theoretical foundations inform the practices of facilitator educators? What importance do facilitator educators place on understanding the values and/or theoretical foundations that underpin their practice?*** and ***What importance do facilitator educators place on helping their emerging facilitators to understand the values and/or theoretical foundations underpinning their practice?***” These three questions will be addressed together.

As a result of this study it may be concluded that integrated theoretical orientations are more common amongst facilitator educators than single theoretical foundations. Although there were commonalities in the theories underpinning the facilitator educators’ practice, there was also diversity. This finding is consistent with the findings of research in the group counsellor education literature (Schneider-Corey & Corey, 2006). The data collected from the facilitator educators in this study also concurred with the literature, which argued the importance of facilitators being intentional about their practice (Bentley, 1994; Burson, 2002; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Heron, 1989, 1993, 1999; Killion & Simmons, 1992; Priest et al., 2000; Robson & Beary, 1995; Schwarz, 2002; Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, & Gass, 2000; van Maurik, 1994; Weaver & Farrell, 1997). Notably, for some of the facilitator educators, the process of developing greater clarity of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) occurred as a consequence of their participation of this study.

Although the facilitator educators were able to emphasise, demonstrate, and role model intentional practice grounded in a range of integrated theoretical orientations, most of

them were less able to describe the means by which they planned to help their emerging facilitators to develop their own intentionality. Sean was one exception in this study, in that he recommended facilitators adopt the values and theoretical underpinning presented as a complete package in his approach to facilitation. In this way he suggested the appropriate values of facilitation for his participants, rather than have them develop their own set of values. More research is needed to establish the efficacy of adopting values and theoretical foundations particularly when the facilitator encounters challenging situations. In such circumstances, the gap between an emerging facilitator's adopted, espoused theory and his or her theory-in-use could be exposed.

Given the emphasis placed on the need for intentionality in some of the facilitation literature, it is not clear why the facilitator educators had not developed strategies to enable their emerging facilitators to develop their own intentionality. It is not surprising that the facilitator educators who seemed to be developing their discursive consciousness as a consequence of their participation in this study had not yet developed clear strategies to help their emerging facilitators to develop discursive consciousness. The findings of this study suggest that facilitator educators need to develop, and be more explicit about, the means by which emerging facilitators can clarify their underpinning values and theoretical foundations. I suspect that knowing how to help others clarify their own values and theoretical foundation requires a different depth of knowledge about theories, values and the processes by which emerging facilitators clarify or establish their own values and theories. Facilitator educators need to establish strategies or processes to help their emerging facilitators to develop their intentionality, if they maintain it is a necessary part of learning to be a facilitator.

Another conclusion of this study is that intuitive processes have an important role in facilitation. In this respect, the tension identified in the literature between explicit intentionality and implicit intentionality was also evident in facilitator education practice. The facilitator educators agreed with sections of the literature that the task of facilitating groups requires, even necessitates, the use of some intuitive processes (Ghais, 2005; Hunter et al., 1999; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Luckner & Nadler, 1997). At times, group facilitation requires complex decisions to be made quickly and "without knowing why we know" (Gladwell, 2005, p. 52) a particular intervention is appropriate. However, the facilitator educators did offer some cautions. First, they encouraged emerging facilitators



to treat information gleaned through intuitive processes tentatively, and to test assumptions with the group. Secondly, there was no suggestion from the facilitator educators that facilitators should rely entirely on tacit knowledge, or in Giddens' (1984) terms, to practice at the level of practical consciousness. There was also recognition from a number of the facilitator educators that an awareness and appreciation of unconscious processes in groups is important to effective facilitation. This conclusion supports the assertions made by Ringer (2002) for group leaders and Neville (2005) for emerging teachers. This study has flagged the issue that some aspects of western culture, with its emphasis on positivism, may be less receptive to intuitive and unconscious processes.

The dimension of critical facilitator education was less prominent than the other dimensions in the programs observed. However, it was an important part of the program for two of the facilitator educators in this study, and their practices were congruent with the writing of Mindell (1995) and Kirk and Broussine (2000). Facilitators need to be aware of how their power or rank influences their participants and to use it wisely. Facilitators also need to accept and acknowledge that at best they have only a partial awareness (Kirk and Broussine, 2000) and in a political sense they should seek to know what is going on in themselves, in the group, and the wider system.

According to the evidence collected in this study, whether people use their facilitation to achieve emancipatory aims seems to be determined by the values that underpin their practice, rather than the training they receive. As discussed previously, while values underpin facilitation practice, it is unclear to what degree a facilitator education program can shape a person's values. In this study, some of the facilitator educators articulated a higher calling to 'save the world,' and although such statements were made 'tongue in cheek,' these facilitator educators demonstrated a commitment to emancipatory causes in their programs and other facilitation consultancy work. However, their commitment to such causes was not a consequence of their interest in facilitation. On the contrary, facilitation was adopted as the best method of achieving the emancipatory aims they sought to achieve in their professional lives, as evidenced by their involvement in non-violent action training and commitment to environmental and social causes. In this respect the dimensions of facilitator education model has multiple entry points and an emerging facilitator, with an interest in emancipatory causes, can quickly assimilate the goals of critical facilitator education. In the programs observed in this study, several

emerging facilitators started their facilitator education fully cognisant and committed to the intent of emancipatory facilitation, but accepted the need to ‘double back’ and develop the skills, knowledge, and presence required to facilitate effectively.

***Important elements of the facilitator education process according to the emerging facilitators***

The final research question posed in this study was, “***From the perspective of the emerging facilitators, what were the important elements of the facilitator education process that assisted with the development of their skills, knowledge and experience?***”

My observations of the emerging facilitators in this study, and the survey responses of graduates, indicated that the four teaching processes identified in the group counselling literature (Berger, 1996) all contributed positively to the facilitator education process. Didactic teaching strategies were used less than experiential processes, but were important to the effective communication of the theoretical foundations underpinning facilitation practice. Experiential participation, experiential leadership, and observation were strategies that were combined effectively by the facilitator educators in this study. Despite the concerns mentioned previously about the confronting nature of some aspects of person-centred facilitator education, most of the survey responses from graduates indicated an appreciation for opportunities to practice and receive coaching and feedback from peers. A conclusion made as a result of this study is that facilitator education programs should provide a balance of the four teaching strategies identified in the group counselling literature (Berger, 1996).

Survey responses indicated an appreciation for the frameworks used to develop self-awareness provided by facilitator educators. The graduates reported deep levels of personal learning through these frameworks, which were applicable not just to their development as facilitators, but also to other aspects of their lives. The emphasis placed on exploring unconscious processes was specifically identified in survey responses by some emerging facilitators as important to the development of greater self-awareness. In the light of these findings, a conclusion of this study is that facilitator educators, particularly those emphasizing person-centred facilitator education, need to provide some frameworks for their emerging facilitators to conduct the requisite self-exploration.

### **Reflections on the interpretive framework**

In the penultimate section of this chapter, I will comment on the efficacy of the theoretical interpretive framework distilled through the literature as a means to interpret the data collected in this study. The dimensions of facilitator education model, presented in chapter 2 and shown in Figure 3, emerged from the frameworks presented by Giddens (1984) and Ling et al. (2002). The three levels of consciousness described by Giddens (1984) in his Theory of Structuration were effective in interpreting the various approaches to facilitator education found in the literature and the data collected in this study. The conclusions provided in this chapter about the role of intuitive processes in facilitation are congruent with Giddens' description of practical consciousness, where the facilitators may only be able to demonstrate tacit awareness of the reasons or motives behind actions. Finally, all of the facilitator educators in this study demonstrated and encouraged their emerging facilitators to develop discursive consciousness, which Giddens explained occurs when a person is "able to give a coherent account of one's activities and the reasons for them" (p. 45).

The intentional, person-centred, and critical dimensions of facilitator education reflected Giddens' (1984) definition of discursive consciousness on different levels. Intentional facilitator education demonstrated discursive consciousness about the theories and values that underpinned facilitation practice. Person-centred facilitator education encouraged discursive consciousness by encouraging an awareness of the effects the facilitator's presence has on the group, and the development of self-awareness was a critical part of the educational process. Critical facilitator education deepened this awareness, or discursive consciousness, by drawing specific attention to the political nature of facilitation and the issues of rank and power in facilitation contexts.

Also drawing on Giddens' (1984) 'Theory of Structuration,' Ling et al.'s (2002) framework classified the awareness and consciousness that casual teacher education staff have of their own actions. None of the facilitator educators in this study fit the 'Non reflective' category described by Ling et al. and the 'context oriented' or 'teacher oriented' categories were most frequently demonstrated. Only some of the facilitator educators that emphasised critical facilitator education demonstrated what Ling et al. described as 'professional reflection,' where there was critical reflection on the nature of facilitation process.

The four dimensions of facilitator education used in the theoretical interpretive framework for this study provided an effective language and structure to interpret and make sense of the approaches to facilitator education outlined in the literature. However, the danger of the model is that it compartmentalises facilitator education in an artificially tidy or concise manner, whereas in practice the different dimensions overlap and distinctions between them are blurry. All of the facilitator educators in this study focussed on some combination of technical, intentional, and person-centred facilitator education. Figures 7-11 in chapter 4 provided a helpful way of using these dimensions to analyse their practice and consider the change in emphasis of their programs over time. Discussion about the political nature of facilitation and the way power and rank can be used, and misused, in facilitation was presented as a natural extension of the self-awareness developed in person-centred facilitator education.

The four teaching strategies identified in the group counselling education literature provided a useful language and typology for considering the teaching strategies used by the facilitator educators in this study. Although the strategies were rarely used in isolation, it was helpful to borrow this typology from the more developed group counselling literature. Many of the issues raised about the use of the different strategies in the group counselling context were also applicable to the facilitator educators in this study. In the final section of this thesis I will now consider implications for future research based on the findings and conclusions in this study.

### **Implications for future research**

The findings of this study presented in chapter 4 and the conclusions presented in this chapter allowed for the provision of responses to the research questions posed in chapter 1. However, they have also raised new questions.

The importance of particular values to the effective practice of facilitation was not clear in this study. However, the fact that all the facilitator educators in this study demonstrated degrees of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1983) for their emerging facilitators was duly noted. Although in this study I did not set out to establish causal links between the practice of the facilitator educators and the success of their programs, the fact that all of the facilitator educators demonstrated this value raises the question

about its importance to both effective facilitation as well as facilitator education. This role of values in facilitator education is an area requiring further research. It is not clear at present the degree to which there are essential values for effective facilitation, or whether facilitation processes can be applied to, or overlay, any pre-existing value systems of emerging facilitators. The International Association of Facilitators (2004) have adopted a 'Statement of Values and Code of Ethics' which indicates their position that there are essential values for effective facilitation. Nonetheless, further research could assess the degree to which these values are shared, and their role in guiding effective facilitation practice.

The inability of the facilitator educators in this study to explicitly describe the means by which their emerging facilitators can develop their own intentionality is a concern. The complexity of developing discursive consciousness and time involved to successfully do so are two possible reasons why the facilitator educators in this study have not addressed this issue. Further research with facilitator educators could explore this issue to determine the reasons for this omission and to identify possible solutions.

### **Summary**

In this study a framework concerning the dimensions of facilitator education was introduced, and was shown to be effective in describing important elements of a facilitation training program. This fills a gap in the literature pertaining to facilitation because previously there has been no adequate language to describe the various components that constitute an effective program. The importance of intentionality in facilitation practice was reinforced, but there is a need for facilitator educators to articulate more clearly the strategies that may be used to help emerging facilitators to develop their intentionality.

This study has reinforced the importance of self-facilitation, given the essential role of the facilitator's presence, personal awareness, and authenticity when working with groups. Emerging facilitators appreciated the inclusion of experiential approaches, including coaching, within the context of a supportive group. Developing an understanding of the political dimensions of facilitation, and the influence of power and rank, is a natural extension of person-centred facilitator education. Longer programs

provide more opportunity for a facilitator educator to establish an appropriate level of containment to support emerging facilitators in these areas.

The tension between intentionality and using intuitive processes described in the literature was found to exist in the practice of facilitator educators. The facilitator educators acknowledged that, given the complex nature of the facilitation role, there are times when emerging facilitators must acknowledge the value of non-rational processes. Strategies to wisely and responsibly use such input were discussed and practiced in many of the programs.

Finally, the facilitator educators in this study demonstrated high quality programs, which were consistent with the recommendations of the literature, and valued by the emerging facilitators. Two signposts that will demonstrate a growing maturity of the facilitation field in the future will be a reduced presence of stand-alone technical facilitator education and more careful consideration of values within the facilitator education process.

## **Epilogue**

I commenced this study with the intention of improving my teaching by some research that would inform my practice as a facilitator educator. Whilst this research project has certainly achieved this goal, it has also helped me to learn how to be a better facilitator, a better researcher, and a better human being. The completion of this research project is satisfying in itself, but the quality of the relationships that have been developed mark the real success of the project. Although I started this study with considerable experience as a facilitator and a facilitator educator, my journey over the last five years has still provided great moments of unexpected insight, professional learning, and profound personal liberation. The challenge of developing my own self-awareness, in the person-centred facilitator education components of the programs, required me to closely examine personal behaviours, attitudes, values, and thinking.

The findings and conclusions of this study have been very useful for my teaching. The four dimensions of facilitator education have become an excellent conceptual framework for the unit I teach called 'Outdoor Leadership A.' The four approaches to facilitator education, gleaned from the group counsellor education literature and ratified in this study, have been adopted as my major teaching strategies, with great effect. The breadth and depth of skill, knowledge, and understanding I have gained through the completion of this study allow me to teach and facilitate learning with greater confidence and authenticity. This study has allowed me to contribute to the body of literature pertaining to facilitation, which adds to my credibility and standing as an academic. I gained positive feedback from two of the facilitator educators in this study because they have started using my dimensions of facilitator education model to situate their approach to facilitator education with their clients.

As indicated in the preceding chapters, this research did not go completely according to plan, which is perhaps not unusual. My initial plan was to conduct some interviews and observations and to be quite passively involved in some facilitator education programs. Fortunately, the facilitator educators in this study knew better than to allow me to play such a passive role, because if I had enacted this plan I would never have experienced the richness of their programs or the full extent of learning they were able to provide.

However, fulfilling the dual roles of participant and observer simultaneously was difficult, and the roles definitely impeded each other. At times, I was so drawn into a program as a participant that my ability to observe was compromised. Other times, my fellow emerging facilitators expressed their frustration with me, describing me as being too aloof, when I was busy recording notes in my observer role. In the end, I completed neither role perfectly, but was happy that I completed each role effectively.

As the researcher in this study, I developed some amazing relationships with the facilitator educators and other emerging facilitators, which I am confident will endure. However, the process of building relationships included many surprises and twists. For example, I did not anticipate the resistance I initially encountered when I contacted the facilitator educators about being involved. Naively, I expected them to see the potential value of the project for them and the field. However, securing agreement to participate involved complex negotiations with each and every facilitator educator. Many of the facilitator educators were concerned about the potentially negative consequences my participation in their programs could produce. While this was initially a surprise to me, given the more accurate understanding I now have of their programs, I can fully understand the grounds for their concerns,

Negotiating access with the facilitator educators was only part of the struggle. Once I had passed over that hurdle, I had to find 'ways of being' with each facilitator educator that allowed us to both get on with the work we had to do. This process was completely different with each facilitator educator. With one facilitator educator, I had multiple meetings before the program to negotiate roles, and an observer likened the process to that of 'two dogs circling each other sniffing each other's arses.' I met another of the facilitator educators for the first time in person, only five minutes before the program started. This complicated my observations and his/her role for the first two days of that program because we were both cautious and guarded with each other. After the second day, I conducted an interview with him/her, and shared some of the awkwardness I felt, and he/she shared similar feelings. We had a good laugh about that, which was liberating for us both and our relationship from that point has been strong and mutually beneficial.

As a researcher, I was very aware that the strength of my relationships, or the quality of the rapport I established with the facilitator educators would influence the quality of the



data I was able to collect. To this end, I felt some pressure to make a good impression and demonstrate a deep understanding of both the content and processes in their programs. At times I experienced some performance anxiety. Some of the facilitator educators indicated that they experienced some anxiety about being observed. In almost every case, I can say that once we had established some rapport, we were both able to relax into our respective roles. These relationship skills, critical to the success of the data collection in this study, cannot be learnt from a textbook, but I was fortunate to bring many of these skills to the research process.

In closing, the full description of my personal journey as an emerging facilitator educator would fill another thesis. This study has produced many benefits for myself and it is my hope that the findings will be useful to other facilitator educators and the facilitation field in general.

**Appendixes**

**Appendix A: Letter of invitation to facilitator educators**

(insert date)



(insert address)

***A study of the theories and practices in facilitator educators.***

**FHEC Approval Number: R003/05**

**Principal Researcher: Glyn Thomas**

Dear (facilitator educator),

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a research project to be conducted in 2005 exploring theories and practices in facilitator education. The project is part of my Doctor of Education study at La Trobe University and aims to: a) develop a better understanding of the way that facilitator educators make sense of their practice, b) explore the way facilitators develop, and c) describe the theories and beliefs underpinning the approaches facilitator educators use to train and develop other facilitators. You have been invited to participate because of your involvement and profile in facilitator education in the Australasia region.

Should you choose to participate in this project, you will help develop a better understanding of how facilitators are trained and developed. You will also have opportunities to: reflect on your practice, develop a stronger understanding of the theory that informs your practice, and gain feedback on your training programs. The outcomes of this research project will be published in a thesis but may also be used in conference presentations, articles submitted to relevant professional and academic journals, books, and/or book chapters. The findings may also stimulate, inform, and/or guide future research into facilitator education.

If you choose to be involved in this research project you will initially be asked to participate in a meeting to discuss the research project and the ways that you may like be involved, if at all. If you choose to participate you will first be involved in an informal, semi structured interview that may last 60-90 minutes, and with your consent, it will be taped to allow for analysis. I would also like to be able to observe a number of training programs that you conduct throughout the year. These observations are likely to lead to more informal, semi structured interviews with you as required. You will be provided with a copy of all interview transcripts to make sure that your responses have been accurately interpreted.

I would also like to interview some recent graduates of your training programs from the last three years. To do this, I will provide you with a letter of invitation, which you would forward (at my expense) to graduates of your programs over the last three years. It would be up to those graduates to contact me if they are interested in being involved, I will not contact them directly.

If any of your contributions to the research project are used in any presentations, media releases, reports, articles or book chapters every reasonable step will be taken to protect your identity by using pseudonyms or changing any other features of the contribution used which may reveal your identity. All data collected in this project will be kept completely confidential, stored securely, and will not available to anyone other than myself. You are welcome to receive a summary of the findings that emerge. However, I would also like to extend to you the invitation to be involved in the discussions about the preliminary analysis of the data and the emerging themes. It may also be possible for you to participate collaboratively in the presentation of findings at conferences, or through joint articles in journals, books, or book chapters.

You will have the right to withdraw from active participation in this project at anytime and, further, to demand that data arising from your participation are not used in the research project provided that this right is exercised within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the project. If you wish to discontinue your participation in the study you can do so without prejudice, by contacting me in person, by phone (5444 7480), or by e-mail ([g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au)).

This research project has approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee to go ahead. If you have questions, you are more than welcome to contact me on the numbers given below. If you have any complaint about the way you have been treated during the study, or a query that I have not been able to satisfy please feel free to contact:

The Secretary,  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
La Trobe University, PO Box 199, Bendigo 3552

I will contact you in a few days to see if you are interested in meeting to discuss your possible participation in this research project.

Yours sincerely

GLYN THOMAS  
Doctor of Education Student  
Faculty of Education  
La Trobe University  
PO Box 199, Victoria, 3552, Australia  
Ph (03) 5444 7480, Fax (03) 5444 7848  
[g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au)

## **Appendix B: Letter of invitation to facilitation course graduates**

20 October, 2005



*A study of the theories and practices in facilitator education.*

**FHEC Approval Number: R003/05**  
**Principal Researcher: Glyn Thomas**

Dear facilitation training graduate,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a research project to be conducted in 2005 exploring theories and practices in facilitator education. The project is part of my Doctor of Education study at La Trobe University and aims to explore the way facilitators are trained and developed. You have been invited to participate because of your involvement in a facilitation training program as a participant.

Should you choose to participate in this project, you will help develop a better understanding of how facilitators are trained and developed. The outcomes of this research project will be published in a thesis but may also be used in conference presentations, articles submitted to relevant professional and academic journals, books, and/or book chapters. A summary of the data may be provided to the organization with whom you completed your training. The findings may also stimulate, inform, and/or guide future research into facilitator education.

To be involved all you have to do is anonymously complete the survey on the attached form and return it to me using the pre-paid envelope. All data collected in this project will be kept completely confidential, stored securely, and will not be available to anyone other than myself. You are welcome to receive a summary of the findings that emerge, please contact me ([g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:g.thomas@latrobe.edu.au)) to let me know.

This research project has approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee to go ahead. If you have questions, you are more than welcome to contact me on the numbers given below. If you have any complaint about the way you have been treated during the study, or a query that I have not been able to satisfy please feel free to contact:

The Secretary,  
Education Faculty Human Ethics Committee  
La Trobe University, PO Box 199, Bendigo 3552

Yours sincerely

GLYN THOMAS  
Doctor of Education Student  
Faculty of Education  
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**Appendix C: Sample survey used with facilitation course graduates**



*A study of the theories and practices in facilitator education.*

FHEC Number: R003/05

Principal Researcher: Glyn Thomas

Please complete the following questions and return your completed questionnaire to

1. What was the name of the facilitation training course that you participated in?

.....

2. In terms of course content covered in the training program, what things were the most useful for your development as a facilitator?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. In terms of the training process used in the training program, what parts of the course were the most useful for your development as as facilitator?

.....  
.....  
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.....  
.....

4. Do you have any suggestions on how the training program could have been run differently to more effectively help you in your development as a facilitator?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

*Thank you for your participation.*

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