An appreciative inquiry of selected elements of staff well-being at a higher education institution

Laurika van Straaten

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SUPERVISOR: Dr A du Plessis

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr SP van Tonder

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation handed in for the qualification Magister Artium in Higher Education Studies at the University of the Free State (UFS) is my own, independent work. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work for a qualification at another university.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI: Appreciative Inquiry

4-D AI CYCLE: **D**iscovery, **D**ream, **D**esign, **D**estiny

Appreciative Inquiry cycle

5-D AI CYCLE: **D**efinition, **D**iscovery, **D**ream, **D**esign, **D**estiny

Appreciative Inquiry cycle

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

SUMMARY

This study explored identified elements of well-being of support services staff of a South African higher education institution (HEI), and ways of optimising their well-being by means of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The study was underpinned by the research paradigm of social constructionism and the belief that reality is socially constructed through our language.

The principles of social constructionism entail that people determine their own destiny by envisioning their desired future. The same principle of dreaming about a desired future is supported by AI – hence this theme was strengthened by both the social constructionism paradigm that underpinned the study, and the research method that was followed (AI).

The institution under research has gone through a process of institutional restructuring from 2007 to 2011. It became evident from an institutional climate survey conducted at the institution in 2013 that elements related to staff well-being had been affected, either through the restructuring or by other factors.

A literature review of well-being revealed that very little research has been done relating to the well-being of support services staff of HEIs, and particularly so in the South African higher education (HE) context. This study was aimed at addressing that gap. The literature review included a study of current perspectives and theories on staff well-being and the research method of Appreciative Inquiry (AI).

During the empirical phase of the study the strengths of the HEI were identified, as well as some positive developments that support services staff members of the institution would like to see in order to enhance their well-being. The research participants' social world was interpreted in an attempt to understand their own reality in terms of the language they used during an AI workshop. A qualitative research design was followed, and action research was conducted by means of an AI process.

The study identified the positive core of the organisation to be its hard-working and dedicated staff, positive relations between colleagues, supervisors and subordinates, a willingness of staff to adapt to change, good remuneration and benefits offered to staff, job security and a supportive work environment. It transpired that through its positive core, the institution could enhance the well-being of support services staff by valuing and acknowledging contributions made by support services staff, by establishing equality between support services and academic staff, appointing adequate support services staff to do the work, ensuring manageable workloads, creating opportunities for promotion for support services staff, and by doing more to address the overall well-being (physical, psychological and emotional well-being) of support services staff.

As there are limited studies available pertaining to the well-being of support services staff at HEIs, this study will make a contribution to the body of knowledge in that field. It is hoped that the institution will realise the importance of the role of support services staff as the gears that keep the machine running, and that their well-being should be a matter of high priority.

The applicability of AI as research method in such a study was illustrated, as the statement of positive, provocative propositions rather than problems created a positive context or climate for the participants within which to work, which resulted in positive findings rather than complaints as often is found to be the case with other types of staff surveys.

Key words: higher education; support services staff; well-being; appreciative inquiry (AI); positive/provocative propositions; AI workshop; Nominal Group Technique (NGT); institutional climate; social constructionism

OPSOMMING

In die studie is 'n ondersoek uitgevoer oor elemente van die welstand van die ondersteuningsdienspersoneel van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse hoëronderwysinstelling (HOI), en maniere om hul welstand te optimaliseer deur middel van 'n appresiërende ondersoek (*appreciative inquiry – AI*). Die studie is onderlê deur die navorsingsparadigma van sosiale konstruksionisme en die oortuiging dat realiteit sosiaal gekonstrueer word deur die taal wat ons besig.

Die beginsel van sosiale konstruksionisme behels dat mense hul eie bestemming bepaal deur hul begeerde toekoms in die vooruitsig te stel. Dieselfde beginsel van 'n wens vir die toekoms word deur *AI* ondersteun – dus is die tema van die studie versterk deur beide die paradigma van sosiale konstruksionisme wat dit onderlê en die navorsingsmetode (*AI*).

Die instelling waar die ondersoek gedoen is, het van 2007 tot 2011 'n proses van institusionele herstrukturering deurloop. Uit 'n institusionele opname oor die klimaat aan die instelling wat in 2013 uitgevoer is, het dit geblyk dat elemente wat verband hou met personeel se welstand geraak is – óf deur die herstrukturering óf deur ander faktore.

'n Literatuurondersoek oor welstand het getoon dat weinig navorsing nog uitgevoer is oor die welstand van ondersteuningdienspersoneel aan hoëronderwysinstellings, veral in die Suid-Afrikaanse hoëronderwyskonteks. Hierdie studie was daarop gerig om dié leemte aan te vul. Die literatuurondersoek het ook 'n studie van huidige perspektiewe en teorieë oor personeelwelstand en appresiërende ondersoeke (*AI*) as navorsingsmetode ingesluit.

In die empiriese fase van die studie is die sterk punte van die HOI geïdentifiseer, asook sommige positiewe ontwikkelinge wat die ondersteuningsdienspersoneel graag sou wou sien om hul welstand uit te bou. Die deelnemers aan die studie se sosiale wêreld is geïnterpreteer in 'n poging om hul eie werklikheid te begryp aan die hand van die taal wat hulle gedurende 'n *AI*-werkwinkel gebruik het. 'n Kwalitatiewe

navorsingsontwerp is gebruik, en aksienavorsing is deur middel van die *AI*-proses uitgevoer.

Met die studie is die positiewe kern van die instelling geïdentifiseer as die hardwerkende en toegewyde personeel, positiewe verhoudings met kollegas, toesighouers en ondergeskiktes, 'n bereidwilligheid van personeel om by verandering aan te pas, goeie besoldiging en byvoordele wat aan personeel gebied word, werksekerheid en 'n ondersteunende werksomgewing. Dit blyk dat die instelling deur hierdie positiewe kern die welstand van ondersteuningsdienspersoneel kan uitbou deur die bydraes wat hulle lewer, te waardeer en te erken, deur gelykberegtiging tussen ondersteuningsdienspersoneel en akademiese personeel te verseker, deur voldoende ondersteuningsdienspersoneel aan te stel om die werk te behartig, hanteerbare werkladings te verseker, geleenthede vir die bevordering van ondersteunings-dienspersoneel daar te stel, en deur meer te doen om die algemene welstand (fisies, psigologies en emosioneel) van ondersteuningsdienspersoneel te verbeter.

Aangesien beperkte studies beskikbaar is oor die welstand van ondersteuningspersoneel aan hoëronderwysinstellings, sal hierdie studie 'n bydrae lewer tot die kennisterrein. Daar word vertrou dat die instelling die belangrikheid van ondersteuningsdienspersoneel sal besef, aangesien hulle die ratte is wat die masjien laat loop, en hul welstand behoort 'n prioriteitsaangeleentheid te wees.

Die toepaslikheid van *AI* as navorsingsmetode in sodanige studie is geïllustreer, aangesien die stelling van positiewe, uitdagende stellings eerder as probleme 'n positiewe konteks of klimaat daargestel het waarbinne die deelnemers kon werk. Die gevolg hiervan was positiewe bevindinge eerder as die klagtes - wat gewoonlik die geval is met ander tipes personeelondersoeke.

Sleutelwoorde: hoër onderwys; ondersteuningsdienspersoneel; welstand; appresiërende ondersoek (*AI*); positiewe uitdagende stellings; *AI-werk*winkel; nominalegroep-tegniek (NGT); institusionele klimaat; sosiale konstruksionisme

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1　INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions play an important role in the ongoing transformation in South Africa, and as such they present an interesting context for studying issues pertaining to well-being (Field and Buitendach 2011:1). South African higher education institutions (HEIs) are under constant pressure to transform at various levels, and they are expected to do more with decreasing resources from Government in terms of subsidy (Fourie 1999: 275). The HEI chosen for the purpose of this study adopted a new Vision 2020 statement during 2010, and went through a process of institutional restructuring from 2007 to 2011 as part of a transformation process to live up to its vision and mission statements. As a researcher as well as a support services staff member of this institution, I have gradually become interested to see whether this transformation process, or any other factors, have had an effect on the well-being of support services staff of the institution. Therefore, my study looked into identified elements of well-being of support services staff of the South African HEI concerned, and at ways of optimising their well-being by means of Appreciative Inquiry (hereafter referred to as 'AI'). Since I conducted this study within the framework of AI as developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), it is not problem-based. Instead, an appreciative approach is applied, focusing on the strengths of the particular HEI.

One's perceptions in life are shaped by various factors, including one's culture, values, and the knowledge and experience one has gained in life (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011:37). Hence, my own knowledge and experiences from working at an HEI formed part of the research that was conducted, and, together with the responses from the research participants, form the social construction of what I perceive to be my world.

The breakdown of chapters will follow the sequence of the research process as it unfolded in this study.

1.2   BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In order to explain my role in this study, I shall provide a brief background of who I am. I am the middle child of three daughters, born in 1972 in the Karoo town of Middelburg, Eastern Cape. After matriculating in 1990, I pursued my studies in linguistics and started my career as a translator/linguist in 1995 at the higher education institution under research. I am very passionate about my profession, and almost 20 years later I am still working at the same institution in the field of linguistic support.

I regard myself as a change agent, and desire to make a positive contribution towards our institution in any possible way. I have a positive outlook on life, and hence my interest in AI, both as theory and research method. Realising that I chose to participate in the research as a support services staff member of this institution, I made a conscious effort to remain as objective as possible throughout the research process. However, I acknowledge that total objectivity is not possible. I applied a process of disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:13). More detail about how I attempted to ensure maximum objectivity as researcher is provided in Chapter 3 of this study (see 3.3.2).

As mentioned in my opening paragraph, the institution where I am employed has gone through a process of institutional restructuring from 2007 to 2011, and adopted a new Vision 2020 statement during 2010. Although the institution has adopted a great vision and mission statement, there is evidence that elements related to staff well-being have been affected in the process. This became evident from an institutional climate survey that was conducted at the institution during 2013 (CUT 2013:1-20). This survey was a typical climate study aimed at

identifying problem areas within the university. The climate survey measured the following elements related to the organisational climate:

- opportunity for growth;
- teamwork;
- culture and work environment;
- direct supervisor;
- communication;
- salary/remuneration;
- resources,
- tools and equipment;
- loyalty/employee confidence, and
- policies and procedures (CUT 2013:6).

In the climate survey, scores between 70 and 100% were regarded as positive; scores between 0 and 49% were regarded as negative; and scores between 50 and 69% were regarded as intermediate and having to be addressed as developmental areas (CUT 2013:8). The climate survey revealed that two areas were regarded as positive by staff; one area (remuneration) was regarded as negative by staff; and seven out of the 10 tested areas were regarded as requiring some improvement. As a support services staff member of the institution with a vision to contribute to positive change at the institution, I became interested in the effect that AI, and an appreciative focus on the organisation and its current strengths, could have on support services staff members of the institution's well-being, which would also affect the institutional climate; hence the reason for this study.

Several studies (Buys and Rothmann 2010; Cranny, Smith and Stone 1992; Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser 2000; Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver 2006; Kahn and Juster 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004) on different aspects of employee well-being such as employee empowerment, job security, employee engagement, job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress and employee well-being in general have shown that these aspects are often inter-linked, that

resources may have a buffering effect on job demands, and that job resources have motivational potential when job demands are high. However, although the above studies measure and link elements of staff well-being, they do not reveal how this is applicable to support services staff members of HEIs in particular, and more specifically, to support services staff of the HEI under research. Moreover, many of these studies are focused on identifying the problem or reasons for a lack of well-being, and not on organisations' strengths (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008:3). Hence, there is a gap in current research that I wished to address by means of this research.

1.3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There has been a significant increase in research on well-being over the past decades (Keyes, Schmotkin and Ryff 2002; Fredrickson 2002, 2003, 2004; Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Seligman 2011). Several studies have been conducted on the causes of staff well-being, the reasons for a decline in the well-being of staff, and the effects of a decline in staff's well-being on the organisations they are working for (Buys and Rothmann 2010; Cranny, Smith and Stone 1992; Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser 2000; Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver 2006; Kahn and Juster 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). However, limited research has been done on the well-being of support services staff at HEIs. This study was therefore aimed at making a research contribution in the field of the *improvement* of aspects pertaining to selected elements of support services staff's well-being, but without conducting a typical staff well-being study or survey designed at identifying the problem. Instead, I did an inquiry into moments of "high engagement, commitment and passionate achievement" in the organisation – referred to as an AI (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2), and I used that positive base as a means to identify desired improvements pertaining to identified elements of staff well-being in the particular organisation.

Before addressing the gap that I identified in terms of staff well-being studies conducted, it is important to make mention of the different theories on well-being, and how these theories have developed over the past decades.

1.3.1 Well-being theories

Numerous well-being theories in the field of social psychology have been formulated since as early as the 1940s. Since my study was aimed at using AI as a tool to identify the particular HEI's strengths and how to use that as a basis for improving staff well-being, I have done my research within the framework of the following, more recent theories on well-being:

- AI theory (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987);
- positive psychology theory (Seligman 1998, in Fredrickson 2003);
- flourishing theory (Keyes 2002); and
- well-being theory (Seligman 2011).

Detailed information on all the different well-being theories, and how those theories have developed, is provided in Chapter 2 of this report (see 2.2.1 - 2.2.9).

1.4 RESEARCH FOCUS

As I worked within the framework of AI and used AI as research method (*cf.* Cooperrider and Whitney 2005), I did not regard the particular HEI as having problems to be solved, but rather as having the potential to focus on its strengths, and to utilise such strengths to bring about the desired change in support services staff's well-being, as voiced by them during the AI workshop that was conducted for purposes of this research. Hence, instead of formalising a research problem or problem statement for the study, an affirmative research topic was identified, as proposed by Cooperrider *et al. (*2008:35) and explained in the following section.

1.4.1 Affirmative topic

The questions we ask, the things that we choose to focus on, and the topics we choose to ask questions about determine what we find. What we find becomes the date and the story out of which we dialogue about and envision the future. And so the seeds of change are implicit in the very first questions we ask. Inquiry is intervention.

-   **David Cooperrider (2008:103)**

This study was conducted within the framework of AI, and hence was not problem-based, but focused on identifying the positive core of the organisation under research (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:3). In AI, an affirmative topic is chosen for an AI summit or workshop, with the purpose of evoking conversations about people's desired future.   This is established by focusing on what gives "life" to the organisation (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:35). The affirmative topic for this study was:

>   AI as a transformative tool towards the well-being of support services staff at [name of institution].

The reason for choosing this affirmative topic was because I wanted to determine how AI could be useful in determining the state of well-being of support services staff at the institution, but also how it could become a tool in enhancing the well-being of support services staff of the particular HEI. The research questions that guided the study are provided in the next section.

1.4.2 Research questions

The aim of the study was to answer the research questions set. The primary research question for this study was the following:

> How can identified elements of support services staff well-being at a particular HEI be improved?

In order to answer the primary question, I had to do a literature review on all the aspects and theories related to staff well-being, and I had to answer the following secondary research questions:

- What are the current perspectives on staff well-being and AI?
- What works well in the specific organisation, why does it work well and how can those successes be extended through AI?
- What strengths exist pertaining to support services staff's well-being at the particular institution, and how can those identified strengths and the aspirations of support services staff be related to theories on staff's well-being?
- What positive developments would support services staff members like to see in order to enhance their well-being?
- How can support services staff's well-being be enhanced in future?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As indicated in the background and rationale to this chapter (see 1.2), there is evidence that selected elements of staff well-being have been affected at the particular HEI. The purpose of this research was to explore, by means of an AI, how the well-being of support services staff might be enhanced in future. The following research objectives were subsequently set:

- To conduct a literature study on current perspectives on staff well-being and AI, specifically within higher education.

- To find out what works well in the specific organisation, why it works well, and how that success can be augmented through AI (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2005:4).

- To discover existing and envisaged strengths pertaining to support services staff well-being at the particular institution.

- To discover support staff of the particular institution's wishes for improved well-being.

- Ensuing from the research, to draw conclusions and to make recommendations for the enhancement of support services staff well-being.

1.6   DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted within the field of Higher Education Studies, and focused on identified elements of the well-being of support services staff of a particular HEI. Disciplinary and geographical boundaries were set for the study.

1.6.1   Disciplinary demarcation

The South African Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997) demarcates tertiary education as higher education. The Act further identifies formal education beyond secondary level education as higher education (RSA: DoE 1997:9).

The research was conducted in the field of Higher Education Studies, a field in which relatively limited research and analysis were done before the 1980s (Altbach 1997:4). This study of elements of the well-being of support services staff at the HEI concerned therefore will contribute to research in the field of higher education – and more specifically in the category of institutional management, as identified by Tight (2012:9). In higher education, the human resources function is an institutional management function. This category focuses on importing change

and diversity theories, leadership, efficiency and managerialism, amongst others (Tight 2012:9; see 2.4.1; 3.3).

1.6.2 Geographical demarcation of the study

The study was conducted at a Free State HEI of which I have been a staff member for almost 20 years. The sample consisted of a purposefully selected group of 80 support services staff members on one campus of the institution, from the total support services staff component of 480 people. Of the 80 invitees, 20 eventually participated in the research. More details on the sampling method are provided in sections 1.9 and 3.5.1.

1.7 CONCEPTS CLARIFIED

For ease of reference, the concepts of *Appreciative Inquiry* and *well-being* are explained.

1.7.1 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

AI is described as a search for the best in people and their organisations (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2). In the context of this research, it involves being inquisitive and making a discovery of what gives *"life"* to this particular organisation; "*what makes it feel most alive, most effective, and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms"* (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2). Therefore, affirmative, positive questions were asked during the AI workshop held for purposes of this study, as a means of discovering and strengthening the organisation's *"positive core*" (*cf.* Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2). A detailed description of AI and how it was applied as theory and research method is provided in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study (see 2.2.2.4; 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.1.3; 3.4.1.4; 3.4.1.5).

1.7.2 Well-being

Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern and Seligman (2011:81) state that a clear definition of the concept of well-being is still lacking. What is, however, clear, is that well-being is about more than just happiness (Keyes 2002; Seligman 2011). Keyes (2002:1007) states that well-being could include psychological, emotional and social elements of someone's welfare. This links with Seligman's well-being theory (2011) and his PERMA-model (2011) (see 2.4.6), in terms of which he identified five measureable building blocks of well-being (i.e. positive emotions; engagement; relationships; meaning and purpose; and accomplishment), which also relate to either psychological, emotional or social elements of well-being, as proposed by Keyes (2002:1007) (see 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.9). The concept of well-being is explored more extensively in Chapter 2 (see 2.1.1).

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research design was to come up with a plan for gathering data that would enable me to answer the research questions (*cf.* McMillan and Schumacher 2006:22). The research paradigm I chose to work in, was social constructionism.

1.8.1 Social constructionism

I chose to conduct this study within the research paradigm of social constructionism. Social constructionism is based on the belief that reality is constructed by our language (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006:276). Our language contains our constructions of the world and ourselves (McNamee and Gergen 1999:4-5), albeit constructionism is interested in the kind of language used, and not the language itself (Terre Blanche *et al.* in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:277). As researcher, I wished to interpret the research participants' social world in an attempt to understand their own reality in terms of the language they used during interviews, and to gain a deep

understanding of the reality that research participants co-created (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280) (see 3.3.1).

1.8.2 Qualitative research design

A research design is the general plan for the research, and the research procedures that are followed in conducting the research (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:20). Since I wished to interpret the social world of the research participants, I decided to do qualitative research, as it is interpretative in nature (*cf.* Creswell 2009:177). Data were collected from written or spoken language, and analysed by identifying themes and categorising the data into these themes, as proposed by Durrheim (in Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:47) (see 3.8).

Another benefit of qualitative research is that it is more flexible than quantitative research, and it allows the researcher to narrow his/her focus to a single element, namely to understand the world as experienced by the research participants (Fouché and De Vos 2011:91). This research design fitted the purpose of my research, as I wished to gain an understanding of the world of the research participants from their perspective, rather than quantifying the data (see 3.8).

1.8.3 Research methodology

The research methodology used in conducting this study was action research. According to O'Brien (1998:1) action research is also known as "participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning and contextual action research". Reason and Bradbury (2001:17) point out that advocates of action research argue that theory alone cannot bring about change, and that there should be a kind of interaction between theory and practice.

In her book *Action Research in Higher Education: Examples and Reflections,* Zuber-Skerritt (1992) demonstrates how teams of academics were able to improve their practice and skills through action research. Action research, therefore, is

viewed an appropriate methodology for this study conducted amongst support services staff of an HEI.

Action research also is a key methodology in organisational development practice (O'Brien 1998:2), and hence it proved valuable in this appreciative study on organisational well-being. The researcher and the research participants, through action research and applied within the context of AI, were able to work together in this research and to realise the value of learning and working together, as emphasised by O'Brien (1998:2).

1.8.4 Research method

AI is regarded as a "significant innovation in action research" (Bushe 1995:14), as it focuses on positive questions about peak experiences and strengths. Many of the principles of social constructionism entail that people determine their own destiny by dreaming about, or envisioning their desired future (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:14). Thus, AI fits well into the research paradigm of social constructionism, the paradigm within which this research was conducted.

Another reason for choosing AI as research method was because it would allow participants to actively participate in the study. Since I wanted to understand staff well-being from the perspective of support services staff (through their language and story-telling); from a positive angle (*cf.* Mertens 2010) and by focusing on the existing strengths of the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:3), AI was regarded an appropriate research method for this study.

1.9   SAMPLE SELECTION

A purposefully selected group of 80 support services staff members from one of the campuses of the HEI were conveniently and purposefully invited to participate in this study; 20 of which eventually participated in the research on a voluntary basis. These participants were selected from a total of 480 support services staff members within the entire organisation (see 3.5.1). They were information-rich individuals and varied with regard to race, gender, age and functions within the organisation, as well as their post levels.

Participation was on a voluntary basis, and participants remained anonymous in all reports on the research. A detailed account of the sampling strategy is provided in Chapter 3 of this report (see 3.5.1).

1.10 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

Qualitative data were collected pertaining to the well-being of support services staff of the HEI, as identified during a 4-hour AI workshop. Various data collection techniques were applied in this study (see 1.10; 3.6; 3.11.1). During the Discovery phase of the workshop (see 3.4.1.2; 4.2.2; 4.3.2), one-on-one interviews were held. Information shared during interviews was captured on an interview guide that was designed for this purpose (see Annexure B). One-on-one interviews were followed by small-group discussions, where participants observed and shared the top positive themes as identified from the one-on-one interviews that were conducted, and decided on two top themes. The four small groups then each shared their two top themes by writing these on a flipchart during the Dream phase of the AI cycle. Meaningful information (in the form of the top eight priorities identified) was collected through the best stories and practices shared, illustrating the positive core of the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:111).   All participants then voted for the top themes shared by all groups.

The data collection technique applied during this phase (the Dream phase; see 3.4.1.3; 4.3.2.3) was an adaptation of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) of Dobbie, Rhodes, Tysinger and Freeman (2004:402-406), embedded in the 5-D phases (Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) of the AI method (see 3.4.1). This data collection technique was chosen to involve participants in the verification of the data. This method of data collection was regarded most applicable, as the research was conducted within the framework of AI, where the emphasis is on collecting data from participants, and involving them in the whole process of verifying and applying the findings of the research. Although, through an adapted NGT process, use was made of the synergy of the group, the focus in the study was on individual participation, and this balanced participation among members of the group. It was effective in strategising, as it contributed to a high level of trustworthiness. Another benefit of this method of data collection was the fact that the research findings were interpreted with relative ease, and with minimal resource requirements.

After the dream phase and the application of the NGT to gather data during this phase, group discussions continued during the design phase (see 3.4.1.4; 4.3.2.4). Small groups presented their ideas to the entire group, and as workshop facilitator, I observed the whole process and made notes on all information shared. I also took photos of all the presentations made, collages designed and interactive sessions, and recorded all the workshop proceedings, discussions and presentations digitally. I kept a reflective journal throughout the research process, and made observations and took notes during the entire AI workshop that was conducted for my empirical research (see 3.6).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:148) state that it is common for qualitative researchers to use a number of data collection strategies in a single study. I used all of the above-mentioned data collection techniques to answer both the primary and secondary research questions of my study from different viewpoints (*cf.* Mason 2002, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:236). I was able to apply greater or lesser depth and breadth in the data analysis; to use triangulation and to search for various data particulars about the same phenomenon (*cf.* Mason 2002, in Cohen *et al.* 2011:236-238*).*

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Participants in the research were involved in analysing the data gathered during the research workshop; actually, most of the data analysis was done by the research participants during the AI workshop, but, as researcher, I interpreted the data. Elements of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) were applied by the participants to identify the top themes (referred to as the positive core of the organisation) during the Dream phase of the AI workshop (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:111; see 3.4.1.3; 4.3.2.3).

The method of content analysis and interpretation of the data that I used entailed the following four steps, as proposed by Anderson (2009:213):

- Understanding and assessing the data collected;
- reducing the data to manageable chunks;
- exploring themes and patterns, and coding the data;
- formulating meaningful conclusions.

Merriam (2009:225) indicates that a thick description of the research pertaining to the research setting, research participants and findings of the study as supported by sufficient evidence, and maximum variation in the selection of the sample, strengthen the transferability of a study. In this report a rich description is given of the research; the research setting; the participants; and how they were selected, with maximum variation in mind (race, age, gender, number of years' service at the institution, and post level occupied). I report the research findings supported by evidence to ensure, as far as possible, that the reader will be able to apply the research findings to other contexts. The research participants and the management of the HEI will receive feedback on the research findings, including the findings and recommendations.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations applied in this research emanated from the need for the research to be credible and trustworthy in terms of the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) (see 1.14; 3.11; 3.11.1). I obtained written consent from the HEI concerned to conduct the research, and written informed consent from participants in the study. Participants took part on a voluntary basis, and remain anonymous throughout this report. They also had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, should they have wished to do so (*cf.* Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele 2012:254; see 3.9).

Research participants were not exposed to any harm, and the research was conducted in a safe environment with which all of the participants were familiar; hence they felt comfortable and at home. The institution had granted permission for the research to be conducted at the institution's premises and in the chosen venue.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State to conduct this study (as per ethics number UFS-EDU-2013-045). More detail on the ethical considerations is provided in Chapter 3 of this report (see 3.9).

1.13 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit four criteria for arguing trustworthiness in qualitative research, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (the extent to which qualitative findings can be transferred to other settings; see 3.11; 3.11.1; 3.11.2; 3.11.3; 3.11.4).

Credibility was established through prolonged engagement in the field, and the "triangulation of data sources, methods and investigators" (Markula and Silk 2011:205). This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (see 3.11.1).

Dependability has been established in that I kept all information gathered during the study safely throughout the process. All methods used are been documented and the logic behind the research findings and conclusions reached is explained (see 3.11.3). Confirmability was established by giving a self-critical account and exposing any biases in the study (see 3.11.4), and transferability was established in that research participants were provided with sufficient information on the context and aim of the study (Markula and Silk 2011:205) (see 3.11.2). Transferability was, however, not the main purpose of the study (see 3.11.2).

In qualitative studies, the reader decides whether transferability has been established (Mertens 2005:256). I have therefore attempted to provide sufficient data in this report for the reader to make a sound judgement (*cf.* Mertens 2005:309). As explained above, I have taken all the criteria provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985) into account to strengthen the integrity of this qualitative study.

1.14 VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The value of this research lies in the fact that existing and envisaged strengths of support services staff at the targeted Free State HEI were discovered through a process of AI (*cf.* Watkins 2010:3).

Traditional studies looking into various elements of staff well-being - amongst others job satisfaction and staff engagement - indicate that change in an organisation should be brought about by finding out what the problems in the organisation are, and finding solutions to such problems (Hammond 1998:6). However, the empirical research in this study was based on David Cooperrider's theory of AI, which challenges the traditional approach to change by indicating that organisations are not "problems to be solved, but rather dynamic organizations that offer the solutions to any challenges they might face" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2005:2). The principles and practices of AI are based on the belief that collective strengths can transform an entire organisation, and as such AI requires an inquiry into those moments when the organisation experienced moments of high

engagement, when staff members were committed and when extraordinary things were achieved (Cooperrider *et al.* 2005:25) (see 3.3.3 - 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1 - 3.4.2; 3.4.4).

The role players that would benefit directly from this research are support services staff of the HEI concerned. If the well-being of support services staff is affected in a positive manner, it will also affect those whom support services staff members serve, namely the management, academic staff members and students of the HEI.

1.15 CHAPTER LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The layout of this report is as follows:

This chapter (Chapter 1) was devoted to a brief introduction and orientation to the study to provide the reader of an overview of the report in a nutshell. Chapter 2, *Current perspectives on staff well-being,* reports on the literature study that was conducted**,** and addresses the elements, causes and benefits of staff well-being. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of a literature review on AI, as well as of the research design and methodology that were applied, whilst the research findings are reported in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes the report, and recommendations are made with a view of improving the well-being of support services staff at the institution.

1.16 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This study involved using AI as a tool in bringing about desired change in the well-being of support services staff of the HEI under research, and how such change could positively affect the institution as a whole. The ultimate purpose of my study was thus to make a positive contribution towards the well-being of support services staff of the particular HEI.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework for the study is provided, and well-being is contextualised – also in the higher education arena. An analysis of the different elements of well-being is done, and the causes and benefits of optimal well-being are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON STAFF WELL-BEING

2.1   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the first chapter of this report, a background and introduction into the research 'problem' - or rather - the affirmative (research) topic - was provided. This chapter will provide the theoretical basis for the study, namely a literature study on staff well-being within an organisational context. The benefits of optimal well-being for organisations thus will also be explored.

A primary, and five secondary research questions were formulated as a framework for conducting this research, and the aim of Chapter 2 is to answer the first part of the secondary research question, namely

What are the current perspectives on staff well-being?

The aim of this chapter further is to provide a theoretical framework for answering all the other research questions. Besides the contextualisation of staff well-being, the elements, causes and benefits of staff well-being for organisations will also be explored.

First, it is important to define the concept of *well-being*.

2.1.1 Well-being defined

"Human well-being is not a random phenomenon. It depends on many factors – ranging from genetics and neurobiology to sociology and economics. But, clearly, there are some scientific truths to be known about how we can flourish in this world."
- **(Harris n.d.)**

Although research related to staff well-being has grown significantly in recent decades, Ryff and Keyes (1995:719-720) point to the fact that *"the absence of theory-based formulations of well-being is puzzling"*. Definitions of staff well-being are, according to Forgeard *et al. (*2011:81), "blurred and overly broad*"*. In the 1980s and 1990s, two approaches to well-being emerged, namely the hedonistic approach, where well-being was related to aspects such as happiness and satisfaction with life (Diener 1984); and the eudaimonic approach, where well-being was described in terms of human development and psychological functioning viewed from a positive angle (Ryff 1989; Seligman 1998). Today, well-being is regarded from a multi-dimensional approach, including concepts such as subjective well-being (Keyes *et al.* 2002); emotional, social and psychological well-being (Keyes *et al.* 2002) and flourishing (Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Seligman 2011).

Ryan and Deci (2000:142) define well-being as *"optimal psychological functioning and experience"*. Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff (2002:1007) state that well-being can be characterised as either subjective well-being (SWB) – *"evaluating life in terms of satisfaction and balance between positive and negative affect"*, or psychological well-being (PWB) – *"the perception of engagement with existential challenges of life"*. Keyes *et al.* (2002) broadened the concept of well-being by adding a third criterion for optimal well-being, namely social well-being. They emphasise that the criteria for experiencing optimal well-being are that an individual must have a combination of high levels of emotional well-being (high positive affect, low negative affect and high levels of life satisfaction); psychological well-being (self-acceptance; personal growth; purpose in life; ability to master one's environment;

autonomy; positive relations with others), and social well-being (social acceptance; social actualisation; social contribution; social coherence; social integration) (Keyes *et al.* 2002:1007).

Shah and Marks (2004:2) consider well-being to be more than happiness and feeling satisfied; they indicate that well-being is also about personal development, being fulfilled in life and making a contribution to the community. Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders (2011:230) provide a definition of what they refer to as "*stable well-being*", namely having the "*psychological, social and physical resources*" needed to "*meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge*". Seligman (2011:13) states that "*… the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing*". I have taken the well-being components as identified by Keyes (2002), the concept of "flourishing" as identified by Fredrickson and Losada (2005) and Seligman (2011), and combined these to form my own definition of the concept of well-being. For me, well-being can be defined as follows:

> *Well-being is all about functioning optimally in life; living a well-balanced life; flourishing at emotional, physical, social and spiritual level; thriving and not only surviving.*

It is clear from all the different definitions and concepts of well-being provided that there is agreement that well-being is about more than happiness, and that it entails flourishing at different levels such as emotional, psychological and social level (Keyes *et al.* 2002:1007; Seligman 2011:13).

2.1.2 Well-being contextualised

From a literature review on staff well-being, it became evident that well-being is indeed a very broad concept (see 1.7.2; 2.1.1; 2.2.1; 2.2.9; 2.3). Optimal well-being could include various elements at emotional, social and psychological levels (Keyes 2002), such as having positive emotions; feeling valued or appreciated;

living an engaged, meaningful life; being engaged in one's work, experiencing job satisfaction, high morale and all kinds of elements that relate to having a flourishing life (Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson 2005). In the absence of these and other elements such as happiness, trust and a sense of belonging, well-being is negatively affected and this could lead, amongst others, to a high staff turnover (Mendes and Stander 2011; Bothma and Roodt 2012); a decline in one's health (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004); low morale (Bezuidenhout and Cilliers 2010; Ngambi 2011); depression (Keyes 2002; Seligman *et al.* 2005); and burnout (Barkhuizen, Hoole and Rothmann 2004; Rothmann and Jordaan 2006).

For the purpose of my study, I have focused on the positive elements of well-being that lead to a flourishing life, as derived from the AI theory of Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), the positive psychology theory of Seligman (1998); the flourishing theory of Keyes (2002) and the well-being theory of Seligman (2011).

To gain a bird's-eye view of how I went about contextualising staff well-being, a table named *General literature review on staff well-being* was compiled (see Annexure A). The table is an indication of the literature review that was conducted to put the research project in context by indicating how the research fits into a particular field, as proposed by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:10). This table provides an overview of the theories on well-being; causes of staff well-being and the various elements of staff well-being that I came across in the literature review, with the author of each, and the year of publication. This includes Seligman's PERMA model of well-being (Seligman 2011) and the AI principle of feeling valued and appreciated (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008), which served as a basis for the study.

For purposes of guiding the reader in following the process of gathering and filtering the information that I came across in the literature review and how that information was applied in the research, a flow diagram (Figure 2.1) was designed:

GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW ON STAFF WELL-BEING

(Chapter 2; Annexure A)

- **Definition of well-being**
- **Elements of well-being**
- **Theories on well-being**

  - ➤ Appreciative inquiry (AI) theory
  - ➤ Positive psychology theory
  - ➤ Flourishing theory
  - ➤ Well-being theory

- **Causes of well-being**
- **Benefits of well-being**
- **PERMA Model of well-being**

ELEMENTS OF WELL-BEING (See Annexure A)

• Feeling valued/appreciated	Improved longevity
• Sense of belonging	Staff retention
• Job motivation	Improved creativity
• Empowerment	Vigour
• Flourishing	Dedication
• Job security	Trust
• Work performance	Morale
• Positive emotions	Productivity
• Remuneration	Engagement
• Job satisfaction	Relationships
• Happiness	Meaningful life
• Confidence	Accomplishment
• Gratefulness	Optimism
• Organisational commitment	Opportunities for promotion
• Resources	Equality, etc.

PERMA MODEL OF WELL-BEING

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment (Chapter 3)

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY WORKSHOP

- **Conducted AI workshop for purposes of empirical research (Chapters 3 and 4). Identified strengths of organisation; identified well-being elements & controlled with literature (Chapter 2).**

Figure 2.1   Flow diagram: Staff well-being contextualised

The different well-being theories and current perspectives on staff well-being in an institutional context warrant further discussion.

2.2   WELL-BEING THEORIES

Various theories on well-being have been developed since the 1940s. For purposes of this study, the principles of the AI theory (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987) (in Woodman and Pasmore 1998); positive psychology theory (Seligman 1998), flourishing theory (Keyes 2002) and well-being theory (Seligman 2011) have been applied.   Other theories that did not figure prominently in the study are also briefly discussed.

2.2.1   Self-actualisation theory

Theories on well-being were formulated as early as in the 1940s. Abraham Maslow is well-known for developing what he referred to as a *hierarchy of needs* (Maslow 1943). Being a humanistic psychologist, he focused on the potential of human beings. In his self-actualisation theory, he presented a hierarchy of needs, namely physiological needs; need for safety; need for love, affection and belonging; need for esteem and need for self-actualisation in the form of a pyramid, where the upper point represents the need for self-actualisation – that is, the need to fulfil one's potential or destiny on earth, as shown in Figure 2.2 below:
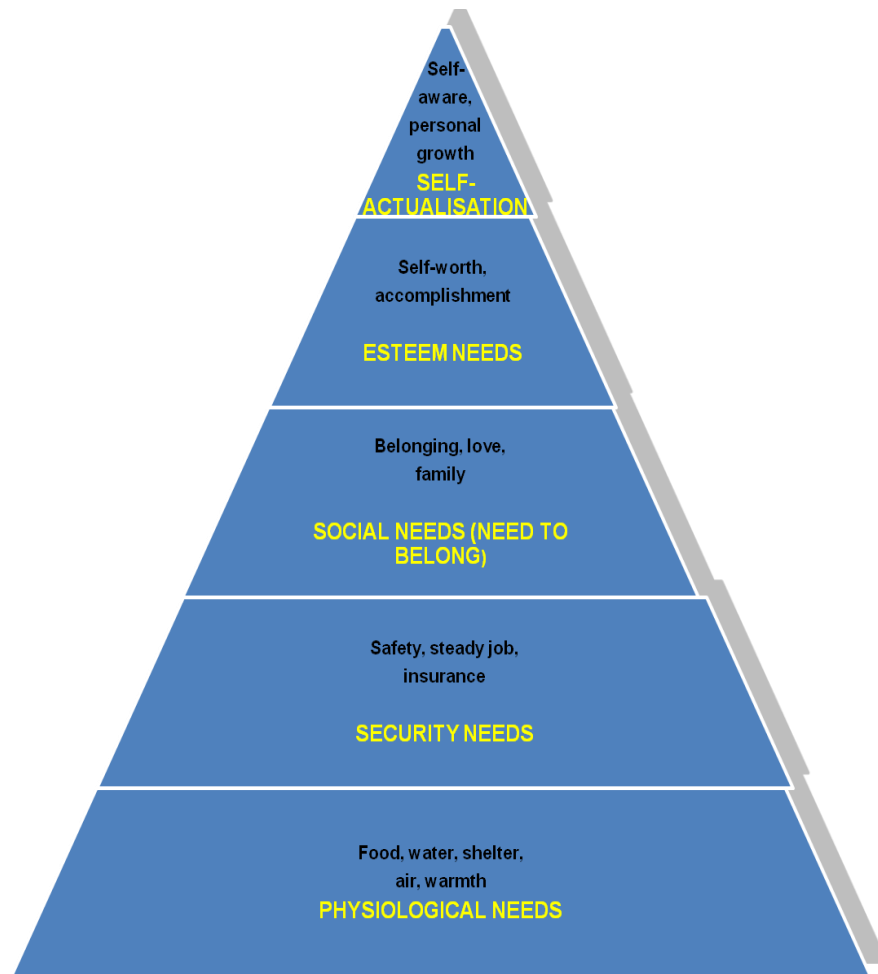
Figure 2.2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted from Maslow 1943)

Maslow (1943) described the third so-called major need in his hierarchy of needs as the need to belong and feel valued (Dunlap 2004:71). More recent studies on well-being by Nadler, Malloy and Fischer (2008) and Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) have found that the need to belong, feel valued and appreciated is still very real and valid in today's society, and that it affects the well-being of people in the workplace. Nadler *et al.* (2008:120-121) point out that every individual needs to have a sense of belonging or being accepted, and that an unmet need to belong leads to anxiety. Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) researched the reasons for burnout, and a lack of engagement and sense of coherence in female academics in higher education institutions in South Africa. Their study confirms that the above-mentioned elements of academics' well-being are influenced by their sense of belonging. In order to

ensure optimal well-being of staff, it is thus important to ensure that they have a sense of belonging, and that they feel valued and appreciated.

2.2.2 Job satisfaction theory

Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson and Capwell (1957) developed the job satisfaction theory. Their theory indicates a correlation between job satisfaction and job motivation, and also includes a list of factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The literature review revealed that more recent studies (Cranny *et al.* 1992; Johnsrud *et al.* 2000, Kahn and Juster 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver 2006; and Buys and Rothmann 2010) still find job satisfaction to be a determining factor in terms of the well-being of staff in the workplace.

2.2.3 Self-determination theory

The self-determination theory (SDT) was developed in the mid-1980s (Deci and Ryan 1985). The theory was developed around the assumption that all individuals have a natural tendency to develop themselves further; it also recognises the importance of self-regulation and integration with others (Ryan and Deci 2002:5). The self-determination theory shows a link with Maslow's self-actualisation theory in terms of the emphasis on social integration and self-awareness. The self-determination theory entails that various factors affect human behaviour and motivation (Van Lange, Kruglanski and Higgins 2012:432), and that this may either lead to growth and integration, or it may disrupt and fragment processes (Ryan and Deci 2002:5). A more recent study by Opie and Henn (2013) asserts that social factors such as family conflict and a lack of sufficient support, amongst others, could influence staff's work engagement and the staff turnover of an organisation (Opie and Henn 2013).

2.2.4 AI theory

Cooperrider's AI theory, developed in 1987 (Woodman and Pasmore 1998), may be compared to the element of 'belonging' in Maslow's self-actualisation theory. The AI theory is based on the belief that we should search for the best in people, and that we should focus on what gives *'life'* in an organisation, instead of focusing on solving problems (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:5) (see 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.3.3; 3.3.4). AI thus entails inquiry into those moments when an organisation has been functioning optimally, in an attempt to bring about the desired change in such an organisation (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:4) (see 3.4.1.3).

A study by Hammond (1998) supports the importance of elements of well-being, such as feeling appreciated and valued. More recent research studies support this viewpoint and posit that the well-being of workers is affected negatively when the workers do not feel 'part of', valued or appreciated (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr and Griffith 2003; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003; Dunlap 2004; Cooperrider and Whitney1999; Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara 2008; Watkins 2010).

AI is not only a theory, but is also used as research method. More detail on AI used as both theory and research method in this study is provided in Chapters 3 and 4 of this report (see 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5; 3.4.2 - 3.4.4; 4.3.1 - 4.3.2; 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4). AI theory, with its positive focus, shows a striking resemblance to the positive psychology theory and 'flourishing theory', as discussed below.

2.2.5 Positive psychology theory

In an attempt to measure overall well-being in people's lives, the concept of positive psychology was developed in 1998 by Martin Seligman, the then President of the American Psychological Association (Fredrickson 2003:330). In earlier years, psychologists focused their research on mental illness and the negative psychological consequences thereof. However, researchers came to realise the benefits of studying

positive psychological consequences (Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Dunn and Dougherty 2008). The aim of positive psychology is to gain an understanding of and foster those factors that enable people and societies to flourish; to be content, satisfied, full of hope and optimistic about the future, and being able to '*flow*' – being one with, engaged and happy in the moment (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000:5).

In their book entitled *Positive psychology: The scientific and practical explorations of human strengths*, Snyder, Lopez and Pedrotti (2011:8) confirm that positive psychology *"offers a look at the other side – that which is good and strong in humankind and in our environs, along with ways to nurture and sustain these assets and resources"*. This view is closely related to the understanding of positive psychology of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), as well as to the positive principles and focus of AI theory (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). It is clear that there had been a move away from negative emotions and their effect on people's well-being, to the positive effects of positive emotions on people's well-being – the so-called positive psychology. This research into the well-being of support services staff at a higher education institution, using AI as both a theory and research method, focuses and builds on the principles of positive psychology and '*flourishing'*, and how positive conversations and emotions can lead to improved well-being and enable people to flourish in life (Fredrickson 2001; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Keyes, 2002) (see 2.2.6; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.6.1).

2.2.6 Broaden-and-build theory

In 1998, Fredrickson developed the broaden-and-build theory in the field of positive psychology. Her research has helped to discover the positive effects that positive experiences and emotions have on people's lives (Fredrickson 2001:218). With this theory she proved that, while negative emotions narrow thought-action tendencies, positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary mind set and build enduring personal resources such as social connections, an individual's ability to cope with

stressful situations, and his/her environmental knowledge (Fredrickson, 2003:330; Fredrickson and Losada 2005:679). Positive emotions also lead to states of mind and behaviour that prepare a person for difficult times to come (Fredrickson 2003:332). This is because of the *"broadening of an individual's momentary mind set"* that takes place, and by doing so, lasting personal resources are built (Fredrickson 2003:332). Other benefits of positive emotions are that they result in people being open to information, and being more creative, flexible and integrative in their thinking (Fredrickson 2003:333). This is closely related to the AI theory and the belief that positive conversations and the synergy created through such conversations can transform an entire organisation (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:101). Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory also shows a strong resemblance to Seligman's element of positive emotions, as described in his well-being theory (see 2.2.2.9).

2.2.7 'Flourishing' theory

In his book, *Creating Mental Illness*, Horwitz (2002:183) defines the concept of 'flourishing*'* as a concept of psychology that assists social scientists and psychologists to study aspects of well-being such as happiness, meaning, purpose and fulfilment. Keyes (2002) also researched what it means to be flourishing in life. He argues that mental health does not only imply the absence of mental illness, but that it also includes dimensions of positive feelings and functioning, and that flourishing adults have high levels of emotional, social and psychological well-being (Keyes 2002:208-212). Flourishing people are happy and satisfied; they feel that their lives have a purpose; they experience some degree of mastery and accept themselves; they experience a sense of personal growth; they have a sense of autonomy and internal locus of control; and they choose to take responsibility for their own lives instead of being victims of life (Keyes 2002:207-222).

Fredrickson and Losada (2005:678) define the concept of 'flourishing*'* as living *"within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth and resilience"*. This definition builds on the work done by Keyes (2002),

Seligman *et al.* (2005) and Seligman (2002, 2011), implying that mental health should be measured in positive terms, and not by the absence of mental illness. Fredrickson and Losada (2005:678) state that to 'flourish' is to function optimally at different levels. Flourishing (functioning optimally and living a fulfilled life) is seen as the opposite of pathology and languishing (feeling hollow and empty) (Fredrickson and Losada 2005:678).

AI was chosen as transformative tool to bring about improved well-being of support services staff at an HEI. This links with the concept of *"flourishing"* as explained by Horwitz (2002), Keyes (2002), Fredrickson and Losada (2005) and Seligman (2011); the concept of positive psychology as explained by Seligman *et al.* (2005) (see 2.2.5); and with Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (1998) (see 2.2.6).

2.2.8 Authentic happiness theory

Research conducted by Seligman (2002:102) confirms that happiness is an important element of people's well-being. In his book, *Authentic Happiness*, he indicates that there are three distinct kinds of happiness, namely the Pleasant Life (pleasures), the Good Life (engagement) and the Meaningful Life (Seligman 2002:29). His research implies that living a meaningful life requires a sense of belonging, and serving a purpose larger than oneself and one's own desires and pleasures (Seligman 2011:14-24). He developed the authentic happiness theory in 2002, stating that it entails positive emotion (what we feel; pleasure; comfort); engagement (the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity; living an engaged life); and meaning (belonging and serving something you believe to be bigger than yourself, e.g. religion, a political party; the family) (Seligman 2002:250-254).

Seligman later changed his views on what positive psychology entails, stating that it is not only about being happy, but about experiencing total well-being (Seligman *et al.* 2005). Hence, he extended his original authentic happiness theory into what he refers to as well-being theory (Seligman 2011). My own definition of well-being also

emphasises total well-being (see 2.1.1), and Seligman's extended well-being theory was therefore used as a cornerstone theory for purposes of this research.

2.2.9   Well-being theory

As indicated above, Seligman came up with the notion that well-being – and not happiness – is the topic of positive psychology (Seligman 2011:13). Based on his understanding of happiness and well-being, he wrote a book with the title of *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*, and identified five measurable building blocks of well-being which he referred to as the PERMA-model, namely **P**ositive emotion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning and purpose, and **A**ccomplishment (Seligman 2011:14-24) (see 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5).

His well-being theory entails that each of the above elements of his PERMA-model must contribute to well-being; it must be pursued for its own sake; and it should be defined and measured independently from the other elements (Seligman 2011:17). Where the authentic happiness theory was all about maximising how we feel, the well-being theory is not measured by happiness and life satisfaction, but by the following: having positive emotions; living an engaged life; having meaningful relationships; living a meaningful and purpose-driven life; and accomplishing one's goals in life (Seligman 2011:24) (see 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5).

Whilst the focus of positive psychology in the authentic happiness theory is on one's own happiness and one's own life, the goal of positive psychology in the well-being theory is to increase the extent to which a person is flourishing in his/her life, but also the extent to which others are flourishing (Seligman 2011:20-24). Seligman's well-being theory also relates to two of six elements that Dr Steve Ilardi emphasises as important in overcoming depression in his book entitled *The Depression Cure: The 6-Step Program to Beat Depression Without Drugs*, namely social connectedness and getting involved in meaningful, engaging activity (Ilardi 2010:9). Seligman (2002, 2011) indicates that, by engaging in meaningful activity and becoming totally

absorbed in an activity, one's mood is lifted, stress is alleviated and a *flow* is created, which can be described as being immersed in the moment and experiencing joy in the present moment (Seligman 2011:11) (see 2.3.6.4).

It is evident from the above-mentioned research and well-being theories that optimal well-being is established, and that people begin to flourish in life and in the organisations where they work when:

- they cultivate positive emotions (Fredrickson 2004; Seligman 2002; 2011);

- they become socially connected (Seligman 2011);

- they engage in meaningful activity (Seligman 2011);

- a healthy 'flow' is established in their lives (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Ilardi 2010; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000);

- they feel valued and appreciated (Ludema *et al*. 2003; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003; Dunlap 2004; Cooperrider and Whitney 2005; Money *et al.* 2008; Watkins 2010);

- their lives become meaningful and purpose-driven (Seligman 2011); and

- they experience emotional, social and psychological well-being (Keyes 2002).

In this study, too, the emphasis was on staff well-being, in that I attempted to make a contribution towards identified elements of support services staff well-being by means of AI (see 4.3.2; 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.5).

2.3   ELEMENTS AND CAUSES OF STAFF WELL-BEING

During the literature review, the main elements and causes of staff well-being have been identified from the well-being theories and the positive psychology approach. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, there is evidence that well-being is about more than happiness (Seligman 2002; 2011; Keyes 2002; Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Steger 2009). When conducting the literature review for this study, I had e-mail, telephonic and personal discussions with various experts in the fields of

industrial psychology, higher education and AI to assist me in identifying the relevant concepts and theories with regard to staff well-being, organisational well-being and AI. The guidance provided by these experts was very helpful and assisted me in looking into the concepts of well-being and AI holistically, from a positive angle and with a focus on the most recent theories on staff well-being.

Typical studies on organisational well-being are grounded in organisational development or organisational culture, as it "mandates a linear approach of diagnosis, measurement and gap analysis as standard practice in relation to most culture change initiatives" (Scheel and Crous 2007:29). The empirical research in this study, however, did look into the organisational culture and various elements pertaining to the well-being of support services staff, but without attempting to diagnose problems within the organisation. Instead, the organisation was regarded as a dynamic entity "offering the solution to any challenges" it might face (*cf.* Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2) (see 1.1; 3.3.3; 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1 - 3.4.2; 3.4.4).

The principles and practices of AI suggest the idea that, by building on its collective strengths, an entire organisation can be transformed (see 1.1; 3.3.3 - 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1 - 3.4.2; 3.4.4)*.* Hence, it requires an appreciation of and an inquiry into those moments when the organisation experienced "extraordinary moments of engagement, commitment and achievements" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:25). This study, by means of AI, thus attempted to focus on the positive core of the organisation by having interviews with an appreciative focus - interviews about times when the organisation and its staff were functioning optimally - interviews focusing on the organisation's strengths by means of AI (see 3.4.1.2; 4.3.2; 4.3.2.1).

Upadhyay and Gupta (2012:80) indicate that there is a link between elements of low staff morale, such as staff engagement, and staff performance, as well as the job satisfaction experienced by staff members. They state that *"morale is considered to be the main element in the mental phenomenon driving performance in the organization" (*Upadhyah and Gupta 2012:80). Warr (2002) identifies four dimensions

of staff well-being, namely job satisfaction, occupational stress, burnout and staff engagement. He measured staff's job satisfaction by means of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) as developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), and found a relationship among job satisfaction, occupational stress, burnout and work engagement.

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) developed the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model). They made the assumption that every occupation may have its own causes of employee well-being, but also some risk factors that are associated with job-related stress. Their research provides evidence for the existence of two simultaneous processes: High job demands exhaust employees' mental and physical resources, deplete them of energy and lead to health problems, whereas sufficient job resources increase employee's engagement and performance (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer and Schaufeli's study (2003:341-356) focuses on job demands and job resources as predictors of absence duration and frequency. They found that job resources were a unique predictor of organisational commitment, and that demanding aspects of work led to impaired health. Furthermore, their study confirms that burnout plays a mediating role in the relationship between job demands and absenteeism (Bakker *et al.* 2003:341-356).

Staff well-being also affects their work outputs, levels of absenteeism and staff turnover (Syptak, Marsland and Ulmer 1999; Dwyer and Ganster 1991; Firth and Britton 1989). Staff well-being, therefore, is an important research topic, as it affects organisations as a whole. Luthans (2002:57) emphasises five key attributes of well-being outlined in his CHOSE model, namely **C**onfidence, **H**ope, **O**ptimism, **S**ubjective well-being and **E**motional intelligence. His message is clear: there is a need to move away from studying dysfunctional behaviour and workplace problems, and to focus on positive psychology (Luthans 2002:57).

Since this research is conducted within the framework of higher education, current perspectives on the well-being of staff working at higher education institutions, and

the elements and causes of their well-being, need to be looked into (see 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.2.1- 2.3.2.11).

2.3.1 Current perspectives on staff well-being in higher education institutions

Altbach (1997:4) points out that up to that point in time not much research has been conducted into higher education. It was envisaged that this research into elements of support services staff of a higher education institution's well-being would contribute to research in the field of Higher Education Studies – and more specifically in the category of institutional management - as identified by Tight (2012:9) (see 1.6.1; 3.3). Human Resource Management is an integral part of institutional management, and therefore the well-being of support services staff, as part of Human Resource Management, forms part of institutional management in HE. This category focuses on importing change and diversity theories, leadership, efficiency and managerialism, amongst others (Tight 2012:9) (see 1.6.1; 3.3).

2.3.2 Factors that influence well-being of HEIs' staff

The well-being of South African higher education institutions' staff members is affected both positively and negatively by various factors. As indicated in Chapter 1, HEIs are under constant pressure to transform at various levels, and to do more with decreasing financial support from government (Fourie 1999:275) (see 1.1). HEIs however, rely on their staff members to fulfil their mandates, and should therefore take the well-being of their staff seriously. It is evident from the literature that the well-being of staff impacts on their organisations as a whole, and it is thus worthwhile to pay more attention to the improvement of staff's well-being. Some of the main factors that I came across that influence the well-being of staff within HEIs are discussed below. The empirical research that was conducted, served as a control measure for the discussion of these elements. In the section below I therefore focus

on those elements of well-being that came forth clearly in the empirical research, and which is grounded by literature.

2.3.2.1 Job satisfaction

The levels of job satisfaction of employees are affected by their morale, levels of engagement in their work, and their performance (Upadhyay and Gupta 2012:80). A study by Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000:34-59) confirms that there is a link between morale and performance. However, none of these studies reveal how this is applicable to staff members of higher education institutions, and naturally, to support services staff members of the HEI under study. Furthermore, traditional studies on issues such as staff morale indicate that change in an organisation should be brought about by investigating the problem within the organisation, and finding a solution to such a problem (Hammond 1998:6) (see 2.2.4; 2.3.2.4).

Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) performed research on how to enhance long-term worker productivity, performance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Amongst others, their study reveals that staff turnover leads to a loss of expertise and organisational stability, and that it could also decrease both morale and perceived job security. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found a relationship between job satisfaction, occupational stress, burnout and work engagement.

From my study, it became evident that support services staff members of the institution enjoy their work more when their contributions are recognised, when they enjoy the work that they do and when they are valued and appreciated (see 4.3.2.1).

2.3.2.2 Engagement

Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) conducted a study on job demands, job resources and work engagement of academic staff in South African HEIs. Their research findings confirm that job resources such as growth opportunities and organisational support

and advancement predict work engagement. Job insecurity was negatively related to dedication in their study.   Hence, their study shows that academics are more dedicated when they have sufficient organisational support – irrespective of whether they experience low, moderate or high job demands (Rothman and Jordaan 2006:94). They recommend that more research should be done on the positive aspects of human behaviour in the work context, as *"too much attention has been paid to unhealthy and dysfunctional aspects"* (Rothman and Jordaan 2006:95). Consequently, using AI as research method in this research project is very appropriate, as it focuses on the positive aspects and strengths of an organisation, and it is therefore a research method that would assist to address the gap in current research on the well-being of support services staff within higher education institutions.

Studies conducted within the higher education landscape by Connell, Ferres and Travaglione (2003), Corbitt and Maritz (2003), Costa (2003) and Dirks and Ferrin (2002) reveal that having trust in one's leader or direct supervisor has been linked to desirable performance outcomes such as satisfaction, retention, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Mendes and Stander (2011) studied the role of leader behaviour in work engagement and retention of staff. Their research proved that empowering behaviour of leaders, role clarity and psychological empowerment predict work engagement, and that work engagement predicts employees' intention (or not) to leave (Mendes and Stander 2011:1). They emphasise that organisations that wish to retain talent should identify the elements contributing to a positive organisation and the retention of talent. To be successful, organisations, according to Mendes and Stander (2011:1), should focus not only on the performance of staff, but also on the health of their employees. It is evident from their research that there should be a move towards positive organisations making a positive contribution towards the well-being of their staff – be it how engaged they are in the organisation, or what they can do to contribute to the optimal health and well-being of their staff.

Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) conducted a study on burnout, work engagement and a sense of coherence in female academics in South African higher education institutions. Their research attempted to find ways of avoiding the consequences of burnout, and to contribute towards positive work engagement for female academics. This study emphasises that university management needs to recognise the high occurrence of burnout among female academics in higher education institutions, and that strategies should be put in place to address this challenge, to lead to greater work engagement (Bezuidenhout and Cilliers 2010:1-10).

From my empirical research, it became evident that staff members feel more positive and engaged when they are fulfilled in their work; when their efforts are recognised; and when they have the support of supervisors and colleagues (see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.4).

2.3.2.3 *Organisational commitment / dedication/ behaviour*

Organisational commitment is influenced by various factors. Studies conducted within the higher education landscape by Connell *et al.*(2003); Corbitt and Maritz (2003); Costa (2003) and Dirks and Ferrin (2002) reveal that when staff members trust their leader or direct supervisor it is likely to result in desirable performance outcomes such as more job satisfaction, better retention of staff, staff commitment and organisational partnership behaviour.

Field and Buitendach (2011:1-10) conducted a study of happiness, work engagement and organisational commitment of support staff at a tertiary education institution in South Africa. It is one of the few studies that have been conducted in South Africa on the well-being of support services staff in higher education institutions. Their research confirms the predictive value of work engagement for organisational commitment (Field and Buitendach 2011:9). However, since their research used a non-probability convenience sample, it cannot be generalised to all support staff of that university, or to the support staff of other South African universities.

Geldenhuys, Łaba and Venter (2014:8) conducted a study on the relationship between meaningful work, work engagement and organisational commitment. Their study reveals that there is a positive relationship between psychological meaningfulness, work engagement and organisational commitment, and that psychological meaningfulness and work engagement predict the commitment of employers towards an organisation (Geldenhuys *et al.* 2014:1).

In my empirical research, organisational commitment featured as an important element of well-being. This is discussed in detail in sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.4.

2.3.2.4 *Morale and positive emotions*

Johnsrud (1996) emphasises that academics stay with an institution where morale is high, whilst Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) indicate that the retention of academics is also linked to whether they can make a decent living. A study by Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2002) found that academic staff members were dedicated to their work, but that their morale and intention to leave the higher education institution were influenced by their discontent with the institution that they served.

Ngambi (2011) studied the relationship between leadership and employee morale in higher education. According to the findings of his study, leadership competencies such as communication, trust and team building impact directly on the morale of staff (Ngambi 2011:762). He recommends that surveys on staff's morale should be conducted before organisations attempt to develop strategies that relate to the morale, retention and performance of employees (Ngambi 2011:762). However, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:2) approach this differently. They indicate that, rather than conducting typical low morale studies or surveys designed at identifying the problem in an organisation, more can be accomplished in terms of positively affecting staff's morale and well-being by "inquiring into extraordinary moments of high engagement, commitment and passionate achievement in the organization" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2). Based on this view, I chose AI as research

method and as tool to bring about a flourishing support services staff component at the institution under research.

When morale is high, staff members are more likely to experience positive emotions. Positive emotions were identified as one of the required elements towards optimal well-being of support services staff in the literature that I consulted (see 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1).

From my own life, I have found that by approaching life and its challenges from a positive angle, hope is established, and hope has produced patience and the desire to make a positive contribution to my own life, and the lives of others. This approach links to Seligman's view (2011) of a meaningful life ("serving something bigger than yourself") as an important factor in determining well-being (see 2.3.6.4) This desire to make a positive contribution to my own life and the lives of my family, friends and colleagues has inspired me to conduct this research into the well-being of support services staff at an HEI.

2.3.2.5   *Resources*

In their study on job demands, job resources and work engagement of academic staff in South African higher education institutions, Rothmann and Jordaan (2006:87-96) used the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Job Demands-Resources Scale (JDRS) to measure the impact of job demands and job resources on their work engagement. Their study confirms that sufficient job resources, such as growth opportunities, organisational support and advancement lead to higher levels of work engagement (Rothmann and Jordaan 2006:94).

Demerouti and Bakker (2011:1-9) conducted a study on the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model). This model has been used by researchers to predict how, amongst others, high job demands and a lack of resources have a detrimental effect on employees' levels of engagement, job satisfaction, levels of absenteeism and

retention (Rothmann and Jordaan 2006; Jackson *et al.* 2006). In their study, Demerouti and Bakker (2011) found that high job demands and insufficient resources led to an increase in work-place bullying, the occurrence of upper respiratory tract infections and early retirement. Their study provides evidence that the JD-R Model can be used to predict well-being related to the afore-mentioned factors, and also to predict performance at work (Demerouti and Bakker 2011:1-9).

From the literature review conducted, and ensuing from my empirical research, one of the main factors identified towards improved well-being, was that there should be an enough resources – and more specifically, an adequate number of, and more efficient, staff to do the work (see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.4; Annexure A).

2.3.2.6 S*tress-related illnesses*

Keyes (2002) and Fredrickson and Losada (2005) conducted research on the well-being of staff. They found that a lack of emotional well-being, psychological well-being and/or social well-being could lead to depression, absenteeism from work, a decline in work productivity, stress-related illnesses and an increase in healthcare costs (see 2.1.2; Annexure A). The same finding emerged from my empirical study (see 4.3.2.3).

In their study on the relationship between well-being indicators and teacher psychological stress in Eastern Cape public schools in South Africa, Vazi, Ruiter, van den Borne, Martin, Dumont and Reddy (2014:1-10) found that stress is prevalent amongst teachers. Their study reveals that subjective and psychological well-being factors add significantly to stress variance, whilst negative affect and role problems have a significant positive correlation with stress among public school teachers (Vazi *et al.* 2013:1).

2.3.2.7 *Remuneration*

In their article, entitled *Managing the academic talent void: Investigating factors in academic turnover and retention in South Africa,* Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014:1-14) identify the retention factors of academic staff in the South African context. Their study confirms that dissatisfaction with compensation and performance management practices is an important factor influencing turnover and retention of academic staff.

Robyn and Du Preez (2013:1-14) conducted a study on the intention to quit amongst Generation Y academics (born between the year 1977 to 1994) in higher education. They report that employee engagement, job satisfaction, remuneration, reward, recognition and transformational leadership are significantly related to the intention of Generation Y academics to quit.

From the literature review and empirical research conducted, remuneration also featured as an element that influences the well-being of staff (see Annexure A; 4.3.2.1).

2.3.2.8 *Job security*

Job security has been found an important element in the determination of staff well-being (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Jackson *et al.* 2006; Buys and Rothmann 2010) (see Annexure A).

Job security can be influenced by factors such as having trust in one's leader (Mendes and Stander 2011; Bothma and Roodt 2012). Where job demands are high and job resources such as sufficient staff, are low, it could influence the retention of staff, as they might look for another job since they are afraid that they would not be able to keep up the pace at work (Demerouti and Bakker 2011:1-9). Processes such

as organisational restructuring also have a negative effect on job security, as staff members often fear that they will lose their jobs (Probst 2003).

From the literature review conducted, it became evident that staff members feel more secure in their positions in a supportive working environment, when they have a positive relationship with their supervisor and colleagues, and when they are recognised and valued for the quality of their work (Rothmann and Jordaan 2006:87-96) (see Annexure A).

2.3.2.9 Opportunities for promotion

Staff members are more likely to stay with an organisation/institution when opportunities for promotion exist in the organisation (Robyn and Du Preez 2013; Theron *et al.* 2014). They also tend to be more engaged in their work when they have sufficient organisational support and development opportunities (Rothmann and Rothmann 2010:1-12) (see 2.1.2; Table 2.1; Annexure A).

2.3.2.10 Equality

From the report of the Commissie Gelijke Behandeling (2010), it is evident that equal treatment in the workplace is regarded as one of the most fundamental rights of employees. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (South Africa 1996:1243) stipulates that the Republic of South Africa is "one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms".

Equal treatment of staff in the workplace is thus both a human and constitutional right of our country's citizens. From the empirical research conducted for purposes of this study, it became evident that the well-being of support services staff is indeed negatively affected when they are not treated equally to academic staff. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.2.1).

2.3.2.11 Feeling valued/appreciated

Feeling valued or appreciated is a very important aspect of well-being. This is evident from studies by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008); Hammond (1998); Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003); Money *et al*. (2008) and Watkins (2010) (see 2.2.1, 2.2.4), which confirm that staff well-being is negatively affected when staff members do not feel 'part of', valued or appreciated. Janas (2009) reported that, in a survey conducted by Salary.com, it was found that 34.2% of employees felt that they did not receive sufficient recognition or appreciation for their work, talents or capabilities, and that this lack of recognition and appreciation was the reason they had left their jobs. The aspect of feeling valued or appreciated is discussed more extensively in section 2.3.5, and was confirmed as an important aspect of well-being in my empirical research study (see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.3).

2.3.3 Gap in current research pertaining to support services staff

Most of the studies that have been conducted within the higher education framework, have been conducted pertaining to academic staff, and there seems to be a gap regarding studies on the well-being of support services staff at higher education institutions, and also in terms of studies with a positive approach towards desired change (see 1.2). My study attempts to address this gap, as it is performed within the higher education landscape, and it involved support services staff members only.

The next section provides an analysis of the benefits of optimal well-being for both individuals and their organisations.

2.3.4 Benefits of optimal well-being

Research by Fredrickson and Losada (2005:678-686) reveals that there are numerous benefits in having employees experiencing optimal well-being, that is, flourishing employees, in an organisation. For instance, positive emotions, such as

feeling happy, carry more personal and psychological benefits than just a positive, pleasant experience. Their research indicates that flourishing widens attention, broadens behavioural repertoires, and increases creativity (Fredrickson and Losada 2005:679). Furthermore, positive feelings can have physiological manifestations such as a reduction in cortisol and blood pressure levels, and it can improve longevity (Fredrickson and Losada 2005:679). Flourishing individuals are more likely to graduate from college; to secure 'better' jobs; perform better in the workplace, and they are less regularly absent from work (Lyubomirsky, King and Diener 2005:822). These staff members also receive more support and assistance from co-workers and supervisors in the workplace; tend to be more involved in communities; and they have more social support, and better social relations and companionship than non-flourishing individuals (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005:822-825). As is evident from the above research, the benefits of optimal staff well-being are numerous.

A study conducted by Opie and Henn (2013) revealed that optimal well-being leads to a reduction in staff turnover. Keyes (2003) found that flourishing staff members tend to be more involved in the organisations they work for, and that they enjoy higher levels of motivation.

Griffeth and Hom (1995:245-293) conducted research on the effects of stress on employees. Their research provides evidence that stress is positively correlated with staff turnover, absenteeism, viral infections and coronary heart disease (Griffeth and Hom 1995:245). They also found that if employers are able to decrease employees' stress levels by increasing their levels of job satisfaction and their general well-being, the organisation's staff turnover and absenteeism rates would be positively affected (Griffeth and Hom 1995:245).

According to Fredrickson (2003:333), positive emotions have a buffering effect against depression; they improve longevity (Fredrickson 2003:334); and they might correct or undo the after-effects of negative emotions (Fredrickson 2001:222). Positive emotions enable individuals to bounce back effectively and efficiently from

stressful experiences (Lazarus 1993); they build psychological resilience and trigger improved emotional well-being (Isen 1990; Fredrickson 2001). Furthermore, positive emotions have an undoing effect on lingering negative emotions (Fredrickson and Levenson 1998; Fredrickson 2001); and they enable individuals to lead an optimal, meaningful life, referred to as a 'flourishing life' (Keyes 2002, Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Seligman *et al.* 2005, Seligman 2011). It is evident that these benefits of positive emotions on the well-being of people will also benefit organisations to a huge extent, as people experiencing positive emotions would display the above-mentioned characteristics and benefits which, in turn, could benefit an entire organisation.

Another element of staff well-being that I came across in my research is meaningful work, and how the work life contributes to defining meaning of life for employees. Money *et al.* (2008:25) point out that work may cause people to lead more engaged, pleasurable and meaningful lives, and that, in turn, it benefits the organisation as a whole and the individual employee.

Research by Ghoshal and Bartlett (1994) and Heil, Bennis and Stephens (2000) provide evidence that employees, to an increasing extent, rely on their work and work environment to define their own meaning in life. This is confirmed by the research of Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010), De Braine and Roodt (2011) and Opie and Henn (2013). Hence, when the wellness or well-being of staff members is negatively affected, it impacts on the organisation as a whole, leading to, amongst others, dissatisfaction with work, stress-related illnesses, low morale, a lack of motivation, burnout, a decline in general well-being and a decline in work engagement (De Braine and Roodt 2011; Rothmann 2010; Bezuidenhout and Cilliers 2010; Ngambi 2011; Bothma and Roodt 2012; Opie and Henn 2013).

From the above-mentioned studies, it is evident that staff well-being is indeed a real issue in today's society, and also in higher education institutions, and that much still needs to be done to increase the overall well-being of staff within higher education institutions, to the benefit of the individuals, their institutions and society at large.

The literature review on staff well-being that I have conducted revealed that staff well-being is a broad concept (see 2.1.1; 2.2; 2.3). Optimal well-being could include various elements at emotional, social and psychological level (Keyes 2002), such as having positive emotions; feeling valued or appreciated; living and engaged, meaningful life; being engaged in one's work, experiencing job satisfaction, high morale and all kinds of elements that relate to having a flourishing life (Seligman 2011) (see 2.1.1; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5). In the absence of these and other elements such as happiness, trust and a sense of belonging, well-being is negatively affected and this could lead to a high staff turnover (Mendes and Stander 2011; Bothma and Roodt 2012); a decline in one's health (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004); low morale (Bezuidenhout and Cilliers 2010; Ngambi 2011); depression (Keyes 2002; Seligman *et al.* 2005); and burnout (Barkhuizen 2004; Rothmann and Jordaan 2006), amongst others (see Annexure A).

For the purpose of my study, I have focused on the positive elements of well-being that lead to a flourishing life, as derived from the AI theory of Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) (see 2.2.4), the positive psychology theory of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) (see 2.2.5); the flourishing theory of Keyes (2002); (see 2.2.7), and the well-being theory of Seligman (2011) (see 2.2.9). The section that follows addresses the main elements of well-being as identified from the above well-being theories and the positive psychology approach, emanating from the literature review that has been conducted (see Annexure A).

2.3.5 The benefits and value of being appreciated and valued

The number one factor in job satisfaction is not the amount of pay but whether or not the individual feels appreciated and valued for the work they do.

- **Chapman and White (2011:11)**

The focus of this study was an AI into selected elements of well-being of support services staff at a selected HEI. In Chapter 1, I have explained that I have an appreciative outlook on life, and that I was therefore interested in studying the effect that AI, both as theory and research method, could have on the well-being of support services staff of the particular HEI. The benefits of feeling valued and appreciated were also touched upon in section 2.3.2.11.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:25) state that, in order to bring about desired change, we should always search for the best in people. Watkins (2010) performed a study which revealed that a lack of appreciation towards workers led to a decline in their general well-being. This viewpoint is supported by Chapman and White (2010). In their book with the title of *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace*, Chapman and White (2010:9) state that if organisations could create a corporate climate where individuals feel deeply appreciated, those individuals would respond to the organisation with renewed loyalty and commitment.

When being valued and appreciated, a sense of belonging is created (Bezuidenhout and Cilliers 2010:1-10). Seligman *et al.* (2005) identified appreciation as one of 24 character strengths of adults around the world that is required to experience optimal well-being.

It was clear from the literature review conducted that happiness and life satisfaction are no longer regarded as the only elements that make on happy in life (Fredrickson and Losada 2005; Seligman *et al.* 2005; Seligman 2011; Field and Buitendach 2011); neither are they regarded as the goal of well-being theory, but rather as factors included under the element of positive emotion (Seligman 2011:16). It is also clear that happiness does not equal total well-being (Keyes 2002).

The section below explains each of these elements related to optimal staff well-being from Seligman's PERMA model of well-being (2011).

2.3.6 PERMA model of well-being

The five measurable elements of well-being, as identified by Seligman (2011:24) in his PERMA model on well-being, are:

- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Achievement/accomplishment.

Each of the above elements of well-being is discussed in more detail in sections 2.3.6.1 to 2.3.6.5 below.

2.3.6.1   *Positive emotions*

"A lot of things are inherent in life - change, birth, death, aging, illness, accidents, calamities, and losses of all kinds - but these events don't have to be the cause of ongoing suffering. Yes, these events cause grief and sadness, but grief and sadness pass, like everything else, and are replaced with other experiences. The ego, however, clings to negative thoughts and feelings and, as a result, magnifies, intensifies, and sustains those emotions while the ego overlooks the subtle feelings of joy, gratitude, excitement, adventure, love, and peace that come from essence. If we dwelt on these positive states as much as we generally dwell on our negative thoughts and painful emotions, our lives would be transformed."

- Gina Lake (n.d.)

In contemporary psychology, the focus is on the curing of various psychological diseases (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Recently, however, there has been

a significant move towards the enhancement of positive aspects of psychological functioning - a field described as positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Snyder *et al.* (2011:8) state that positive psychology focuses on what is good and strong in humankind and our world, and how to nurture and sustain those assets and resources. There thus is a strong link between the principles of AI and positive psychology (see 1.4; 2.2.4 - 2.2.5). From a psychological perspective, twenty thousand (20 000) opportunities per day are presented for overcoming the negative and pursuing the positive, and for engagement (Snyder *et al.* 2011:244). There thus is ample opportunity on a daily basis for every human being to choose to focus on the positive, and to engage in meaningful activities, and we need to learn how to make those positive choices.

Positive emotions remain a corner stone of the well-being theory (Seligman 2011:16). As a hedonic or pleasurable element, positive emotion "encompasses all the usual subjective well-being variables: pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth, and the like" – and in the presence of all these a "pleasant life" is experienced (Seligman 2011:16-17). Happiness and life satisfaction are therefore no longer regarded as the goal of well-being theory, but rather as factors included under the element of positive emotion (Seligman 2011:16). Positive psychology focuses on the things that make life most worth living and on optimal human functioning, referred to as "flourishing" (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Positive emotions are a subjective variable, defined by what one thinks and feels (thoughts and emotions) (Seligman 2011:16-17).

Fredrickson and Losada (2005:679) emphasised various benefits related to positive emotions, positive moods and positive sentiments, namely that good feelings alter people's mind sets; widen their scope of attention; broaden behavioural repertoires and increase intuition and creativity. Good feelings also speed up recovery; alter frontal brain asymmetry and increase immune function (Fredrickson and Losada 2005:679*)*. Other benefits of positive emotions and positive affect are that they predict mental and physical health outcomes, and that frequent positive affect

increases longevity (Fredrickson & Losada 2005:679). All these benefits have an effect on people's well-being in that they improve their lives in various ways.

The well-being principle of engagement, identified by Seligman (2011:11) as being absorbed in an activity, has various benefits for personal well-being which warrant a closer look.

2.3.6.2   Engagement

The engaged life is about 'flow' – becoming one with the music, time stopping, and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity.

- **Martin Seligman (2011:11)**

Similar to positive emotions, engagement is also measured only subjectively in Seligman's well-being theory, and whilst the subjective state for pleasure is in the present, it is retrospective for engagement (Seligman 2011:16-17). Both positive emotions and engagement meet the criteria for being regarded as elements of well-being, namely

- They contribute to well-being.
- They are pursued for their own sake, and not to gain any of the other elements of well-being.
- They are measured independently (Seligman 2011:17).

Individuals do not thrive when doing nothing – they become bored and may even experience feelings of uselessness. However, when they engage with their life and work, they become absorbed, gain momentum and focus (Seligman 2011). As stated in the opening quote to this section, Seligman (2011:11) regards the engaged life as being about establishing a healthy 'flow' – being absorbed by and becoming one with the event or activity you are engaged in. The concentrated effort required in 'flow'

"uses up all the cognitive and emotional resources that make up thought and feeling" (Seligman 2011:11). Hence, an individual has to identify his/her strengths and learn how to use them to establish 'flow' in his/her life (Seligman 2011:12). This links to Cooperrider's AI theory and the belief that, by focusing on one's strengths and the strengths of an organisation, positive change can be brought about (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:25) (see 1.1; 1.3; 2.2.4; 3.3.3 - 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1 - 3.4.2; 3.4.4).

2.3.6.3   Relationships

Other people are the best antidote to the downs of life and the single most reliable up.

- Martin Seligman (2011:20)

The third principle of well-being as identified by Seligman (2011:20) is *relationships.* Positive relations fulfil two of Seligman's criteria for being regarded as elements of well-being:

- They contribute to well-being.
- They can be measured independently (Seligman 2011:17).

Moments of joy, laughter, feeling proud and having a sense of accomplishment, often take place in the presence of other people (Seligman 2011:20). We have not been created to exist in isolation, but to share our life experiences with others, and to live not only for ourselves. According to Seligman (2011:21), loneliness has been described by neuroscientist Cacioppo as a disabling condition, and hence pursuing positive relationships with other people is regarded as fundamental to optimal human well-being. This is further confirmed by the fact that scientists have found that doing acts of kindness to others produces *"*the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested*"* (Seligman 2011:20).

2.3.6.4   Meaning/meaningful life

The purpose of life is not to be happy.   It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson (n.d.)

The fourth measurable, identified element of well-being is *meaning/a meaningful life* Seligman (2011:12).   Human beings constantly search for meaning and purpose in life. The concept of 'meaningful life' encompasses belonging to or serving something bigger than yourself, and it is not only regarded subjectively (Seligman 2011:17). Thus, to have a meaningful life, connections with other people and relationships are required (Seligman 2011:17).   This also links to the well-being element of 'relationships' as identified by Seligman (2011) (see 2.3.6.3). Meaning allows an individual to transcend – either through positive social relationships or connecting to a higher power (Seligman 2002).

Since employees spend many hours a day at work, it is inevitable that their work will impact on their experience of a meaningful life. Today, meaningful work is regarded as equally important as factors such as job security and remuneration (Steger, Pickering, Shin and Dik 2010).   Isaksen (2000:88) defines meaningful work as "an intrapsychological phenomenon that emerges in an individual's interaction with his or her working environment", and states that it encompasses an individual's reasons for working, what he/she wishes to accomplish through the work, and the purposefulness of the work performed.   Research conducted by Geldenhuys *et al.* (2014:1-10) confirmed that psychological meaningfulness of work leads to positive work outcomes and work engagement.   It is thus evident from their research that meaningful work can lead to more engaged and committed employees (Geldenhuys *et al.* 2014:9).

A study conducted amongst nursing staff in hospitals revealed that, even with the pressures and challenges associated with the nursing profession, nurses who regard their work as a calling, show higher levels of organisational engagement and commitment (Beukes and Botha 2013:10). This links with Seligman's concept of "meaning" as "serving something bigger than oneself" (Seligman 2011:17).

2.3.6.5   Accomplishment

> *Well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships and accomplishment.   The way we choose our course in life is to maximize all of these elements.*
>
> -   **Martin Seligman (2011:25)**

Accomplishment is identified as the fifth measurable element of optimal well-being by Seligman (2011:18). It entails winning, achieving or simply acting to master our environment (Seligman 2011:18). Although accomplishment is often pursued for its own sake, it is also pursued in an attempt to experience joy, positive emotions, engagement and meaning in life (Seligman 2011:18-19). Accomplishment allows a measurable way for the individual to determine whether their actions are meaningful and efficient, and it is also more focused on feedback from others than on the contribution of the individual (Seligman 2011).

Setting long-term goals can assist us in leading a meaningful life and in accomplishing that which we wish to accomplish in life (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly 2007:1087-1101). Working towards goals assists in building hope for the future (Seligman 2011). Furthermore, when looking back on our lives and past successes, it gives us confidence that we can accomplish other goals that we have set (Seligman 2011). Thus, to achieve well-being and happiness, we must be able to look back on our lives with a sense of accomplishment (Seligman 2011).

However, to establish optimal well-being, there has to be a presence of an interaction among all five of the elements of PERMA (Seligman 2011:25).

2.4   SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the theoretical foundation for the study was laid, and the causes of well-being and current trends of well-being in higher education and the field of psychology were discussed. Furthermore, the importance of ensuring optimal staff well-being was emphasised - not only for academics and researchers - but also for support services staff of HEIs, as they play an equally vital role in these institutions.

More recently, there has been a shift towards a focus on a more *positive psychology*, with the concept of well-being appearing increasingly in psychological literature, and particularly in organisational psychological literature (Field and Buitendach 2011:1). As tertiary institutions play an important role in the on-going transformation of our country (see 1.1), the well-being of both their academic and support services staff should be regarded as important.

The existing gap in research related to support services staff, in general, and more specifically the well-being of support services staff of tertiary education institutions (see 2.3.3) calls for more research to be conducted pertaining to support services staff of HEIs. Support services staff members contribute to a great extent to the effective functioning of tertiary institutions, and hence their well-being should be addressed in a similar manner than the well-being of academic staff. This study has attempted to do just that.

In the next chapter the focus will be on AI, and the research design and methodology that were applied to this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided the theoretical framework on staff well-being in the workplace. This chapter explains the chosen research strategy and the nature of the empirical investigation that was conducted to answer the primary research question, namely

How can identified elements of support services staff well-being at a particular HEI be improved?

The purpose of my research design was thus to come up with a plan for the generation or collection of data that would enable me to answer the above-mentioned research question (*cf.* McMillan and Schumacher 2006:22).

In this chapter, cross-references to the background to the research problem and the theoretical framework for staff well-being are provided. It also sets out the research paradigm, research design, methodology and method employed during this study in more detail. Detail is also provided on issues such as the research population, the sampling technique followed, the method of data collection and data analysis strategies applied, and the questions asked during the AI workshop.   The trustworthiness of the research findings is established, and the chapter concludes with the ethical considerations as applied to this study.

The chapter also addresses the second part of the first secondary research question in more detail, namely

What are the current perspectives on AI?

This implies that this chapter includes a discussion of the literature review on the nature of AI as an action research method.

3.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH FOCUS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As indicated in Chapter 1 of this report, I have been a support services staff member of a Free State HEI for almost 20 years. As such, I wished to gain a greater understanding of the causes of staff well-being; the effects of a lack of well-being on staff and the organisation as a whole; how AI can be used as a means of establishing the state of support services staff of the particular HEI's well-being; and how AI can be utilised as a transformative tool in establishing a flourishing support services staff component at the institution.

As indicated above, the theoretical framework for staff well-being and the reasons for me conducting this study were discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2. The causes of well-being and current trends of well-being in higher education were researched, and the importance of ensuring optimal staff well-being, as well as the benefits gained when staff experience optimal well-being, were explained in Chapter 2 (see 2.3.1 – 2.3.2.11.)

The different elements of the research design and the methodology used in this study are discussed in the next section.

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:277) state that, in developing a research design, the researcher decides on the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm that would be informing the research, the context within which the research will be conducted and the research methods and techniques to be used to collect and analyse data.

My research was conducted in the field of Higher Education Studies in the research category of institutional management (*cf.* Tight 2012:9) (see 1.6.1). I was guided by a social constructionist discourse that had an effect on my positioning as researcher (see 1.8.1). What then were the reasons for choosing to work in the social constructionist research paradigm?

3.3.1   Research paradigm

Research is grounded in our beliefs about the world and how we relate to these. Our beliefs influence the manner in which we perceive things, and our behaviour and attitude towards the research we conduct are all a result of the paradigm in which we choose to operate (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011:37).

Ontology explains the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about reality (Appleton and King 1997:13).   Mertens (2010:18) reasons that constructionist researchers believe in the notion that multiple realities exist. My own ontology links with this notion of the existence of multiple realities. As indicated in Chapter 1 (see 1.8.1), this ontology provides the basis for a social constructionist epistemology. In this sense, my study was conducted within the research paradigm of social constructionism, and was based on my ontology that different realities exist for different people. The core of social constructionism is the belief that reality is constructed by our language as a form of social construction (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:276). Our language contains our constructions of the world and ourselves, and

we create stories about our lives that are important in constructing our future (McNamee and Gergen 1999:4-5). This links with Guba and Lincoln's statement (in Bisman and Highfield 2012:5) that social ontology in constructivism is "socially and experientially based".

Furthermore, constructionism is interested in the patterns of social meaning that are encoded in language (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:277) (see 1.8.1) – in other words the *kind of language* used and not the language itself. As researcher, I wished to interpret the social world of the research participants in order to understand their own reality in terms of the language they used during interviews (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280). I wished to gain a deep understanding of the reality constructed by the research participants through the language they used, and the self-reflection that was brought through discourse that opened participants' thinking to alternative forms of understanding (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280; Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:176). Moreover, through positive, appreciative conversation, I wished to gain an appreciation of the power of language and discourse of all types through the stories that the participants shared during the AI cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:176).

3.3.2 Research design

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study. In qualitative research, data are collected in the natural environment of the research participants, and analysed from the details in order to come up with general identified themes (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:94). The qualitative researcher thus uses the data gathered to interpret meaning. Qualitative research is more flexible than quantitative research, and it enables the researcher to narrow his/her research focus, and to understand the world of the research participants from their point of view (Fouché and De Vos 2011:91) (see 1.8.2). This strengthened my choice of doing qualitative research, as I chose to conduct research within the paradigm of social constructionism, where much emphasis is placed on understanding the reality of the research participants in terms of the language they use (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280) (see 1.8.1). Another

benefit of qualitative research is that it is more flexible than quantitative research, and it allows the researcher to narrow his/her focus to a single element, namely to understand the world as experienced by the research participants.

As researcher working in a qualitative research design, I interpreted what I understood from the collected data. My interpretation of the data is linked to my own background and life experiences. However, I made every effort to avoid bias and being influenced by my own experiences in my interpretation of the data. This is in accordance with McMillan and Schumacher's ideas on disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity applied by a researcher (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:13) (see 3.10). This strategy assisted me to gain a deeper understanding of the world and experiences of participants, as shared by the participants. The reasons for choosing the particular research methodology need to be discussed.

3.3.3 Research methodology

The research methodology applied was action research (see 1.8.3). Action research is defined by O'Brien (1998:1) as *"*participatory research or collaborative inquiry – learning by doing*"*.

My reasons for choosing action research as research methodology were:

i. Action research is participatory research, and I wanted participants to participate in the process of inquiry and co-learning, or "learning by doing" (*cf.* O'Brien 1998:1).
ii. Action research involves research where a group of people identifies a problem and ways of resolving such. In my study, where an AI approach was applied as an action research method, common themes (as opposed to problems) had been identified, as well as the strengths of the institution, and how such strengths could be used to bring about the desired future (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.*, 2005:25).

iii.   Action research enabled me to collaborate with support services staff of the institution in identifying the positive core of the institution; their dreams in terms of optimised well-being; and how AI could be used as a transformative tool in bringing about desired, sustainable change pertaining to their well-being.

iv.   Furthermore, the research method that I chose, namely AI, lends itself to action research, as it entails collaboration from the research participants in the research process (*cf.* O'Brien 1998:1). Thus, action research (as research methodology) and AI (as research method) complement one another.

3.3.4 Research method

The research method I chose for this research was Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI fits well into the social constructionist research paradigm, as the principles of social constructionism entail that people determine their own destiny by dreaming about, or envisioning their desired future (Cooperrider *et al*. 2008:14) (see 1.8.1). Through envisioning, people are inspired to take action towards their desired future.

The reason I chose AI as research method, was because AI participants participate actively in the study. This was important to me, as I wanted to understand staff well-being from the perspective of support services staff (through their language and story-telling), from a positive angle (*cf.* Mertens, 2010) and by focusing on the existing strengths of the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:3).

This principle of people shaping their own future through their thoughts and words during an AI process is closely linked with the principle of social constructionism according to which people share their stories and develop plans towards their desired future during interviews and group discussions (Reed 2007:56). By doing so, knowledge and creativity are created through social interaction (Reed 2007:56) (see 1.8.1). Furthermore, AI lends itself to action research, as it entails collaboration from the research participants in the research process (O'Brien 1998:1) (see 1.8.4).

For purposes of this research, an AI workshop was conducted during which open-ended, positive questions were asked, adapted from the encyclopaedia of positive questions (Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom and Kaplan 2002), and with a focus on staff well-being. The workshop focused on all the phases of the AI process, namely Definition (Definition for this research involved the identification of a topic or theme for the research workshop, as described in Chapter 1); Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:34) (see 3.4.1). The focus in AI is on the research participants telling positive stories about things that are working well at the institution, instead of focusing on all kinds of problems the institution might be experiencing. This approach proved to be very useful, as it created a positive environment for positive conversations, and it led to participants becoming motivated and inspired.

I utilised the data gathered during the workshop to come up with recommendations towards the *improvement* of identified elements of support services staff's well-being, but without conducting a typical staff well-being study or survey designed at identifying the problem.

Through AI, the wishes of support services staff for improved well-being were discovered, which enabled me to come up with significant conclusions and recommendations for the enhancement of their well-being, as identified during the AI workshop.

3.4 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF AI

AI was founded by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva of Case Western Reserve University during 1987 (Woodman and Pasmore 1998). AI is an organisational development process and approach to change management (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:2). It is built on the belief that organisations are possibilities to be embraced, and not problems to be solved (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:2) –

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hence the importance of focusing on the affirmative and positive. AI is based on the assumption that every organisation has something that works well, and that the organisation's strengths can be used as a basis for creating positive change (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:3).

Scheel and Crous (2007:29) state that "operating within a deficit-based paradigm is unlikely to yield a culturally inspired positive vision of the organisation's future, and problem solving is likely to overshadow the inherent potential of cultural capital to foster a competitive change". Since organisations tend to move in the direction of what they inquire or study, it does not make sense to do a low morale study, for example, when the organisation is seeking to fuse enthusiasm and well-being (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:7; Ludema, Cooperrider and Barret 2001). Hence, this study was aimed at fusing enthusiasm and well-being, and not at identifying various problems within the organisation.

3.4.1 The AI approach to change

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go further, go together." (African Proverb)

- *G Fischer (n.d.)*

The AI approach to change is based on the understanding that unexpected newness (novelty), planned change (transition) and those things that bring life to an organisation (continuity) are interwoven (Watkins, in Gates 2012:113). This means that organisations have to embrace change and newness; plan for such change and acknowledge the true identity, purpose, traditions and strengths of the organisation; and apply these principles in an integrated manner to bring about sustained change (Cooperrider *et al.* 2005:25). This principle is illustrated in the diagram (Figure 3.1) below:
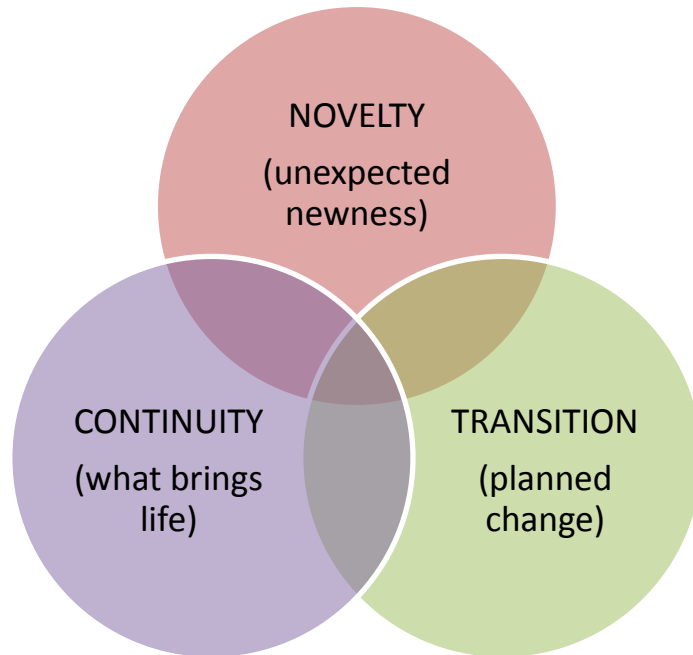
Figure 3.1: The AI approach to change (adapted from Watkins in Gates 2012:13)

Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:35) initially provided a systematic and practical process aimed at operationalising the principles of AI, namely the so-called 4-D AI Cycle, with the phases of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. Later, a fifth phase was added, namely Definition (Watkins 2010:22). The Definition phase is the first step in the AI cycle, and is important, as its sets the tone for the positive discussions to follow (Watkins 2010:24). During this Definition phase, an affirmative topic is identified, and people are encouraged to *"*select a topic they want to see grow and flourish in their organizations*"* (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:36). Choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry leads the organisation to focus on what it does well, and to envisage its future based on its own values and best practices (Watkins, in Gates 2012:12).

The 5-D AI cycle acts as a tool to assist organisations in discovering their positive core by focusing on the achievement of a common, identified goal (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:34). The 5-D AI cycle is illustrated in Figure 3.2 below:
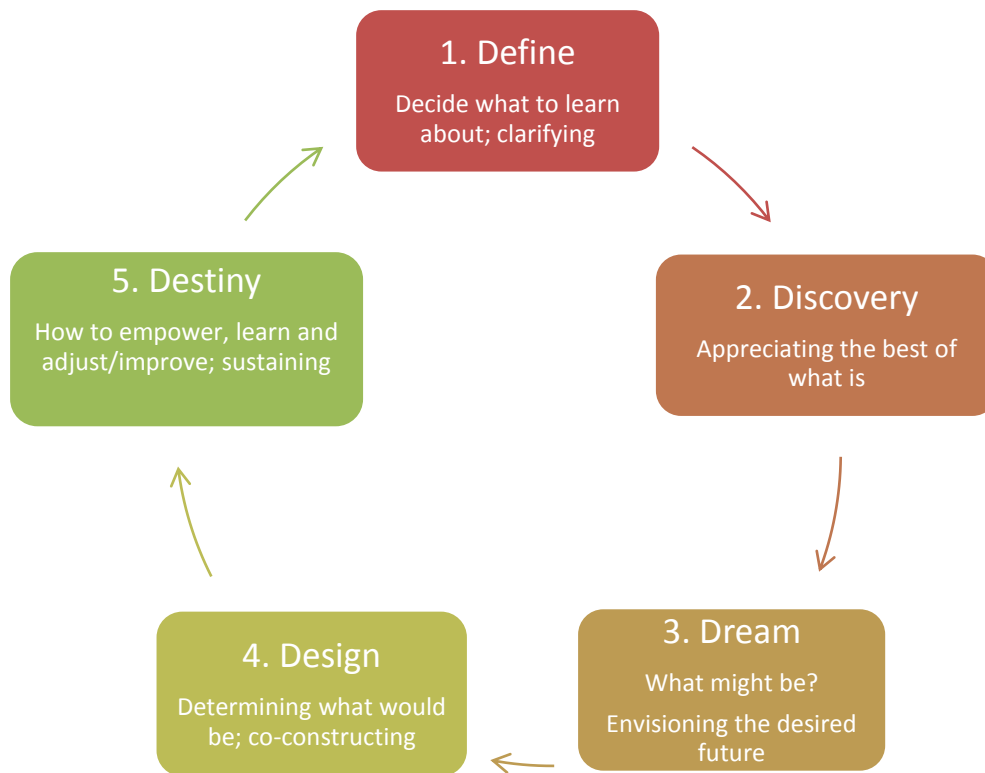
Figure 3.2: 5-D AI cycle (adapted from Watkins 2010:22)

AI becomes a strong transformational tool through the AI summit, where dialogue is used to inspire positive change in the organisation (Powley, Fry, Barrett and Bright (2004:67). Increased involvement in participative practices such as organisational summits empowers members of an organisation to have a stronger voice and interest in their daily work, resulting in greater job satisfaction and increased productivity (Powley *et al.* 2004:67). More details on AI summits, and the AI workshop held for purposes of this research will follow in section 3.4.4.

3.4.1.1 The Definition phase

The Definition phase of the AI cycle entails the choice of an affirmative topic that becomes the focus of the intervention, and it begins with the organisation's 'life-giving' story (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:35). For my study, the affirmative topic was:

> *Appreciative Inquiry as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]".*

During the research workshop, this affirmative topic (defined and described in Chapter 1 of this report; see 1.4.1) set the tone for the positive conversations that followed during the Discovery phase (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:36). Participants were supplied with notes on AI and the 5-D cycle before the workshop (see Annexure E), to provide them with a clear background of what AI is about, and it was explained how AI would be applied in the research workshop that they would be attending.

On the day of the workshop, I acted as facilitator and started by welcoming staff and making a PowerPoint presentation on the AI process, and the study, with special emphasis on the importance of each one's inputs and the conversations that would take place (see Annexure F). I ensured that an environment conducive for such positive discussions was created by booking a smart venue with air-conditioning, and with enough space for participants to spread out and have discussions in pairs and groups without being disturbed by another group. Furthermore, the principle of co-creation was established right from the Discovery phase, where the importance of each participant, and what he/she would be sharing about his/her positive experiences at the institution, were emphasised. The Dream phase and the building of a collage by each small group during this phase further emphasised the importance of co-creation.

3.4.1.2 The Discovery phase

The purpose of the Discovery phase is to have "appreciative interviews" or one-on-one conversations during which people share their stories about what they value in the organisation and wish to bring forward into future (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:43; Gates 2012:15) (see 1.10). By means of the appreciative interviews, people identify the themes that they feel "connect with their most deeply held beliefs and values" (Gates 2012:15).

As explained in section 3.4.1.1 above, I identified the affirmative topic for the Definition phase of my research workshop prior to the workshop. This affirmative topic, together with detail about the AI process and all its different phases and the emphasis on the positive, was shared with all the participants prior to the workshop, in order for them to gain a better understanding of what AI is all about, and about the different phases of the AI cycle that would be used as research method during the research workshop. This ensured that individuals were focused on having positive dialogue and conversation during the Discovery phase. By doing so, participants were able to reach consensus on what the organisation was aspiring to, and to embrace a shared vision for the organisation. This also ensured that participants bonded socially with one another (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:6).

During the appreciative interviews held on a one-on-one basis between participants, valuable data were gathered whilst people answered the interview questions and shared stories about times when they felt positive and alive in the organisation. Participants were encouraged to share their stories as richly as possible and to avoid "Yes" and "No" answers. AI emphasises the importance of the very first question asked, as this question sets the tone for the conversations to follow. I formulated my first appreciative interview question being fully aware of its importance and the positive focus required. The question was:

Tell me about a time when you were flourishing here at [name of institution] – a time when you felt positive, most alive, engaged, or really proud of yourself or your work here at [name of institution]. What was it about you, the situation and/or the leadership that allowed you to have that positive experience?

The open-ended questions asked during the interviews (such as the above one) allowed participants to answer the questions in their own words. I grouped the participants in pairs to save time, to ensure that people that might know one another very well were not grouped together, and also with good variation in mind pertaining to post level occupied, age, race, gender and years of service at the institution. Ten pairs of two participants each were formed. The time originally allocated for the interviews was 45 minutes for both participants (i.e. approximately 22 to 23 minutes each), but in the end the interviews lasted approximately one hour, allowing 30 minutes per interview. During the Discovery phase, the participants' excitement was stimulated by the positive stories and experiences that they shared. Interviewers wrote down the stories told by interviewees, and thereafter they swopped roles.

The one-on-one interviews were followed by a group phase, as proposed by Lewis (2008:53), during which the most popular themes around the best stories shared were identified. The four groups each had to choose two top stories, and the resulting eight stories shared were referred to as positive themes, or the positive core of the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al*. 2008:115). Each group appointed a facilitator from the group to present the themes to the entire group of research participants. These eight stories were then written on a flip chart by the facilitator of each group, and presented to the entire group of 20 participants during the Dream phase (see 1.10 and 3.4.1.3). More detail on these themes is provided in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.2.3).

3.4.1.3   The Dream phase

"Allow yourself to dream and you will discover that destiny is yours to design."

**– Jackie Stavros (in Cooperrider *et al. 2008:199)*

Following the interviews that were held during the Discovery phase and the identification of the top stories, I used elements of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) of Dobbie *et al.* (2004:402-406), embedded in the 5-D phases of the AI method, as data collection method during the Dream phase. Each research participant used stickers of different colours to mark their choice of the stories shared on a scale of one (best story) to eight (least important story). I chose the NGT as data collection technique during the Dream phase of the AI cycle, as I wanted to involve participants in the verification of the data (see 3.6).

The Dream phase is all about participants sharing the top identified stories (initially shared in small groups on completion of the one-on-one interviews held during the Discovery phase) with the group (the entire group of 20 participants) in order to create energy and enthusiasm, and for participants to begin to see common themes (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:130). This occurs when participants have identified and start to value the best of "what is" in the organisation. The mind, according to Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:6), is mobilised to envision new possibilities.

The dream dialogue was integrated into the appreciative interviews held during the AI workshop, and included questions around participants' wishes, hopes and dreams for the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al*. 2008:130). During this phase, the positive, key themes, as identified during the Discovery phase, that described the times when people felt most alive, and when the organisation was functioning optimally, were used as a basis for dreaming about a fulfilled support services staff component – a staff component experiencing optimal social, psychological and emotional well-being

(*cf.* Keyes *et al.* 2002:1007). Participants shared their dreams for support staff of the institution, and described what the institution could and should become in terms of their aspirations and desires (*cf.* Ludema *et al.* 2003:11) by answering the following question:

> *It is three years from now. You are fulfilled in your work environment; you experience optimal well-being; you are flourishing here at [name of institution]. Take the positive themes that we have identified into this future. What are the situations and opportunities that support staff members have seized to become flourishing individuals?*

After the top themes had been identified and scored by participants, they formed groups of four to six people, and each group designed a collage of pictures cut from old magazines that they felt represented those themes. This was an exciting process, and staff members enthusiastically engaged in conversation around this assignment. Each group was given the opportunity to present the collage that they had designed to the bigger group, and it was clear that participants were inspired and excited to share their presentations and their dreams with the entire group. There were much laughter and a positive vibe in the venue, and participants showed their support of the dreams shared by other teams by clapping their hands and cheering. The passion and energy in the room were tangible, and this contributed to even more innovative and creative ideas being shared. More details on the Dream phase are provided in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.2.3).

3.4.1.4   The Design phase

During this phase, the group is empowered to design ways of creating the kind of organisation they are dreaming about, and individuals commit to take action in order to accomplish their dreams for the organisation (Bushe 2007:2). During the Design phase of my research workshop, participants co-constructed the organisation's future by answering the following question:

What is required to make our dream come true?

This question was first answered on the answering sheet that was designed for this purpose by each individual participant, and thereafter discussed in the four small groups. Each group then agreed on the most important actions that were required to make our dream of a flourishing support services staff component come true.

In answering this question, each small group participated in designing a provocative, inspiring statement of intention, written in the present tense, and based on what had worked well in the past, combined with new, envisioned ideas for the organisation's future (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7). Due to the time limit of my research workshop, each team, consisting of four to six staff members, chose a provocative proposition for the institution, and were also given an opportunity to present this provocative proposition to the bigger group, stating why they had decided on this provocative proposition. Although we did not agree on one provocative proposition for the institution, the four provocative propositions identified by the four groups and that were presented to the bigger group, led to more inspiration, as people were nodding heads and agreeing on the provocative propositions shared by other teams. This brought a sense of belonging amongst participants, realising that they were part of one big 'family' of support services staff at this institution.

Ludema *et al.* (2003:1) state that, once participants have voiced their hopes and dreams, the organisation's so-called "social architecture – its norms, values, structures, strategies, systems, patters of relationships, ways of doing things that can bring life to its dreams*"* – may be designed. Ludema *et al.* (2003:10) also emphasise the importance of deliberately creating an inclusive and supportive context for conversation and co-creation in the design phase. This was established in the research workshop in that participants were familiarised with the AI process even before the workshop. As AI workshop facilitator, I also continually emphasised, during each phase of the AI cycle, the importance of each participant's inputs and the conversations that would take place. The principle of co-creation was thus

established right from the Discovery phase. The Dream phase and the design of a collage by each small group during this phase further emphasised the importance of co-creation. This principle of co-creation was thus strengthened even further during the Design phase, where each team agreed upon and presented their provocative proposition to the bigger group.

3.4.1.5　The Destiny phase

The Destiny phase is all about "innovation, action and sustainability" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7). During this phase, it is determined how ready the organisation is to embrace the proposed changes. Recommendations are made and changes embraced by the organisation are implemented to bring about the desired change (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7).

The momentum that is established through the AI process empowers members of the organisation to move forward and closer to the ideal (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7). As this ideal is grounded in realities, it empowers the organisation to make things happen by seeking new ways of doing things, gaining fresh perspective and being appreciative (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7). During the Destiny phase of my research workshop, each participant committed him-/herself to make a contribution towards a flourishing support services staff component at the institution by answering to the following AI statement:

> *I commit myself to do the following in order to make [name of institution] support services staff members flourish.*

These actions and innovations proposed by participants and to which they committed themselves will ensure the sustainability of their dreams for the institution.

3.4.2 Characteristics of AI

Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:4) highlight that inquiry into organisational life should have four characteristics: It should be (i) appreciative, (ii) applicable, (iii) provocative, and (iv) collaborative. AI is a form of organisational study with the aim of asking two fundamental questions, namely

1. "What, in this particular setting and context, gives life to this system – when it is most alive, healthy, and symbiotically related to its various communities?
2. What are the possibilities – expressed and latent – to provide opportunities for more effective (value-congruent) forms of organizing?" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:5).

According to Ludema *et al.* (2003:10), *"AI distinguishes itself from critical modes of action research by its deliberately affirmative assumptions about people, organisations, and relationships."* It requires an inquiry into moments of excellence, moments of growth and enthusiasm; an appreciation and valuing of the best of what is. By asking what Ludema *et al.* refer to as "unconditional positive questions", transformative dialogue is encouraged. Bushe (2001:3) states that an AI where people listen to one another's best stories has the potential to create a climate for dreaming and being open about deeply held desires. During an AI summit, people are invited to explore the organisation's "positive core", namely its strengths, values, assets, accomplishments and other positive elements about the organisation (Ludema *et al.* 2003:xiii). When tapping into the positive core of an organisation, positive energy is released for personal as well as organisational transformation (Ludema *et al.* 2003:10). Thus, the core of AI is *generativity* - in other words to make people think in new ways about social structures and institutions, and to make available actions and decisions that did not occur to us before (Bushe 2007:1). Thus, AI only has the power to transform an organisation when it leads to new ideas and new actions (Bushe 2007:1).

3.4.3 The principles of AI

Based on the origins of AI and grounded in scientific research, Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:8) identified five principles underlying AI as a change approach, which were later extended to eight principles by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003), namely

- The constructionist principle
- The principle of simultaneity
- The poetic principle
- The anticipatory principle
- The positive principle
- The wholeness principle
- The enactment principle
- The free choice principle.

3.4.3.1 The constructionist principle

The constructionist principle states that no empirical truths exist, and that what we know and do is closely interwoven. It is based on the notion that words create words, and that, through language and conversations, reality is co-created. It acknowledges the power of language and all types of discourse, and focuses on the positive core as the core value (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:8). My study was conducted in the social constructionist research paradigm, and focused on the use of language and conversations through conducting one-on-one interviews. Furthermore, the focus of AI on the positive core of an organisation was made clear to the research participants, both in notes on AI sent to them prior to the workshop, and by means of a PowerPoint presentation I made at the commencement of the research workshop (see Annexures E and F). The questions contained in the interview guide were entirely positive questions, setting the tone for the positive discussions that followed in the one-on-one interviews between participants, and the entire research workshop

conducted. By attending to all of these, I ensured adherence to the constructionist principle.

3.4.3.2 The principle of simultaneity

The principle of simultaneity is based on the belief that inquiry and change take place simultaneously and that "discoveries are made by asking questions that invite storytelling and sharing of peak experiences" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9). From these shared stories a desirable future can be dreamed about (envisioned) and created.

The principle of simultaneity was applied during my AI workshop. The one-on-one interviews conducted between participants during the Discovery phase involved inquiry into moments of peak, positive experiences by asking positive questions related to the well-being of support services staff. Based on the stories shared during the one-on-one interviews, participants decided on the positive core of the organisation, and used that core as a basis for dreaming about their envisioned future.

3.4.3.3 The poetic principle

The poetic principle supports the idea that an organisation is like an open book, with the participants as co-authors of the story being told (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9). Similar to a piece of well-written poetry, the organisation is regarded as being open to endless interpretation and possibilities (Scheel and Crous 2007:32).

The poetic principle was applied in this study by means of participants sharing stories during the one-on-one interviews conducted in the Discovery phase. These stories were about times when they had felt positive and alive at the institution. The poetic principle was strengthened during the Dream and Design phases of the AI workshop, when participants created a shared image of their future. During the Dream phase, participants agreed on their desired future by sharing thoughts on the situations and

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opportunities that they had seized to become a flourishing support services staff component. This shared image of their future was further strengthened during the Dream phase by the collages designed by each group as a visual representation of the positive themes as identified during the Discovery phase. The provocative propositions and thoughts shared by each group during the Design phase on what is required to make their dream of a flourishing support services staff component come true, further strengthened the notion of the organisation as being open to endless possibilities, as required by the poetic principle of AI.

3.4.3.4 The anticipatory principle

Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:9) state that the creation of positive images on a collective basis is powerful, and that it inspires positive action. The *"collective imagination and discourse about the future"* become a source of positive energy and motivation behind the everyday actions of a workforce (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9). Furthermore, by locating themes from the stories shared for further inquiry, the anticipatory principle is strengthened.

The anticipatory principle was applied in my research through positive images of the institution being created during the one-on-one interviews and the entire 5-D AI cycle. Participants anticipated their desired future by collectively envisioning this future during the Dream phase. The theme of the research workshop, interview questions, discussions and participation in the research workshop were entirely positive and strengthened the anticipatory principle.

3.4.3.5 The positive principle

Positive change can only take place if momentum is gained, and this requires large amounts of positive effect and social bonding (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9). Hence, the formulation of extremely positive questions becomes crucial, as this will determine whether the change will be successful and lasting (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:8-9). The

positive principle was applied throughout this study. Momentum was gained by the positive effect having been established right from the Definition phase with its positive theme, flowing into the Discovery phase, and then the Dream, Design and Destiny phases. The entirely positive questions asked created a positive and suitable atmosphere for people to share openly. People shared stories about their own experiences – real-life stories – and the authenticity and positivity of these shared stories contributed to the fact that research participants became enthused by the fact that the change they desired could be realised, and could be lasting. This enabled them to think about their preferred future in innovative ways (*cf.* Rothwell, Stavros, Sullivan and Sullivan 2010:16). More details about how this was established during the empirical research will be shared in Chapter 4.

3.4.3.6   The wholeness principle

The principle of wholeness is based on the notion that wholeness brings out the best in people and in organisations. Wholeness gives a voice to the strength that lies in our relations, and focuses on the belief that we are all inter-connected and part of a bigger whole (Kelm 2005). Hence, it is important to embrace individual differences for the benefit of the whole. The principle of wholeness was applied in my study through people being encouraged to share their own experiences and to embrace their differences; and to think of themselves and the organisation in a positive manner – as being whole. It was explained to research participants that, by focusing on wholeness instead of problem-solving, the best will be brought out in themselves and the organisation. When sharing best stories and elaborating on their desired future, participants embraced their differences, and gained an understanding of the value of each person's inputs to benefit support services staff and the institution as a whole.

3.4.3.7   The enactment principle

As stated in the above quote, the principle of enactment is based on the idea that we should become the change we wish to see in the world. Hence, it entails that images and visions of our desired future are enacted in the here and now (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003: 72-74). Fritz (1993) uses the term "embodiment" to describe enactment. He states that we create what we tend to embody or focus on. The enactment principle was applied in the Destiny phase of the empirical research, where research participants were requested to focus internally, and to write down what they were willing to commit themselves to in order to make support services staff members of the institution flourish. It is thus all about each one taking action to bring about the desired changes in the organisation. Participants commented that they realised the importance of making positive changes in their own lives and behaviour, and that, by doing so, change in others and the organisation would follow. This is a beautiful illustration of the application of the enactment principle in my empirical research.   Some of these comments by participants are shared in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.5).

3.4.3.8   The principle of free choice

The principle of free choice is based on the notion that employees who are free to choose their terms of contribution will be more enthusiastic and committed employees, which in turn will empower them to make changes, eventually leading to a thriving organisation (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:75-79). The principle of free choice was applied in my study, first, by participants having a free choice to participate in the empirical research or to withdraw whenever they would feel to do so (see 1.12). Secondly, participants were tutored about the different phases of AI and the importance of their shared stories in this research, both by means of a document circulated prior to the research explaining the AI process and purpose of the workshop, and also during the empirical research workshop. They were encouraged to share freely about their own experiences, in a familiar environment where they did

not feel threatened in any way. Participants were free to choose the stories that they shared, and this made them enthusiastic about participating in the research, as they felt valued.

3.4.4 AI summits or workshops

Powley *et al.* (2004:68) define the AI summit as a "large-system change intervention that used deliberate and dialogic democratic processes to ignite rapid organisational change". In their study on the transformative power of the AI summit, Powley *et al. (*2004:68-80) found that a central idea in the participative trend of involving employees in organisations was that increased involvement empowered members of an organisation to have a voice and to be more interested in their daily work, and that this, in turn, led to increased job satisfaction and productivity.

Since the participants in my study were free to participate in the research workshop for half a day only, so as not to disturb their normal work and activities within the higher education institution under research, I did not have the luxury of focusing on each of the phases of the AI cycle for an entire day, as would typically be done during an AI summit. I therefore had no other choice than to settle for a 4-hour AI workshop, conducted over only half a work day. f I also did not have a mass of support services staff present at the workshop, but the 20 participants who volunteered to participate in the research represented the support services staff component of the institution well in terms of race, age, gender, number of years' service at the institution; and post level. In selecting participants for the workshop, I ensured that people at multiple levels of the organisation participated in the AI workshop, and assisted to co-create the desired future of the organisation.   These limitations to my study are acknowledged and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 (see 5.4; 5.4.1; 5.4.2; 5.4.3). Ludema *et al.* (2003:xii-xiii) elaborate on the benefits of AI summits, including amongst others the following:

- Summits accelerate change as they involve a critical mass throughout the organisational system.

- Summits build organisational confidence through exploration of the positive core of the organisation. Courage flows from the identified positive core, and this fuels innovation and creativity.

- Summits provide broad and immediate access to information. This is established through people at multiple levels throughout the organisation participating in the summit - people having the most critical information required for organisational success. This enriches information and learning about the organisation, as a wide range of ideas and information flows from the broad spectrum of people.

- Summits promote what Ludema *et al.* (2003: xii) refer to as a "total organisation mindset" by allowing participants insight into how their individual contributions would contribute to the whole.

- Summits result in inspired action, as people are likely to support what they have helped to create. By involving participants in the innovation process, less resistance towards change is experienced.

- Summits provide a means of sustaining positive change, as it is built upon the systems, structures, strategies and culture of the organisation. Change is supported and energised through the involvement of participants in the design of high-performance systems.

Although a typical 5-day summit was not conducted in this research, the benefits of AI summits, as explained in the section above, also applied to the AI workshop. The positive core of the organisation was explored, with a focus on the organisation's strengths pertaining to the well-being of support services staff. Participants gained a sense of the importance of their own contributions towards a flourishing organisation, and were inspired, as they had the opportunity to help create positive change within the organisation, realising that they should become the change they wish to see in the institution.

The next section explains the research population and sampling method as applied in this study.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The research population for my study consisted of all support services staff members of the particular higher education institution. From this entire population of 480 support services staff members, I conveniently yet purposefully, invited 80 support services staff members on one of the campuses to participate in the study.

3.5.1 Sampling method

According to Durrheim (2006:49), sampling entails a selection of research participants from an entire population. The researcher decides on which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to study. The 80 conveniently, yet purposefully selected support services staff members represented the entire support services staff component of the particular HEI. Only participants on the campus where I am working were selected, as I could conveniently involve them in one workshop. They were purposefully selected with maximum variation in mind pertaining to post level occupied, age, race, gender and years of service at the institution.

The venue that was obtained for the AI session can seat approximately 30 staff members, and the duration of the AI workshop was four hours; therefore I had to limit the group of participants to fit into the venue, and, for purposes of having a meaningful workshop, to gather as much detail as possible during the four hours' duration of the workshop. I therefore decided to invite five staff members from each post level (post level P1 to P16) on the campus where I am working, representing support services staff across the board. This information was provided to me by the institution's Human Resources Department. This is in line with Durrheim's proposal (in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:49) that in interpretive, qualitative research samples should consist of smaller groups.

Of the 80 invitees, 20 eventually volunteered to take part in the research after having received an invitation. Fortunately, all attendees were information-rich individuals. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and written consent was obtained from all research participants. Participants remained and will remain anonymous in all reports on the research. The demographics of the sample are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1:   Demographics of research sample

Criteria	Description	Total
Age	20 – 30 years	2
	30 – 40 years	5
	40 – 50 years	6
	50 – 60 years	7
Gender	Male	6
	Female	14
Race	Indian	3
	Black	9
	Coloured	3
	White	5
Number of years' service at the institution	Less than one year	0
	1 – 5 years	3
	6 – 10 years	6
	11 – 15 years	6
	16 – 20 years	4
	21- 25 years	1
Post level	Level P5 - P6	7
	Level P7 - P8	5
	Level P9 - P10	2
	Level P11 - P12	1
	Level P13 - P 14	3
	Level P15 - P16	2

In purposive sampling, the researcher specifies the target population first, and then identifies a number of interviewees, from which specific members are then invited to participate in the research (Vogt *et al.* 2012:141).

Vogt *et al.* (2012:141) further argue that convenience sampling is the method of choice when interviews are being conducted for research purposes. I obtained the complete list of 480 support services staff members of the institution from the Human Resources Department, and selected and invited the 80 support services staff members situated on only one of the two campuses of the particular HEI to participate in the research, as they are on the campus where the research workshop would take place. I had to be careful not to disrupt the normal activities of the institution, and therefore I selected staff members representing various divisions to ensure that the productivity of a certain division was not undermined as a result of my research.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:148) point to the fact that it is common for qualitative researchers to use various data collection strategies in a single study. Various data collection strategies may therefore be used by the researcher to answer the same research question in different ways, and from different viewpoints (Mason 2002, in Cohen *et al.* 2011:236). This allows for greater or lesser depth and breadth in data analysis, the use of triangulation and the ability to search for variations in the data about the same phenomenon (Mason 2002, in Cohen *et al.* 2011:236-238*).*

For purposes of this study, the following data collection techniques were used:

- An AI interview guide, with an answering sheet with space for participants' responses. (This was used during Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny phases of AI workshop).

- One-on-one interviews. (Interviews were held during the Discovery phase of the AI workshop.)

- Elements of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). (This was only applied during the Dream phase of the AI workshop.)

- Small-group discussions (which took place during the Discovery, Dream and Design phases of the AI workshop).

- Group discussions of the entire group of 20 participants (which took place during the Dream and Design phases of the AI workshop).

- Observation and note-taking by myself as workshop facilitator. (I did this during the Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny phases of the AI workshop.)

- A digital recording of the AI workshop proceedings (which was made during the entire AI workshop).

- Photos were taken of each session of the AI workshop.

- I kept a reflective journal throughout the study period on relevant literature, data collection techniques, the pilot of the AI interview guide and the AI workshop.

- On completion of the workshop, I typed the responses to each of the questions by each of the participants, and marked elements pertaining to staff well-being that were identified from the responses (see 1.10).

More detail on each of the data collection techniques are provided in sections 3.6.1 to 3.6.7.

3.6.1   AI interview guide

An AI interview guide was designed with entirely positive, open-ended AI questions adapted from the generic AI questions (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). This interview guide was discussed with two AI experts prior to the AI workshop, and their valuable contributions were incorporated. I piloted the AI interview guide with two of the research participants whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and Sesotho respectively, in order to make the interview guide, which was compiled in English, as easily understandable to all participants as possible. I incorporated the inputs from

these staff members and also had the questions translated into both Afrikaans and Sesotho, to further increase understanding (see 3.7; Annexure C). (Elucidation: English is the official language used at the institution, but many staff members are Afrikaans or Sesotho first-language speakers.)

The AI questions were aimed at obtaining thick descriptions from one-on-one interviews during the Discovery phase in the words of the research participants (see 3.7; Annexure B). The AI interview guide (see Annexure B) also contained questions for the Dream, Design and Destiny phases that were completed and discussed in groups. Research participants were thus involved in the collection of data throughout the AI workshop, as they had to write down as much information as possible from the positive stories shared during one-on-one interviews, and also during small-group sessions and discussion sessions of the entire group of research participants (during the Dream, Design and Destiny phases). These questions, as well as the interpretation of participants' responses, are captured in sections 4.3.2.1 to 4.3.2.5.

3.6.2 One-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted during the Discovery phase. I chose a suitable venue with air-conditioning and seating in a U-shape for purposes of conducting the AI workshop on the premises of the institution under research. This contributed to a relaxed atmosphere where participants felt comfortable to share their stories. Sufficient space was available for them to spread out and have open discussions without being disturbed by other participants (see 3.4.1.1). Furthermore, the principle of co-creation was established right from the Discovery phase by emphasising the importance of each participant, and the stories they would be sharing in their own words around their positive experiences at the institution.

During the one-on-one interviews, participants shared positive stories about what they valued in the organisation (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:43; Gates 2012:15) (see 1.10; 3.4.1.2), and through these appreciative interviews, identified positive themes, that is,

those things they would like to take into the future (Gates 2012:15) (see 3.4.1.2). I constantly emphasised the importance of them answering questions in as much detail as possible, and for interviewers to write down as much information shared by interviewees as possible, and in the words they used, on the AI interview guide. This ensured rich descriptions of information, and also improved the credibility of my research.

3.6.3 Small-group discussions

On completion of the one-on-one interviews of the Discovery phase, small groups consisting of four to five staff members each were formed. Each participant was asked to share the top two stories that they had heard from the person they had interviewed with the small group (see 4.3.2.2). Each group was requested to choose two top stories from all these top stories shared. Eight top stories were shared, known as positive themes (*cf.* Gates 2012:15) (see 4.1.2; 4.3.2; 4.3.2.3).

Taking the positive themes identified during the Discovery phase into the future, small groups were tasked during the Dream phase to design a collage that they felt would be a visual representation of those themes. Each small group then presented its collage to the entire group of research participants. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.3. More detail on the Dream phase is provided in sections 3.4.1.3 and 4.3.2.3.

Data were also collected by means of small-group discussions during the Design phase. Groups had to think more deeply on what was required to make their dream of a flourishing support services staff component at the institution come true. They had to be practical and had to describe this in as much detail as possible (see Annexure B). From the information that groups gathered and shared with the entire group of participants, they had to come up with a metaphor that defined the support services staff of the institution – better known as a provocative proposition (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:7) (see 3.4.1.4).

3.6.4 Discussions by entire group of research participants

As indicated in 4.4.3, the AI questions asked during each phase of the AI cycle were addressed first by small groups, and then by the entire group of research participants during the Discovery, Dream and Design phases of the AI workshop (see 3.4.1.2 - 3.4.1.4). This contributed to positive discussions around each of the AI questions. It was evident that participants were eager and excited to share their findings and interpretations with the entire group of research participants. There was a tangibly positive atmosphere in the room, and participants cheered one another on by clapping their hands and cheering. This sparked innovation and the sharing of creative ideas (see 3.4.1.3).

3.6.5 Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

I used elements of the NGT of Dobbie *et al.* (2004:402-406), embedded in the 5-D phases of the AI method, as data collection method during the Dream phase, following the one-on-one interviews and that were conducted during the Discovery phase (see 1.10; 3.6). The NGT was originally developed as an organisational planning technique by Delbecq, van de Ven and Gustafson in 1971 (Dunham 1998), and, according to Joppe (n.d.), has since been used in a variety of settings such as education and research.

I chose elements of the NGT as data collection technique during the Dream phase, as I wanted to involve participants in the verification of the data (see 1.10). This method of data collection was also most applicable, as the research was conducted within the framework of AI, where the emphasis is on collecting data from participants, and involving them in the whole process of verifying and applying the findings of the research (O'Brien 1998:1). The NGT allowed for a research environment in which the participants felt comfortable and not threatened (Dobbie *et al.* 2004:403).

Participants in the research workshop were seated around a table in a U-shape, and I was the facilitator and was positioned at the head of the table. The purpose of the study was explained to participants, and a brief description of AI and the NGT-related process was provided. All participants had signed consent forms and sent it to the researcher prior to the research workshop. The interview questions were phrased carefully in order to gather the most useful information, and were provided in writing. Participants' responses to the questions were recorded on a question and answer sheet during one-on-one sessions, and participants were encouraged to share stories openly around positive experiences they had had at the institution.

Thereafter, smaller groups, consisting of four to six people each, considered the best stories shared and recorded these on a flip chart, as proposed by Dunham (1998). Participants wrote down the best stories shared during the Discovery phase. Ideas were then shared in a round-robin of the entire group of 20 participants, followed by a serial discussion and voting on the top stories or themes. Voting took place by spreading out the selected statements across the venue's walls for all to see clearly. Each participant received eight coloured stickers of different colours, with the score (number) from high to low indicated on the sticker. Each participant had to score the priorities written on the flip charts on a scale of one (top story) to eight (least important story). Participants stuck the stickers on the flip charts, and the facilitators of each of the small groups assisted me in counting the scores, and scores were recorded on the chart. The entire group then re-assessed the scoring to ensure that it was done correctly, and the top eight priorities were agreed upon and recorded on a flit chart, as proposed by Jones (2004).

Although, through an NGT-related process, use was made of the synergy of the group, the focus was on individual participation (Dunham 1998). Furthermore, it balanced participation amongst members of the group. It was effective in strategising, as it contributed to a high level of trustworthiness, because research participants assisted in collecting and verifying data. Another benefit of this method

of data collection was the fact that I could interpret the findings with relative ease and with minimal resource requirements (see 1.10).

3.6.6 Observation, note-taking and photos

As researcher, I facilitated the AI workshop, and made notes during each of the group presentations, and throughout the entire AI workshop. I also observed the one-on-one interviews and discussion sessions by small groups. As part of my observations, I took photos of each phase of the AI cycle, including photos of the themes as identified and presented on a flip chart (see 3.4.1.2); the collages designed by teams (see 3.4.1.3); and the provocative propositions presented by teams (see 3.4.1.4). These notes, observations and photos were very helpful in the understanding and assessment of data.

3.6.7 Digital recording

I recorded the entire AI workshop by means of a digital recorder, downloaded the recording onto my computer, and then stored it with the AI interview guides, collages and all data collected during the AI workshop in a cupboard that was locked, and with the key kept in a safe place. The digital recording was very useful in the interpretation of data – especially since I worked in the research paradigm of social constructionism, where the use of language (words) and how meaning is constructed from words, are emphasised (see 1.8.1 and 3.3.1).

The interview questions and principles of AI as applied in the construction of the interview questions will now be discussed.

3.7   AI INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interview guide that was used during the AI workshop was prepared around the positive principles of AI, and adapted from the generic AI questions (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005) (see 3.7.1; Annexure A).   Discussions were held with two South African AI experts about the interview guide to ensure that it would effectively address the research questions by means of the AI process.   A pilot study was done on the interview guide with two non-English-speaking research participants (support services staff) at post levels 8 and 16 respectively prior to the AI workshop, to ensure that the interview questions were easily understandable to all.   Adaptations were made to some of the interview questions following the pilot.   I kept a reflective journal of the inputs provided by the two participants, and ensured that their inputs were incorporated in the interview guide (see 4.2.1).

To further increase the understanding of the interview questions by participants, I had the English interview questions translated into both Afrikaans and Sesotho by professional translators (see Annexure C).

Open-ended questions were developed around the positive principles of AI (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2005) and the model for optimal well-being, referred to as the *flourish* model or the PERMA-model of Martin Seligman (2011) (see 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5).   The questions formed part of an interview guide that was completed in English by individual participants during the one-on-one discussion sessions of the Discovery phase. Positive questions, incorporating the principles of flourishing from the PERMA-model of Seligman (2011), namely **P**ositive emotion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning and purpose, and **A**ccomplishment were asked during the AI workshop.

3.7.1   Interview questions asked during AI workshop

The following open-ended, positive questions were asked during the one-on-one interviews of the AI workshop (see Annexure B), with the topic *AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]*:

Question 1

(i)   Tell me about a time when you were flourishing here at [name of institution] – a time when you felt positive, most alive, engaged, or really proud of yourself or your work here at [name of institution].

(ii)   What was it about you, the situation and/or the leadership that allowed you to have that positive experience?

Question 2

(a)   Describe or tell me about something that happened here at [name of institution] that made you feel appreciated or valued. How exactly did you feel? Why?

(b)   What do you value most about:
-        Your work environment?
-        [Name of institution] as an employer?
-        Your colleagues/students?
-        Yourself as an employee?

Question 3

What is the one thing that defines our [institution]; makes our [institution] unique? Why?

Question 4

(a) Describe your most extraordinary accomplishment, in your opinion, here at [name of institution].

(b) What circumstances have contributed to this accomplishment/experience, making it extraordinary instead of ordinary?

Question 5

What is the one thing that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component here at [name of institution]?

Question 6

What are your wishes/hopes for our [institution]? Name three (3).

Probing questions, as developed by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:61), were provided to each of the participants in hard copy, and it was explained to them that these questions could be asked to probe interviewees further. The probing questions used were the following:

- Can you tell me more? What was happening?
- Why was that important to you? What made it a great moment for you?
- How did you feel? How did that affect you?
- How did the organisation/your colleagues support you?
- What were others doing that made it a great moment?
- How has it changed your life?

These probing questions assisted in ensuring that as much information as possible was shared during the interviews, rendering rich information.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

From the positive discussions held during the AI summit and the recording of these discussions, as well as from the group sessions where participants agreed on the positive core of the organisation, valuable qualitative data were collected regarding the well-being of support services staff.

Most of the data analysis was done by the research participants during the AI workshop due to the adapted NGT process followed during the Dream phase, and the analysis of data gathered by participants during small-group sessions and large-group sessions (Discovery, Dream and Design phases). As researcher, it was my task to interpret the additional information gathered during the interviews and the AI workshop.

The method of content analysis and interpretation of the data that I used comprised the following four steps, as proposed by Anderson (2009:213):

- Understanding and assessing the data collected;
- reducing the data to manageable chunks;
- exploring themes and patterns, and coding the data;
- formulating meaningful conclusions.

In the first step (understanding and assessing the data collected), I asked questions about the essence of what the data were communicating. I read and re-read the collected data to gain a clear understanding of what the participants had shared. Since I worked in the research paradigm of social constructionism, I was particularly interested in the language (words) used by research participants, as I wished to

understand their own reality in terms of the language they used (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280) (see 1.8.1; 3.3.1). I therefore read and re-read each response carefully, and looked for descriptive words – words that described their emotions, points of view, and their own reality. Being a linguist by occupation was very helpful, as my everyday work requires of me to be "language-minded", and to search for meaning from language.

In the second step (reducing the data to manageable chunks), I interpreted the data by attempting to form a clear meaning of what participants had communicated. I examined the types of discourse used by participants, and how it opened up their thinking (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280; Cooperrider and Whitney 2006:176). I then reduced the information gathered during the one-on-one interviews and written down on the AI interview guide to manageable chunks by searching for words that were related to the elements of well-being as identified during my literature review (see 2.3; 2.3.2.1- 2.3.2.11; 2.3.5 - 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5; Annexure A). Thereafter I grouped the identified elements of well-being together into fitting categories.

The third step (exploring themes and patterns and coding the data) was addressed during the Discovery phase of the research workshop, and through the application of elements of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) during the Dream phase. During the Discovery phase, participants identified the top stories shared during one-on-one interviews. During the Dream phase, participants explored the key positive themes, and the data were coded according to the prescriptions of the NGT (see section 3.6). I explored the key themes that had emerged from the Design and Destiny phases in a similar manner by identifying the themes related to support services staff's well-being and coding the data accordingly. In analysing the data, I organised all the data gathered during the different phases of the AI cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) by grouping the data under the different elements of well-being, as discovered from my literature review (2.3; 2.3.2.1 - 2.3.2.11; 2.3.5 - 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5; Annexure A).

The final step entailed the formulation of meaningful conclusions from the data collected. The repetitive nature of the qualitative data analysis enabled me to formulate my research conclusions based on the evidence found (*cf.* Anderson, 2009:230). I justified the conclusions from the data analysis process that I followed.

In line with what Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Mertens 2010:226) propose, qualitative data analysis was done, as the qualitative researcher interprets the data gathered, and this is important for purposes of understanding social phenomena and the world of the research participants from their point of view.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As researcher working with humans it was important to ensure that the study was conducted taking cognisance of ethical considerations.
I obtained written consent from the higher education institution concerned to conduct the research. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (as per ethics number UFS-EDU-2013-045) to conduct this study. Written, informed consent was also obtained from all research participants, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any stage, should they wish to do so (*cf.* Vogt *et al.* 2012:254) (see Annexure D). This is in congruence with the AI principle of free choice (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:75-79) (see 3.4.3.8).

The research participants were not exposed to any harm, and the research was conducted in a safe environment with which all the participants were familiar; hence they felt comfortable and at home. The institution granted permission for the research to be conducted on the institution's premises and in the chosen venue. The anonymity of all participants was ensured, and no details of the staff that participated in the research were or shall be made known at any time. The participants also gave

permission that the photographs that I took during the AI session could be used for purposes of this study.

3.10 MY STATUS AND ROLE AS RESEARCHER

My own position (my status and role) during this research project warrants elucidation.

I have been a support services staff member of this institution for almost 20 years, and have identified the need for the overall improvement of staff well-being at the institution over the years. Some of the participants in the research are known to me, as some of them have also been staff members of the particular higher education institution for many years.

A researcher's own experience, knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon influence the manner in which the research is conducted (Nieuwenhuis 2007:60). I acknowledged my personal interest in this study and my involvement in the particular institution under research (see 1.2). However, in my interpretation of the data I avoided bias by applying disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity (*cf.* McMillan and Schumacher 2006:13) (see 3.3.2).

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Nieuwenhuis (2007:80) states that the use of multiple data gathering methods assists in establishing trustworthiness. I followed his advice and used multiple data gathering methods for purposes of this research, namely the use of an interview guide for the one-on-one interviews, involving the participants individually and working in teams to collect and analyse the data to decide on the top themes. This increased the

trustworthiness of my research, which is a key principle in ensuring the quality of a qualitative study.

Furthermore, Lincoln *et al.* (1985 in Cohen *et al.* 2011:181) identified four criteria to be met to increase the trustworthiness of a study, namely credibility (related to validity), transferability (related to external validity or generalisability), dependability (related to reliability) and confirmability (related to degree of objectivity/subjectivity). I will now explain how I have complied with these criteria to optimise the trustworthiness of my research.

3.11.1 Credibility

Mertens (2005:254) argues that credibility relates to the fact that there should be correspondence between the manner in which respondents perceive social constructs, and the way researchers present their own viewpoint.

First of all, I used well-established and appropriate research methods for my qualitative study, as proposed by Harris, Gleason, Sheean, Boushey, Beto and Bruemmer (2009:87) and outlined earlier in this chapter. I performed a thorough literature study prior to conducting the empirical research (see Chapter 2), and used multiple sources of data collection - referred to as triangulation - (namely an open-ended AI interview guide, one-on-one interviews, small-group discussions and discussions amongst the entire group of participants during the research workshop; observation and note-taking). I also recorded the entire research workshop session by means of a digital recorder, and took photos of each of the different AI phases conducted during the workshop.

Participants were involved in the analysis of all data collected during the research workshop by means of the identification of top stories shared during the Discovery phase; the identification of the positive themes that form the positive core of the organisation during the Discovery phase; the adapted NGT process applied during

the Dream phase, and the analysis of data gathered during small-group sessions and group sessions of the entire group (Discovery, Dream and Design phases). I kept all data collected safe by locking up the completed interview guides and the data collected, together with the digital recording of the research workshop conducted, in a cupboard in my office, and kept the key in a safe place.

To ensure saturation of data collected, I read and re-read the data collected to ensure that I did not overlook any information. All of these things were done in an attempt to increase the credibility of my research.

3.11.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings are applicable to other situations. Mertens (2005:256) indicates that the reader of the research findings determines the degree of transferability or generalisability between the context of the study and the context in which it is applied. It is therefore important that the researcher provides sufficient data in the study to enable the reader to make a sound judgement (Mertens 2005:309).

Merriam (2009:225) suggests that a thick description of the research in terms of the research setting, research participants and findings of the study, as supported by sufficient evidence and maximum variation in the selection of the sample, strengthens the transferability of a study. I attempted to provide a rich description of the study itself; the setting in which the research was conducted; who the participants were; how they had been selected (with maximum variation pertaining to race, age, gender, number of years' service at the institution and post level in mind); and reported the research findings by means of thick descriptions of evidence to ensure, as far as possible, that any reader would be able to apply the research findings to other contexts (see 1.13).

3.11.3 Dependability

Mertens (2010:259) and Merriam (2009:223) state that the dependability of a study is influenced by the manner in which the research findings are consistent with the data collected. As such it is related to the reliability of a study. The researcher should therefore explain in as much detail as possible how the study was conducted, and how the data were collected and analysed. To this effect, I have kept a reflective journal whilst conducting the literature review, the empirical research, and whilst collecting and interpreting the data. In this journal, I captured my thoughts, reflections and reasons for choosing the particular research design; the sample selection; the questions for the interview guide; the pilot study done on the interview guide prior to the research, the data collection and how I went about to interpret the data. I also typed out all the information gathered from the one-on-one interviews and the different phases of the AI cycle performed during the research workshop, and had regular discussions with my supervisor and co-supervisor during every phase of conducting this research. Research participants were involved in the analysis and interpretation of data gathered during the AI workshop (see 1.10; 3.4.1.3; 3.6). All these were done consciously in order to strengthen the reliability of my study.

3.11.4 Confirmability

In order to increase the confirmability (related to the degree of objectivity) of research findings, Lincoln *et* al. (in Mertens 2005:258) emphasise that the researcher must be explicit about the instruments used in interpreting the data, and must ensure that qualitative data can be tracked back to its original sources. I have applied the strategy of disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity (*cf.* McMillan and Schumacher 2006:13) in an attempt to increase the confirmability of my research (see 3.10).

The researcher also must ensure that data are stored safely and captured accurately. The researcher must keep evidence of all the sources used and information gathered and analysed, so that, should an audit be performed, the same conclusions would be

reached (Lincoln *et al.* in Mertens 2005:258). I have explained how this was done in the section on my status and role as researcher (see 3.10). I adhered to the principles of confirmability by keeping a reflective journal throughout the study, storing all the data gathered in an appropriate manner, and ensuring that the data would be accessible, if required. I also documented how I went about analysing the data (see section 3.8).

3.12 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Choosing to work within the social constructionist research paradigm and choosing action research as research methodology and AI as research method for this study proved to be very useful. As explained in section 3.3.1 of this chapter, the principles of social constructionism entail that people determine their own destiny by envisioning their desired future (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:14). This envisioning inspires them to take action towards their desired future. This is exactly what I experienced during the AI workshop. Participants shared openly about their own experiences, and dreamed about their future collectively. This inspired them to do their part in establishing the change they wished to see within the organisation.

The positive focus of AI assisted in establishing enthusiasm amongst research participants, and they enjoyed each step of the 5-D AI cycle as used during the empirical research. Participants were eager to share their stories, and looked forward to each phase that followed. This was made possible as a result of the positive focus of AI and the flexibility that it offers in terms of the research process. Furthermore, action research as participatory research ensured that participants were involved in the research process, and this added to the credibility and trustworthiness of my research, as it prevented me from making research findings that were not supported by all the participants.

Being a linguist by profession, I was also interested in and able to analyse the social constructions brought about by the language used by participants. As a result, I never became bored throughout the research process.

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the research design and methodology followed during my research. In the next chapter, the empirical research findings are discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 explained the chosen research strategy and the nature of the empirical investigation that was conducted to answer the primary research question.   This chapter provides the data analysis findings and the interpretation of the empirical data, with the aim of answering the following secondary research questions, namely

- What works well in the specific organisation, why does it work well and how can those successes be extended through AI?
- What strengths exist pertaining to support services staff's well-being at the particular institution, and how can those identified strengths and the aspirations of support services staff be related to theories on staff's well-being?
- What positive developments would support services staff members like to see in order to enhance their well-being?
- How can support services staff's well-being be enhanced in future?

In this chapter I explain how I went about to extract meaning from the qualitative data that had been collected, analysed and interpreted during the AI workshop. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:212) emphasise that data are of no or little use if it is not summarised or organised. Whilst reporting the research findings in this chapter, I constantly provide a literature control by referring to the literature on staff well-being and AI that I studied, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3.   This is most frequently done by means of

consistent cross-references to the literature in these two chapters. Where research findings differ from the information gathered in my literature review, it is reported as such.

In the figure below (Figure 4.1), the different AI phases of the workshop, the purpose of each phase and the data collection techniques used during each phase are illustrated (also see 3.6; 3.6.1 - 3.6.7).

1. DEFINITION
PURPOSE: Affirmative topic shared with all participants.
DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES: Digital recording of entire workshop; photos.

5. DESTINY
PURPOSE: Sustaining the desired future.
DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES:
AI interview guide; entire group discussions; observations and note-taking by researcher; photos taken; digital recording of proceedings.

2. DISCOVERY
PURPOSE: Positive stories shared.
DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES: One-on-one interviews; answers written on AI interview guide; small-group sessions to identify top two stories for each group; observation and note-taking by researcher; photos taken; digital recording of proceedings.

4. DESIGN
PURPOSE: Co-constructing the future.
DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES:
Small-group discussions; entire group discussions; observations and note-taking by researcher; photos taken; digital recording of proceedings.

3. DREAM
PURPOSE: Envisioning the desired future.
DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES: NGT; Small-group discussions; entire group discussions; observations and note-taking by researcher; photos taken; digital recording of proceedings.

Figure 4.1   AI cycle: Purpose of each phase and methods of data collection used (adapted from Watkins *et al.* 2010:22).

4.2   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

As qualitative researcher, I applied various data collection strategies in the study (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:148; see 3.6). These data collection techniques were applied for purposes of answering the research questions as stated in Chapter 1 (see 1.4.2).

The various data collection techniques applied in this study, and the phases of the AI cycle during which they were applied, were discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (see 3.6; 3.6.1 - 3.6.7).

The next section describes the data analysis process that was applied in this study.

4.3   DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the aim of this chapter is to answer the secondary research questions by extracting meaning from the qualitative data that were collected, analysed and interpreted during the AI workshop (see 4.1).

In order to do so, I shall use each phase of the AI cycle (Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) and the AI questions asked during each phase as a framework for reporting the data, and the analysis thereof by research participants and me to answer the secondary research questions. Each of the phases of the AI cycle and the data analysis processes followed during each of the AI phases will be taken under scrutiny.

4.3.1 The Definition phase

No questions were asked during the Definition phase. The affirmative topic for the workshop was explained to all participants (see 1.3.2), as well as the importance of sharing as much information as possible during one-on-one interviews and each of the AI phases. The affirmative topic was chosen in an attempt to set the positive tone for the rest of the workshop, with the focus on AI and how it could be used as a tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at the institution. For more detail on the Definition phase, see 1.3.2, 3.4.1 and 3.4.1.1. Below is a photo taken during the Definition phase.

Figure 4.2:   Explaining the affirmative topic and AI cycle during the Definition phase

4.3.2 The Discovery phase

During the Discovery phase, six AI questions with sub-sections were asked by means of an AI interview guide, and answered during one-on-one interviews (see 3.7). Participants were requested to write down as much information as possible, and in the words used by the interviewee. This resulted in rich information, and it made the analysis of data much easier (*cf*. Merriam 2009:225; see 3.11.2).

Probing questions as constructed by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:61) were provided to each of the participants in hard copy, and it was explained to them that these questions could be asked to probe interviewees further, in an attempt to avoid "Yes" and "No" answers (see 3.7.1). The probing questions used were the following (see Annexure C):

- Can you tell me more? What was happening?
- Why was that important to you? What made it a great moment for you?
- How did you feel? How did that affect you?
- How did the organisation/your colleagues support you?
- What were others doing that made it a great moment?
- How has it changed your life?

Apart from having the responses to each question written in the words of participants on the interview guide, and reading and re-reading those, I typed all the responses of each participant to each AI question as written on the AI interview guide. I read and re-read each response. Thereafter I captured the data into smaller, manageable chunks (*cf.* Anderson 2009:213; see 3.8), and categorised the information according to the theories on and elements of well-being as identified and supported by my literature review (see Chapter 2 and Annexure A). This process of data analysis was followed for each of the questions asked during each of the phases of the AI workshop (see 4.3.2.1 – 4.3.2.5). The purpose of the data analysis processed followed was to extract meaning from the descriptive, qualitative data that were

gathered, and to gain a better understanding of participants' perceived reality as described in their own words (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280; see 3.3.1).

I also made notes of each presentation made by small groups during the AI workshop, and carefully studied these notes when reporting on the research findings. The recording that I made of the entire AI workshop was very helpful, and I listened and re-listened to the presentations made by each group and made some notes from that, too. This was very useful, and it assisted me to understand how the participants regarded issues of well-being at the institution (see 3.3.1).

Below is a photo of some of the participants having one-on-one interviews during the Discovery phase.

Figure 4.3: One-on-one interviews held during Discovery phase

4.3.2.1 Data analysis process followed for information gathered during the Discovery phase

In this next section, I have used each of the questions asked and the responses received to explain how the data were analysed, and how these responses answer each of the secondary research questions.

The main purpose of the Discovery phase was for participants to identify the strengths of the institution, and, from those, to identify the top eight themes – also referred to as the positive core of the institution (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008; see 3.4.1.2; 3.8; 4.3.2.2 - 4.3.2.3). Ensuing from the positive discussions held during the one-on-one interviews of the Discovery phase, qualitative data were collected by means of the interview guide completed by each interviewer when interviewing the interviewee (see 3.8; Annexure B). Information shared on each of the above questions was recorded in the words of the interviewees, as I believe that our worlds are constructed by the words that we use (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:276; see 1.8.1 and 3.3.1). This also links with the constructionist principle of AI, namely that no empirical truths exist, and that reality is created through language and conversations (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003; see 3.4.3.1). I have also adhered to the AI principle of simultaneity by asking AI questions that invited storytelling and peak experiences (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9; see 3.4.3.2). The poetic principle was also applied, as the participants were co-authors of the stories they told (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9; see 3.4.3.3). The descriptions in the words of the participants assisted me to interpret the data from the viewpoint of each participant.

I shall now use the AI questions asked during the Discovery phase, to explain how I went about analysing the data and controlling the relevance thereof with the findings of the literature review. In adherence to the positive principle of AI (see 3.4.3.5), all questions asked during the one-on-one interviews were extremely positive, open-ended questions.

Question 1

(i)   Tell me about a time when you were flourishing here at [name of institution] – a time when you felt positive, most alive, engaged, or really proud of yourself or your work here at [name of institution].

(ii)   What was it about you, the situation and/or the leadership that allowed you to experience these positive emotions, and to feel alive and engaged in your work here at [name of institution]?

Question 1 focused on the aspects of positive emotions and engagement, as identified by Seligman in his well-being theory (2011; see 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2). The responses to question 1 (a) and (b) were all taken from the interview guide and categorised according to themes related to staff well-being. I read and re-read each response, highlighted identified elements of well-being from each response, and verified each response with the literature and theories on staff well-being that I had studied. I looked at the language (words) used by participants that described their emotions, points of view and how they perceived their world (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280; see 1.8.1; 3.3.1), and I searched for meaning from the language they used (see 3.8). I then interpreted the data by forming a clear meaning of what the participants had communicated.

The responses from all participants can be categorised into the following well-being elements identified as important in ensuring a flourishing support services staff component at the institution, and as supported by the literature review (see Annexure A) and literature control performed (see Table 4.1 below):

Table 4.1: Elements of support services staff's well-being identified during AI workshop

Element of well-being identified	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Feeling valued/appreciated	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Positive emotions	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
Accomplishment	See 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
Relations with supervisor/colleagues (supportive environment)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Meaning / meaningful life (serving something bigger than yourself)	See 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.8; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A
Trust	See 2.3.2.2 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.4; Annexure A
Sense of belonging	See 2.1.2; 2.2.8; 2.2.1; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Job satisfaction	See 2.2.2; 2.3; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.7; 2.3.4; Annexure A
Engagement	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1 - 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A
Remuneration	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Resources	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Opportunities for promotion/development	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
Equality (between academic and support services staff)	See 2.3.2.10; Annexure A

The factors that emerged over and over as factors having a positive effect on the well-being of support services staff are a supportive supervisor; trusting others and being trusted; a sense of accomplishment and a meaningful, appreciative work environment, as is evident from the following responses:

(a) "Since joining the support services in my current post, I finally found my niche area and am doing what I always wanted to do. Many years spent as a temp and now I finally accomplished what I have always wanted to do. It made me feel very positive and engaged to do something fulfilling and positive in the field in which I studied for so many years.

(b) I finally felt rewarded for all the hard work done over many years. The environment was positive, accepting and I felt like being part of a family. My supervisor made me feel welcome and equal – not like someone superior to me. She introduced me to others, and I immediately felt part of a team."

Another response confirming the emergence of a sense of accomplishment, a supportive supervisor and an appreciative work environment as important factors of well-being is captured below:

(a) "At the end of 2012 I applied for my current position. Just as I discovered that I got the job, I also received my results. I had six distinctions. It felt like a real achievement, because I had work, family and studies, and I managed to do it all successfully. In terms of the promotion, the interview process was quite difficult, as we had a very advanced and extensive competency test, and the people I was short-listed with were very competent, high-calibre candidates. The biggest achievement for me was being selected over everybody else."

(b) "Being considered the most competent of the group of other every capable and competent staff made me feel invigorated. The positive is an executive secretary position, and not knowing what to expect, but hearing how specific his (the manager's) requirements are, it is good to know that I met his requirements. The fact that he is so appreciative means more than the financial rewards

gained from the work. The fact that someone tells you you're making a positive contribution in a very stressful environment is very fulfilling."

What stood out for me during the Discovery phase, as I observed the one-on-one interviews being conducted between participants, were the sense of collegiality and a sense of belonging that emerged. As colleagues were sharing their best stories with one another, there were comments such as: "I never knew that about you!", and "Wow! That is really amazing!" Colleagues listened intently to one another. They were looking one another in the eyes and sharing some of their greatest experiences at the institution. It became evident to me, right from the onset of the interviews, that AI was indeed a powerful tool in establishing a positive outlook and in creating a sense of belonging (see 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.8; 3.3.4 - 3.3.5; Annexure A). Furthermore, I observed a sense of excitement in the room. It was clear that the AI process had energised the participants right from the start of the AI workshop. This really excited me, as some participants had voiced to me, on inviting them to the workshop, that they at the time did not have a lot to be positive about at the institution. These participants were all participating with enthusiasm, and I experienced the transformative power of AI first-hand.

Question 2

(a)   Describe or tell me about something that happened here at [name of institution] where you felt appreciated or valued. How exactly did you feel? Why?

(b)   What do you value most about:
- Your work environment?
- [Name of institution] as an employer?
- Your colleagues/students?
- Yourself as an employee?

Question 2 was grounded in AI theory (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 1998; see 2.2.4). It was aimed at identifying those things that make support services staff feel valued and

appreciated. Question 2(b) was divided into sub-sections, requiring participants to state what they valued most about their work environment, their employer, colleagues and themselves. It was thus aligned with the well-being elements of relationships and meaning, as identified by Seligman (2011; see 2.3.6.3 – 2.3.6.4), as I wanted to gather information on the effect of relationships and meaningful work on the well-being of support services staff. This question was asked with the AI principle of wholeness in mind, as I wanted the participants to understand that they were inter-connected and part of a bigger whole (Kelm 2005; see 3.4.3.6). I also wished to gain information on the things that they valued most pertaining to their employer, colleagues, their work environment and themselves.

Following the procedure for the analysis of each response received as explained in section 4.3.2, I extracted meaningful data from the descriptive, qualitative data that were gathered in the words of the participants (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:280; see 3.3.1). The things that support services staff valued most about their work environment and employer were grouped together as there was much overlapping. Through my analysis of the responses of participants to question 2(a) above, and as verified with literature on staff well-being, the following elements were identified as important in making support services staff feel valued and appreciated:

Table 4.2:   Requirements for feeling valued and appreciated

Requirement for support services staff to feel valued/appreciated	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Gratitude/appreciation expressed for work done	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Positive feedback	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Support/encouragement/motivation from supervisor/colleagues	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Trusted by supervisor and colleagues	See 2.3.2. - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.4; Annexure A
Making a difference in others' lives (living a meaningful life)	See 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A

Some of the responses confirming the above findings (provided in Table 4.2) are quoted below:

(a)   "I started the Winter School Project at the then Teacher Education School. The previous Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the project on numerous occasions. The reports that I submit on behalf of the Faculty are also acknowledged. Getting "thank yous" at various levels openly. Parents and students thank me for what I do. That makes me feel rewarded and appreciated.

(b)   My work environment is very conducive and very supportive. My employer provides me with the personal space that I need at times to develop and grow. My colleagues are open, fair and supportive. What I value about myself is that I always try to give my best."

(a)   "I was tasked to short-list the candidates for the senior analyst position. My supervisor indicated that I have made good choices. It made me feel that he trusted my judgement and that this was an important task.

(b) My work environment provides flexibility. My employer looks after its employees. It pays well in comparison to others. It also forces employees to save a lot towards pension. My colleagues are always open for conversation and ready to engage with me. They are also very helpful. What I value about myself is that I always make an attempt to foster good relationships with other employees."

The above responses are an indication of the value placed on being acknowledged for good work; gratitude or appreciation shown for a job well done; a positive, supportive working environment; being trusted by others; and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. These findings strengthen Cooperrider's AI theory (1998; see 1.3.1; 2.2.4), Seligman's positive psychology theory (1998; see 1.3.1; 2.2.2.5) Keyes' flourishing theory (2002; see 1.3.1; 2.2.7), as well as Seligman's well-being theory (2011; see 1.3.1; 2.2.9).

The responses support services staff provided to the question on what they valued most about their work environment, and what they valued most about the employer, also rendered similar responses. That which were valued most and that was mentioned by almost all the participants was colleagues. The second aspect of their work environment that support services staff valued most, was a positive, supportive working environment, followed by sufficient physical resources, meaningful work, the fact that the employer took good care of its staff in terms of remuneration and benefits offered, and sufficient opportunities for further growth.

There is a strong link between these findings and what Seligman proposed as elements of optimal well-being in terms of his PERMA model (2011; see 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.5). What also stood out for me from the responses of the things valued most about the work environment and employer, was the fact that respondents were able to focus entirely on positive aspects – the value of which was emphasised over and over by me as workshop facilitator. Not once during the AI workshop did any respondent voice any negative aspects. This, to me, was evidence of the fact that "AI

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can make a difference with a single person or with any collective human system", and that "AI is a proven paradigm for accelerating organizational learning and transformation. It can be used in any situation where the leaders and organizational members are committed to building positive, life-centred organizations" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008: xxix).

Table 4.3 lists the elements valued most, as confirmed by the literature review and literature control conducted.

Table 4.3:   Elements of work environment /employer valued most

Elements of work environment / employer valued most	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Colleagues (relations)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Positive, supportive, friendly, flexible working environment	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Sufficient physical resources (office space, computer equipment) to do work	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Enjoy the work that I do; meaningful work	2.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Take good care of staff (remuneration, benefits, leave)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Opportunities for personal growth/development	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A

Some of the responses to the above question confirm the above analysis, as quoted below:

"[Name of institution] offers good working conditions. I have flexibility, there is less bureaucracy. Also, physical and financial conditions are good – better than most institutions."

"The institution looks after its employees. Pays well in comparison to others. Forces employees to save a lot towards pension."

"The institution provides me with personal space I need, and time to develop and grow."

The following aspects (Table 4.4) were eventually identified from my analysis of the data as the things valued most by participants about their colleagues/students, as confirmed by literature and theories on staff well-being:

Table 4.4:   Aspects valued most about colleagues/students

What I value about my colleagues/students	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Friendly, supportive colleagues	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
They value/appreciate/acknowledge me	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4; 2.3.5; Annexure A
Engagement with them	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A
Positivity of colleagues	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A

It became evident from the majority of the responses about what support services staff valued most about their colleagues or students that the well-being element of

relationships, as identified by Seligman (2011; see 2.3.6.3), emerged very strongly, as reflected in the following responses received:

"What I value most about my colleagues is knowing that we are there for each other."

"My colleagues are always open for conversation and ready to engage with me. Colleagues are also very helpful."

Another aspect that support services staff valued about their colleagues was that they were friendly and supportive. In the literature review and literature control conducted, the element of supportive colleagues featured strongly (see 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A).

There was also a positive correlation between friendly, supportive colleagues, engagement and feeling valued or appreciated. Some of the responses confirming this positive correlation are the following:

"What I value about my colleagues/students: Their openness, frankness and supportiveness."

"Colleagues/students: Love colleagues, they are inspiring and motivating. Also helpful. Students are also respectful and appreciate my assistance."

"Colleagues are respectful; they have respect for your privacy and beliefs. Students respect staff, they are very appreciative of good service."

Participants truly recognised the best in their colleagues. They appreciated them as an integral part of their daily lives. I observed how interviewers identified with the statements made by interviewees by the nodding of their heads and by making confirming statements. This was evidence to me of the fact that reality is indeed

socially constructed – that is, through our words (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:276; see 3.3.1).

The last part of question 2 focused on what participants valued about themselves. The following themes (Table 4.5) emerged, some of which were not confirmed in my literature control, as they were more related to what people valued about themselves than to elements pertaining to well-being:

Table 4.5:   What support services staff value about themselves

What I value about myself	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Hard-working; willing to go the extra mile; always give my best (organisational commitment)	See 2.3.2.3
Willing to learn more, to improve – to benefit the institution	See 2.3.2.3
Making a positive contribution to the institution (meaning)	See 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.8; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A
I foster good relationships with employees	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Committed and loyal towards the institution	See 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Quality of work that I deliver (excellence)	See 2.3.2.3
Willing to share my knowledge with others	See 2.3.2.3
Positive attitude	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
Good listener	Not confirmed during literature control

What was valued most about themselves by support services staff was a willingness to go the extra mile to get the job done. This was followed by fostering good relationships with employees, having a positive attitude and delivering quality work (see Table 4.5).

The following responses testify to these findings:

"What I value about myself is my commitment and loyalty towards institution."

"I'm a hard worker and always willing to go the extra mile to get the job done."

"I deliver excellent service. I ensure that my cleaning is excellent in whatever I am doing."

It was encouraging for me as AI workshop facilitator to observe that participants were able to value themselves. In a negative environment, people would struggle to voice positive statements, but during the AI workshop, it seemed like the natural thing to do. It is also evidence of the fact that the participants did not feel threatened during the AI workshop.

Question 3

What is the one thing that defines [our institution]; makes [our institution] unique? Why?

Remuneration and fringe benefits offered by the institution featured strongly as elements that influence the well-being of support services staff of the particular HEI. The participants were also positive about being more engaged in work and a willingness to go the extra mile. This means that support services staff members become more engaged in their work, and are willing to go the extra mile because the

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institution pays them well and offers them good fringe benefits. There also was a positive correlation between hard-working employees who were willing to go the extra mile, and the fact that the institution is small and a sense of belonging is created, and also between being hard working and the positive relations with colleagues. This means that, since support services staff members have a sense of belonging at the institution, they have positive relations with colleagues – their 'work family', and as a result they are often willing to go the extra mile and also to assist colleagues.

Table 4.6 below lists the defining elements of the institution (elements making the institution unique, some of which were not confirmed by my literature review, as they are not related to elements of staff well-being, but rather to the uniqueness of the employer):

Table 4.6: **What makes our institution unique?**

What makes our institution unique?	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Excellent benefits (salaries, leave, pension)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Engaged institution	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1 - 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A
Hard-working employees, willing to go the extra mile	See 2.3.2.3
Positive relations among colleagues	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Our innovations	Not confirmed during literature control
Small institution; thus more personal; creates atmosphere/sense of 'belonging'	See 2.1.2; 2.2.8; 2.2.1; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Diversity of our staff; multi-cultural community	Not confirmed during literature control
Culture of openness and transparency; open communication	Not confirmed during literature control
Our physical location	Not confirmed during literature control
Management has an open-door policy (positive relations)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Our vision and support of that vision by all staff	Not confirmed during literature control
Quality of the education we offer	Not confirmed during literature control
Quality of our staff (professionals)	Not confirmed during literature control

Extracts from responses to this question confirming the above analysis, include the following:

"[Name of institution] has a vision and is working hard to accomplish that vision, and to provide staff and their children with opportunities to study and develop further. [Name of institution] members are hard workers. They are willing to start working early and to work until late to get the job done. They are willing to go the extra mile to get the job done – not only me. It makes my life here at [name of institution] great."

"Our university is more personal because it is smaller than others. We get to know many colleagues. Also, our innovation and technology make us unique."

"We have confidence in ourselves as a university, despite our size. We function on a bigger scale."

"A human environment. Work with professional people. I love to get up and come to work."

In analysing the actual words used by participants in answering question three, I looked for words carrying certain emotions, and aspects related to their well-being. For instance, from the response quoted below, I was able to make the following analysis:

"The opportunity that my child could study for free, which could not have happened if I was not working here. Although I don't work with students, I feel that I am a part of the development of young people."

It was evident that the respondent regarded the fact that his/her child could study for free, as an opportunity and a great benefit. This benefit of a child studying for free would not have been possible had the staff member not been employed by the

specific employer; hence the respondent was at the same time appreciative of the employer. Lastly, the participant indicated that, although he/she did not work with students, he/she felt part of (that is, has a sense of belonging, or feels he/she is contributing to), the development of young people. It is evident that the respondent regarded the employer as being a unique employer for providing such great opportunities and a sense of belonging.

Question 4

(a)   Describe your most extraordinary accomplishment, in your opinion, here at [name of institution].

(b)   What circumstances have contributed to this accomplishment/experience, making it extraordinary instead of ordinary?

Question 4 required of participants to describe their most extraordinary accomplishment at the institution, and to indicate what circumstances had contributed to that accomplishment. This question was formulated with Seligman's well-being element of accomplishment in mind (2011; see 2.3.6.5). As mentioned in section 4.3.2.1 of this chapter, I read and re-read all the information captured from the AI interview guide, typed it all out, and then proceeded to categorise and group the information based on the elements, causes, and benefits of well-being, as well as theories on staff well-being as identified during my literature review (*cf.* Anderson 2009:213; see 3.8; Annexure A).

I also analysed the language (words) used by participants by looking at the kind of words used, what emotions those words were revealing or trying to hide, and how those words described the world of the participants from their viewpoint (*cf.* Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:276; see 1.8.1; 3.3.1; 4.3.2.1). A good example of such a response, and how I went about to analyse it to identify elements related to well-being, are given below:

"Getting my Master's degree and getting the job I currently hold. Was in interviews with other competent and capable people – but it feels gratifying to know that I was considered as being the best candidate."

The above words were the exact words used by the candidate to describe the most extraordinary accomplishment. From the language used, it became evident that the respondent's biggest accomplishment was related to a personal achievement or accomplishment – namely obtaining a master's degree and getting the job the employee at the held - and as such it is related to the well-being element of accomplishment as identified by Seligman (2011). Also, the statement that it feels "gratifying to know that I was considered as being the best candidate", is an indication that the participant's sense of accomplishment is also linked with a sense of gratitude or appreciation – and as such it links to the well-being element of feeling valued and appreciated (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008; see 2.3.2.11; Annexure A).

Part (b) of Question 4 focused on the elements that had contributed to achievements by support services staff. Responses received were closely related to aspects of staff well-being as confirmed by my literature review (see Annexure A). Some of the accomplishments that were shared by participants are captured in the extracts below:

"Mandela Day 2013, I felt proud. Some colleagues and I were able to pull this event off successfully in a short space of time. What contributed to this accomplishment was that I could not forgo the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives."

"I was nominated in 2011, my first year here at [name of institution], for a performance bonus. It was an extraordinary achievement, since it was my first year at the institution. What contributed to this accomplishment was the fact that I quickly managed to grasp what my responsibilities are. They systems I implemented made the office run smoothly."

"I have to regularly work overtime at no extra pay. I'm always willing to do more to get the job done. I do not have any specific incident to mention. What contributed to this accomplishment: I feel [name of institution] has a staff shortage in some divisions. Hence, more is expected of staff to get the job done. I always do my part to get the job done – whatever it takes."

The above responses reveal that a sense of accomplishment was established through further development/studies; getting a job that the person applied for; being nominated for a performance bonus; the ability to quickly adapt in a new work environment; and a willingness to work overtime and to go the extra mile to get the job done.   These accomplishments were positively related to a supportive work environment and colleagues, opportunities for further development; job satisfaction, available resources and the wish to make a positive contribution to the lives of others (see Table 4.7).

From the analysis of the responses, the following information (Table 4.7) was categorised, as confirmed by the literature control performed:

Table 4.7: Circumstances contributing to the most extraordinary accomplishments/experiences of support services staff

Circumstances contributing to my most extraordinary accomplishment	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Wanted to contribute to making people open to change/more positive	See 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A
Wanted to achieve/accomplish my goals/striving to live a better life	See 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
Wanted to make a difference in people's lives	See 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A
Supportive colleagues/supervisor/ management/teamwork/trust	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
I felt valued/appreciated	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
My knowledge and experience	Not confirmed by literature
Development opportunities offered	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
Lack of resources (staff)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Job satisfaction	See 2.2.2; 2.3; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.7; 2.3.4; Annexure A
Striking staff	Not confirmed by literature
Resources (finances) made available	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2; Annexure A

Question 5

What is the one thing that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component here at [name of institution]?

In answering Question 5, participants had to indicate the one thing that they felt would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component at the institution. Amongst others, the responses received from participants confirmed that they regarded opportunities for promotion and further development as important elements in establishing optimal well-being (see Table 4.8 below). There was, however, a sense that there were not sufficient opportunities for promotion for support services staff at the institution. This was also confirmed during the climate survey that was conducted at the institution (CUT 2013:6; see 1.2). Another factor that strongly emerged was that support services staff members were of the opinion that they were not treated equally to academics pertaining to remuneration, fringe benefits such as the number of days leave per year, and also pertaining to the perception that their work was less important than that of academics (see Table 4.8). When asked what the one thing was that they felt would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component, equality between academic and support services staff was mentioned by most of the research participants (see 2.3.2.10; Table 4.8).

The following information came forth from the analysis and categorisation of information:

Table 4.8: **Things identified that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component**

Factors that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Value and acknowledge contributions made by support services staff	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Equality between academics and support services staff	See 2.3.2.10; Annexure A
An adequate number of staff to do the work (resources)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
More appreciation and gratefulness shown for our work	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Willingness of all staff to take responsibility, and to go the extra mile to get the job done	See 2.3.2.3
Addressing well-being of staff in totality (physically, psychologically, emotionally) – more support from HR, Wellness, etc.	See 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.6
Opportunities for promotion for support services staff	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
Extending study benefits for our children to also study at colleges (linked to remuneration and fringe benefits)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Dispelling all negativity at the institution	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
More contact or interaction with the Vice-Chancellor (positive relations between support staff and top management)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Opening up opportunities for dialogue during working hours (engagement)	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1 - 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A

Some of the responses to this question, confirming the above findings, are reflected below.

"More hands to get the job done!"

"When people start to take ownership of [name of institution] we can then dispel negativity at the institution."

"Get up from your chair. Don't be afraid to walk or run to go the extra mile."

"Value contributions made by support staff. What we do is just as important as what academics do. See support staff as complementing the academic staff and not as inferior to them."

"[Name of institution] to regard support services staff as equal to academic staff."

What was enlightening for me to observe during the answering of Question 5 by respondents, was that although respondents were mentioning things that they felt were required to make them flourish – in other words they mentioned things that they felt were not yet existing at the institution, none of this was shared in a negative manner. In fact, the atmosphere remained extremely positive, and interviewers agreed with some of the responses given by interviewees.

The constructionist principle of AI was adhered to constantly by participants, as well as the positive principle. I was excited to observe how the principles of AI "are central to AI's theoretical basis for organizing for a positive revolution in change" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008: 10).

Question 6

What are your wishes/hopes for [our institution]? Name three (3).

Question 6 was the last question asked during the one-on-one interviews of the Discovery phase of the AI workshop. Participants were requested to state three wishes they had for the institution.

Again, in analysing the data from the responses received, I read and re-read all the information captured on the AI interview guide, typed it all out, and then proceeded to categorise and group the information (*cf.* Anderson 2009:213; see 3.8). I went back to the literature review I did on staff well-being (see Chapter 2; Annexure A), and searched for evidence of staff well-being found in the literature, and how my findings linked to theories on staff well-being. The following information (Table 4.9) surfaced from my analysis:

Table 4.9: **Wishes/hopes for the institution**

My wishes/hopes for the institution	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
That everyone at our institution be treated equally	See 2.3.2.10; Annexure A
Equal benefits and opportunities for all staff (including contract staff, leave, opportunities for promotion, etc.)	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
That the institution be recognised and acknowledged more for its contributions	Not confirmed during literature control
Simplified processes (less red tape; more to be done online)	Not confirmed during literature control
Support services staff divisions to be better staffed (resources)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Improved facilities for staff and students (e.g. cafeteria, wellness programmes, gym facilities, medical facilities, student accommodation, physical resources)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Manageable workloads for support services staff (job demands)	See 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.11
That everyone should value and respect one another more	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4; 2.3.5; Annexure A
Excellence in all areas of the university	Not confirmed during literature control
Racial issues to be put aside	Not confirmed during literature control
More participation of staff in university activities (engagement)	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A
More friendly working environment	See 2.3.2.3
More competitive remuneration for improved staff retention	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
That the institution would continue to grow (also in student numbers)	Not confirmed during literature control
Institutional stability (within HE landscape)	Not confirmed during literature control
Knowledgeable staff to be brought in from outside and ensure that we appoint the right staff – fit for purpose	Not confirmed during literature control
That a sense of belonging be created for all staff and students	See 2.1.2; 2.2.8; 2.2.1; 2.3.4; 2.3.5; Annexure A
To be innovative (practise what we preach)	Not confirmed during literature control

The top themes that emerged from the responses were equality between support services and academic staff; support services staff divisions to be better staffed; that everyone should value and respect one another; competitive remuneration for improved retention; and the wish that the institution would continue to grow. These wishes revealed that the institution could do more of these things in an attempt to improve the well-being of its support services staff.

Some of the wishes mentioned by participants, confirming the top themes as identified from my analysis of the information gathered, are quoted below:

"I wish people will value and respect one another more, because that would entice people to work harder, and will bring out the best in them."

"Equality. SAAs, for example, to be treated the same, irrespective of race or gender. There should be the same remuneration and development opportunities. Promotion opportunities for all – it will create a competitive working environment."

"Better and competitive remuneration towards better staff retention. Equal benefits for all staff. What is available for academic staff should be available to support services staff."

"[Name of institution] to grow further. We need more hands in some departments to do the work effectively."

"I wish [our institution] success so that we can grow. Longevity – [name of institution] to live long!"

It is evident from the wishes shared by participants that some wishes (such as "better and competitive remuneration" and "institutional stability") were isolated statements made by individuals that did not necessarily reflect the positive themes that had been identified by the entire group (see 4.3.2.2; Table 4.10). Since I used AI as research

method, however, I valued the inputs of all participants, and therefore also included once-off statements such as these, as they could be relevant to a particular individual - although contrary to the overall research findings.

Below are some photos taken during the Discovery phase of the AI workshop, during which questions one to six above were answered in one-on-one interviews, and after which small-group discussions took place during participants identified the top stories shared. As indicated in section 3.9, participants gave permission that the photographs that I took during the AI session could be used for purposes of this study.

Figure 4.4:   One-on-one interviews held during Discovery phase

On completion of the one-on-one interviews, during which questions one to six as analysed above, were discussed, small groups consisting of four to five participants were formed to identify the top stories shared during interviews. Each small group selected two top stories, and a total of eight top stories were shared by participants. From these stories, positive themes were identified that formed the positive core of the organisation.

I observed that the AI process lent itself to the involvement of participants in the analysis of information and the identification of themes. This type of analysis by participants was indeed done during the Discovery, Dream and Design phases. This strengthens the credibility of my research, as research participants contributed to the gathering of information, the identification of positive stories and the top themes, and the analysis of data gathered (see 3.11; 3.11.1 - 3.11.4).

4.3.2.2   Data analysis process followed for information gathered during the Dream phase

As indicated in sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.2.1 of this Chapter, eight top stories, or positive themes, were identified by participants during small-group sessions on completion of the one-on-one interviews of the Discovery phase. This is in line with what Cooperrider *et al.* (2008) proposes. An adapted NGT process was then followed during the Dream phase to score the top themes.

The eight top stories emanating from the one-on-one interviews, and as identified by small groups on completion of the one-on-one interviews, were categorised by participants themselves into positive themes or the positive core of the organisation (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008). By doing so, the anticipatory principle of AI, according to which themes for future inquiry are identified from the stories shared, was adhered to (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:9; see 3.4.3.4). The top eight themes (positive core of the organisation) as identified by participants and confirmed during my literature review, are given in Table 4.10:

Table 4.10:   Top themes/positive core of the organisation

Themes/positive core of organisation	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Hard-working, dedicated staff	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Staff willing to go the extra mile	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Positive relationships between colleagues	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Willingness of staff to adapt to change	See 2.3.2.3
Institution offers "value for work" (good remuneration and benefits)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A)
Job security	See 2.3.2.1; 2.3.6.4
Supportive work environment	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A

These top themes were shared by the small groups with the entire group of research participants by writing them on a flip chart, followed by a presentation by each group facilitator on their two top stories or themes identified. Participants listened carefully to the presentations made by group facilitators, and cheered them on whilst they shared their stories with the group. The positive atmosphere created by the sharing of these

stories was tangible, and this positivity continued right through the AI workshop. This is evidence of the power of AI as a tool to promote focusing on the positive and creating enthusiasm (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008).

Below are some of the photos taken during the Dream phase.

Figure 4.5:   Presentation of top themes identified by group facilitators

In order to score the themes on a scale of one (top theme) to eight (lowest scored theme), an adapted NGT process was used as a data analysis technique, as I wanted to involve participants in the verification of the data and the co-creation of the desired organisation (see 1.10). This also strengthened the credibility of my research (see 3.11.1). The NGT was an applicable method of data collection, as the research was conducted within the framework of AI, where there is strong emphasis on the involvement of participants in collecting and verifying data, and applying the findings of the research (see 3.6).

Each participant scored the themes on a scale of 1 to 8, and the results of the scoring were as follows:

(i) 'Job security' and 'Hard-working, dedicated staff' were scored equally as number one.

(ii) 'Staff willing to go the extra mile' and 'positive relationships between staff' was scored equally as number two.

(iii) 'Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates' were scored as number three.

(iv) 'Willingness of staff to adapt to change' was scored as number four.

(v) 'Institution offers value for work' was scored as number five.

(vi) 'Supportive work environment' was scored the lowest as number six.

During a discussion of these themes after the scoring had been done, the entire group stated that the themes were also inter-linked in some way, for example: 'Hard-working and dedicated staff' and 'Staff willing to go the extra mile' were related, and 'positive relationships among staff' and 'positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates' were also related. Participants felt that all these themes were important to them, and that, although they had attached scores to these themes, they would not like to think of them in a specific order, but rather regarded all the themes as forming the positive core of the institution. I noted this in my reflective journal on the workshop, and agreed to state it as such in my research findings. This

is a typical example of how I had involved participants in the analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

The participants then formed four small groups, and were given the opportunity to each choose one theme from the eight positive themes as identified, and to take the positive theme that they had chosen into their desired future by designing a collage that they felt was a visual representation of that theme.

The question that was asked during the Dream phase was the following:

It is three years from now. You are fulfilled in your work environment; you experience optimal well-being; you are flourishing here at [name of institution].

Take the positive themes that we have identified into this future. Use these themes to design a collage, in your groups, that you feel is a visual representation of the theme you chose.

Upon completion of the collage, one person from each group will present the collage to all of us, describing the situation and the opportunities that support services staff members of [name of institution] have seized in order to become flourishing individuals.

The four groups chose the following four themes for their collages:

- Job security.
- Hard-work and dedication take you to the top.
- Willingness of staff to adapt to change.
- Staff willing to go the extra mile.

In sections 4.3.2.3 (i)-(iv) below, each of these themes as presented by each group is discussed.

(i) Theme 1: Hard work and dedication take you to the top

The first group presented a collage on the theme 'Hard work and dedication take you to the top'. They answered the Dream question by stating that, for support services staff of the institution to reach their dream of experiencing optimal well-being, they had to have a dream; learn as much as they could to equip themselves; think hard about how they could improve; and work hard to achieve that dream.

The group facilitator explained that their collage represented the fact that through hard work and dedication, one could realise one's dreams (see 2.3.2.3; Annexure A). However, they emphasised that it all had to start with a dream; an envisioning of one's future (see 3.4.1; 3.4.1.3). In order to reach their dream of becoming a flourishing support services staff component, they had to set goals for themselves, and then learn as much as they could – whether it be practical life experience; studying further; or learning from others (see Annexure A). They had to think big, and not allow any obstacles to stand in their way of pursuing their dream. They had to continue to work hard until they had accomplished their dream (see 2.3.2.3; Annexure A). The group's collage was a beautiful demonstration of the AI cycle. They defined the collage by means of the chosen theme (namely "Hard work and dedication take you to the top"); identified the things that were necessary to reach the top; emphasised the importance of having a dream and working hard to realise it; and the fact that, by doing so, they believed they would reach their destiny (or, as they called it, 'achieve our dream') (see 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5).

As indicated by the cross-references in the above paragraph, the collage presented by this group, and their explanation of it, is backed up by literature on well-being and AI (see 2.3.2.3; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5; Annexure A). In analysing the components of well-being as identified by this group, I grouped the information shared

into the different categories of well-being that became evident from the literature review, and performed a literature control to identify the elements of well-being that were backed up by research, as well as any new information not yet backed up by research. The photos that I took of the collages, as well as the digital recording that I made of the entire AI workshop, and my reflective journal, also came in useful, as I was able to go back to these records to assist me in verifying the data and categorising it into relevant well-being categories or themes.

Below are some photos of their collage and the presentation thereof to the entire group of research participants, illustrating the situation and the opportunities that the group felt were seized by support services staff members to experience optimal well-being.
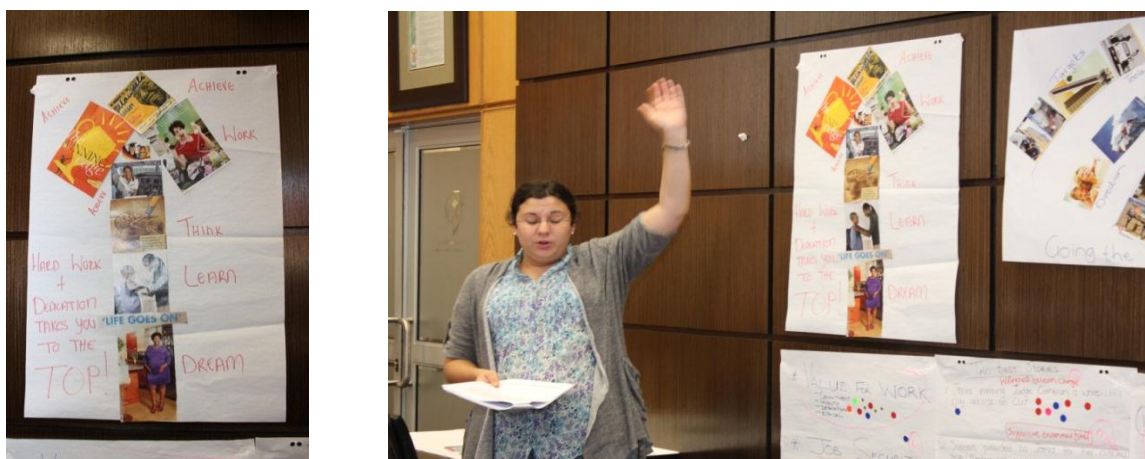
Figure 4.6:   **Presentation of collage on theme: Hard work and dedication take you to the top**

ii   Theme 2: Willingness to go the extra mile

The second group's collage was based on the theme 'Willingness to go the extra mile'. The group facilitator started the presentation of the collage by saying that, to reach their dream of becoming a flourishing support services staff component, they needed to have a clear path or vision. This is also in line with the presentation of the

first group, who stated that they should have a dream/vision as a starting point; and in line with the AI principle of discovering strengths and using those to dream about or envision a brighter future (see 3.4; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.1.3). Furthermore, the group stated that, to reach one's vision in life required energy and having a support system in place (see 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1 – 2.3.6.3; Annexure A).

The group also emphasised the importance of teamwork, as no single support services staff member could make this happen – they had to work together as a team (see 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A). The element of 'relationships' as an important factor towards optimal well-being was also identified by Seligman (2011) in his PERMA model as an important element of well-being (see 1.7.2; 2.3.6). The group concluded their presentation on the collage built by stating the importance of being recognised and feeling that one was appreciated for the fact that one was willing to go the extra mile (see 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A). Where there is recognition and appreciation, one is encouraged and would therefore be willing to go the extra mile again and again.

As indicated by the various cross-references provided in the paragraph above, the group's presentation on the theme "Willingness to go the extra mile" is constantly backed by literature on staff well-being and AI. What also stood out from their collage and presentation was that a willingness to go the extra mile was positively related to being recognised and appreciated (see 2.1.2; 2.2.1; .2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A). Once again, the atmosphere during this presentation was one of expectancy and positivity. There was even laughter about some funny statements made by the presenter. It was evident that the support services staff representatives were now starting to bond with one another at a level that had not happened before.

Figure 4.7:   Presentation of collage on theme: Willingness to go the extra mile

iii   Theme 3: Job security

The third group chose to design a collage on the theme 'Job security'. They stated that support services staff should feel secure in their jobs in order to be flourishing. This is in accordance with what I found during my literature review, as job security was found to be an important element of well-being (see 2.3.2.1; 2.3.6.4). The group facilitator presented the collage they had designed, and stated that support services staff would feel secure in their work environment when their efforts and inputs were valued and recognised in the workplace. This is confirmed by my literature review (see 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A). The group further emphasised that, when support services staff was encouraged and appreciated, they would be inspired to work hard to accomplish the institution's goals, as confirmed in my literature review (see 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure). The group also emphasised the importance of having a diverse support services staff component, and stated that they would flourish if they

were remunerated well for their efforts. Remuneration was found an important factor in optimising well-being (see 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A). The photo below shows the presentation made by this group on the theme of job security.

Figure 4.8   Presentation by group facilitator on theme: Job security

iv   Theme 4: Willingness of staff to adapt to change

The fourth group chose the theme 'Willingness of staff to adapt to change', including changing their perceptions about matters. They stated that, in life, mountains or obstacles had to be overcome in order to achieve certain goals. Emphasis was placed on the importance of involving others to accomplish dreams. This also came out in the presentation by the group on theme 3 (see 4.2.2.3 (iii)), and it was confirmed in my literature review as an important element of well-being (see 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A).

The group stated that support services staff had to think big and dream big dreams, and that they needed to make smart choices to accomplish their dreams, such as eating healthily, keeping fit, stay mentally healthy by regularly exercising their brains through further studies, reading and learning from others, and taking leave regularly.

These elements of well-being were also found in my literature review as important elements of staff well-being (see 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.6).

The group further stated that support services staff would flourish if they cherished relationships and not burn relational bridges, and this is also confirmed by literature (see 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A). The group emphasised the importance of being willing to change one's perceptions about things, to change and to grow – all for the benefit of the institution as a whole. This is in agreement with the well-being element of organisational citizenship behaviour (see 2.3.2.3).

They also emphasised that one had to sow in order to reap, and that one could not expect to have a harvest if one was not willing to make sacrifices, work hard, and work together as a team. This agrees with the well-being principle of 'meaning' as identified by Seligman (2011) (see 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A).

The group stated that, when one lives life as if it were your last day, one would flourish, because one would live it to the full. They felt that wisdom was required in our daily decisions, and that one should test waters before making important decisions that could have a negative impact on one's life and well-being. The group also stated that doing a good deed every day would have a positive impact on emotional well-being, as it would make people feel good. This is in agreement with the research conducted by Keyes (2002) on emotional well-being, and the element of 'meaning' (Seligman 2011) as identified in the PERMA model of well-being (see 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A).

The presentations of the themes emerging from the collages designed by the four small groups completed the Dream phase. I observed that participants freely participated in the small-group and bigger group discussions, and during the presentations made on the top themes by small-group facilitators. The collective

conversations on images of the desired future were powerful in maintaining a positive atmosphere and in creating possibilities, as proposed by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:132). The photo below illustrates the collage designed by the group, as presented by the group facilitator.

Figure 4.9   Presentation by group facilitator on theme: Willingness of staff to adapt to change

4.3.2.3   Data analysis process followed for information gathered during the Design phase

The AI question that participants had to answer individually for the Design phase was:

> *What is required to make our dream come true? Be very practical and describe in as much detail as possible.*

Once each individual participant had answered this question, they discussed it in their small groups in an attempt to broaden their own thinking – which is one of the benefits of AI summits or workshops as identified by Ludema *et al.* (2003) (see 3.4.4).

The qualitative data that were collected from the answers of the AI question during the Design phase were written by participants on the space provided on the AI interview guide (see the above excerpts; Annexure B). This assisted me to interpret the data from the viewpoint of each participant.

The elements of staff well-being that featured in the responses to this Destiny-phase question, analysed as described in 4.3.2, and confirmed by my literature review and theories on staff well-being, are the following (Table 4.11):

Table 4.11   Requirements for a flourishing support services staff component

What is required to make our dream of a flourishing support services staff component come true?	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Effective communication	Not confirmed during literature control
Supportive culture/relations, management and employees	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Willingness to go the extra mile (organisational commitment)	See 2.3.2.3
Sufficient resources	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Staff to value and respect one another	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
More manageable workloads / job demands	See 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.11
Management to be more committed to the improved well-being of employees (at all levels)	See 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.6
Engagement of staff	See 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 2.2.8 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.1 - 2.3.2.3; 2.3.2.5; Annexure A
New, more positive mind-sets	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
Financial assistance to employees in need (e.g. pension fund loans)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Passionate, committed employees	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Actions to go along with words (do what you say)/trust	See 2.1.2; 2.3.2.2 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.4; Annexure A

It is clear from the above analysis that all the elements identified by support services staff to promote a flourishing support services staff component are confirmed by literature and theories on staff well-being (see cross-references listed in table 4.11).

Some of the responses to this question, confirming the above analysis, are quoted below:

"Effective communication. Lines of communication should be properly defined. Communication should be open, and people should be willing to listen and assist. Valuable and timely feedback should be provided. If someone is unable to assist, he/she should refer you to someone who is able to assist."

"For our dream to come true, we need to support one another as support services staff. Furthermore, staff members need to work harder and be fully committed to achieving [name of institution]'s goals. At times this will mean you have to go the extra mile."

"Making opportunities available. Making resources available. Providing more staff to undertake these opportunities in community engagement. We would be able to make the community a better place."

"Management to be committed to the well-being of employees. Making time available for employees to participate in institutional activities. In the past staff were more involved in institutional activities. We can check what had changed that culture. We should not only communicate via e-mail, but be visible employees at all levels. More staff to be employed to reach out to employees that need wellness-related support, i.e. we should be a proactive and not reactive employer."

"Go the extra mile. Be positive. Respect others. Support from managers."

"Teamwork and positive attitudes; support from colleagues."

Once again, the Dream phase was conducted with tangible enthusiasm and energy by all participants. Interviewers were able to learn from the positive stories shared and the positive themes identified from those stories, and to value those stories (*cf.* Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:130). This enabled participants to envision the organisation of the future that "embodies the images, hopes, dreams, and visions of its people" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:131).

During the next step of the Design phase, participants formed small groups, and were tasked with identifying a provocative proposition for the institution, as proposed by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008). Provocative propositions – also known as 'possibility statements' – "embody the organisational dream in the ongoing activities" (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:45; see 3.4.1.4).

In AI organisational design is based on (i) what is being designed; (ii) who needs to be involved and (iii) how the ideal organisation can be described (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:201). The purpose of coming up with a provocative proposition for the institution was explained to participants in the notes on AI that were distributed to them prior to the AI workshop (see Annexure E), and also at the start of the AI workshop. It was explained to participants that provocative propositions stated how the preferences of the people involved would come to realisation within the organisation; and they described the ideal organisation using the best of the past and enabling the desired future (*cf.* Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003:212).

I decided to ask each group to come up with a provocative proposition, instead of identifying only one provocative proposition for the institution in an attempt to broaden their thinking on the different metaphors that defined the institution. Each team discussed this in detail, and then made a presentation to the entire group on the metaphor that they had chosen. Hence, the entire group of participants had an opportunity to hear why the other teams felt that the metaphor that they had identified, defined the support services staff best. Each group was enthusiastic to share its provocative proposition with the entire group of research participants, and of course

each group felt that theirs was the best! However, this did not create division or a sense of competition in the negative sense of the word, but rather an atmosphere of fun, participation and positivity, as groups cheered one another on during their presentations. By this stage I felt that we could change the whole world if we could maintain the energy, focus and positivity that were present.

The four provocative propositions that were eventually shared are:

- [Name of institution] is an eagle.
- [Name of institution] is an employer of choice.
- [Name of institution] is a growing tree.
- [Name of institution] is a tiger.

Each of these provocative propositions is explained briefly in sections (i) to (iv) below.

### i	[Name of institution] is an eagle

The first group simply stated that they saw the institution as an eagle, as the eagle is a powerful bird that soars high above the rest – just like [name of institution]. The above statement is evidence of the fact that the institution is regarded positively and as successful, hence the comparison to an eagle soaring "high above the rest". The positive principle of AI was applied, and the focus on the good and positive during the Discovery and Dream phases led to more positivity during the Design phase (see 3.4.3.5). Furthermore, the constructionist principle was adhered to in that the participants were co-creating the reality (see 3.4.3.1).

### ii	[Name of institution] is an employer of choice

The second group stated that [name of employer] is an employer of choice. They emphasised that the support services staff members of the institution should count themselves fortunate to be working for such an institution that offered good

remuneration and excellent benefits to its staff. The element of remuneration and benefits offered to staff was identified as an element of well-being during my literature review, and also featured constantly during the AI workshop as a determining factor pertaining to the well-being of support services staff (see 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.3; Annexure A).

iii   [Name of institution] is a growing tree

The third group's provocative proposition, namely that the institution is a growing tree, was beautifully illustrated by their explanation that, similar to a tree that grows from a small seed, the institution has grown tremendously from its humble beginnings. It has become stronger and is constantly improving and growing towards its vision.

It was evident that the rest of the research participants agreed with the above statement made. They nodded their heads in support of the provocative proposition, and a positive atmosphere was tangible in the room. This is in line with what Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:46) indicate, namely that the "collective construction of positive images of the organisation's future in terms of the provocative propositions" helps the organisation move to "positive action and intended results". It was clear that the participants were ready for action towards the organisation's desired future (see 3.4.1.4).

iv   [Name of institution] is a tiger

The last group energetically shared their provocative statement, namely that the institution is a tiger. They stated that a tiger is a force to be reckoned with, and so is the institution. Furthermore, a tiger is able to camouflage itself well. Similarly, the institution is small and might not be that visible, but it is there, ready to seize every opportunity and to make a huge impact. The concluded by stating that a tiger is fast, and that it is not easy to catch up with a tiger running at full speed. Similarly, the institution is running fast towards accomplishing its vision, and its competitors would

struggle to keep up with it. Once again, the group succeeded in inspiring support services staff to take positive action towards the intended organisational results (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:46).

The four provocative propositions are indeed inspiring statements of intention, written in the present tense, and based on what has worked well in the past, combined with new, envisioned ideas for the organisation's future, as proposed by Cooperrider *et al.* (2008). From these provocative propositions, it is clear that the affirmative AI workshop topic, the positive AI questions asked during the Discovery phase and the envisioning of the desired future during the Dream phase all contributed towards fresh inspiration and enthusiasm in all the workshop participants (see 3.4; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5). Participants reviewed and celebrated the institution's accomplishments; generated a list of possible actions (see 4.3.2.4, Table 4.11) and how such actions could be supported, and applied the principles of AI throughout the process (*cf.* Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:219). The identification, communicating and celebrating of positive changes had indeed become as important as the change itself that support services staff desired to see (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:219-220).

The next section concludes the analysis of data gathered during the Destiny phase of the AI workshop.

4.3.2.4 Data analysis process followed for information gathered during the Destiny phase

The final phase of the AI workshop was the Destiny phase. This phase was not executed extensively, as the main purpose of the AI workshop was to discover the positive core of the organisation, and how it could be used to improve the well-being of support services staff by means of AI. This chapter's aim thus is to answer four of the five secondary research questions pertaining to (i) the strengths and positive core of the institution, (ii) how this could be extended through AI; (iii) to discover support services staff's dreams and the positive elements they would like to see in order to

enhance their well-being; and (iv) lastly to establish how their well-being could be enhanced in future (see 1.4; 4.1).

As workshop facilitator, I reminded participants during the Destiny phase that they had already emphasised and shared with the entire group of participants during the Dream phase and the presentation of their collages the importance of sowing in life before one can reap, and how this links with Seligman's principle of 'meaning' (2011) (see 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A).

Participants had to answer to the following AI statement during the Destiny phase:

> *I commit myself to do the following in order to make [name of institution] support services staff members flourish:*

By asking participants to stipulate here what they were prepared to do to bring about a flourishing support services staff component, I adhered to the AI principle of enactment, which is based on the idea that we should become the change we wish to see in our world (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003:72-74; see 3.4.3.7). This is also linked to Seligman's principle of 'meaning' (2011; see 2.1.2; 2.2.7 - 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.3 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.3; Annexure A). Participants answered this question individually on the AI interview guide.

All responses to this question were read and re-read, and then categorised under the following commitments that were made, and as confirmed from my literature review and theories on staff well-being:

Table 4.12: Commitments by support services staff to contribute to a flourishing support services staff component

My commitment in order to make support services staff members flourish	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
To be more positive	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A
To be grateful and appreciative	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
To work hard, be dedicated and to do my work to the best of my ability	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
To take pride in my work (related to job satisfaction)	See 2.2.2; 2.3; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.7; 2.3.4; Annexure A
To assist and motivate fellow staff members	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
To promote the institution/to be committed to the institution	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
To encourage more developmental opportunities	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
To extend my knowledge of AI and to share it with colleagues	See 2.3.2.9; 3.4; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5; Annexure A

Responses from participants confirming the commitment to be positive towards improved well-being, and to spread awareness of AI, are the following:

"I commit myself to always have a positive attitude and assist other people; then we will see positive things happening at [name of institution]."

"I commit myself to always be positive; to appreciate every colleague; to give the best service ever, and to smile, smile, smile!"

"I commit myself to spread the message of positivity, and to make small differences every day, which will amount to eventual big changes."

"I commit myself, when I hear negativity, to help others to turn the negative experience into something positive. To share AI in situations where possible. To advocate a better community engagement service. To be an AI advocate."

Some responses were related to hard work and showing gratitude:

"I commit myself to work hard; be dedicated; to do what is needed to improve myself; and to execute my duties with passion and commitment."

"I commit myself to say "thank you" more often, and to give compliments to colleagues regularly."

The Destiny phase completed the AI workshop. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form and to answer the following question:

> *What about the Appreciative Inquiry process most enlivened you/what did it mean to you?*

All responses received were extremely positive, and testified to the fact that participants recognised the value of AI as organisational change approach, and also that it is a powerful tool towards transformation in terms of the well-being of support services staff, as is evident from the excerpts below:

"What enlivened me most about the AI process, is that it has encouraged me to never stop believing in myself; to do more and more; to love my colleagues and to keep on loving my work."

"It was an eye-opener!"

"I have learnt to concentrate on the good and to build on that."

"The fact that it was so engaging! It has encouraged me not to always see and speak about the negative things, because that will make other people negative."

"It gave me a good idea of how my fellow colleagues experience the workplace; their way of thinking. The flourishing ideas were very refreshing. The opportunity to engage with others from different divisions was very exciting and enlightening. A great experience indeed."

"The thing that I appreciated the most was that it was such an interactive session with a lot of engagement. It made the session feel lively and productive. With the feedback received from the participants during and after the workshop it was evident that all participants felt motivated and very positive about the institution."

All of these responses are evidence to the fact that AI succeeds in establishing a positive outlook on the organisation. It further succeeds in establishing a sense of collegiality and engaging in a positive, appreciative and productive atmosphere. These principles are similar to the benefits of AI summits or workshops, as described by Ludema *et al.* (2003; see 3.4.4).

4.4   SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the methods of data analysis that were used, and how the qualitative data were interpreted. The data were analysed so as to answer the applicable secondary research questions. Cross-references to the elements of and theories on staff well-being, as identified in literature, served as literature control, and strengthen the findings of this research on the well-being of support services staff at a particular HEI.

The main findings of this research entailed the identification of the positive core of the organisation – its strengths (see 4.3.2.3, table 4.10). The research questions as identified in the introduction to this Chapter were answered (see 1.4.2; 4.1). This was done by means of the AI interview guide and the positive questions around support services staff's well-being that were asked and answered during the Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny phases (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4). The information gathered during these phases were analysed according to the elements of well-being identified (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4; Annexure A), and in accordance with theories on well-being (see 2.2; 2.2.1 - 2.2.9), in an attempt to identify the strengths of the organisation, the healthy core pertaining to the well-being of support services staff, and areas requiring improvement (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4; Annexure A). Elements such as feeling valued and appreciated, the power of being positive, engagement; positive, supportive relations, living a meaningful life and having a sense of accomplishment surfaced strongly during all the AI phases (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4). This strengthens the research findings of Cooperrider *et al.* (2008) (feeling valued and appreciated; see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.3), and Seligman (2011) (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment; see 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.4; 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.5) pertaining to staff well-being.

Other elements of well-being that arose as elements affecting the well-being of support services staff of the particular institution, and as confirmed by literature, are job satisfaction (see 2.3.2.1; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A); organisational commitment (see 2.3.2.3; 4.3.2.1 Annexure A); resources (see 2.3.2.5; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A); stress-related illnesses (see 2.3.2.6; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A); remuneration (see 2.3.2.7; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A); job security (see 2.3.2.8; 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.3; Annexure A); opportunities for promotion (see 2.3.2.9; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A); and equality (see 2.3.2.10; 4.3.2.1; Annexure A).

In the next chapter, the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study are reported.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study was aimed at identifying how elements of support services staff's well-being at a particular HEI could be improved. In Chapter 1 the primary and secondary research questions were formulated (see 1.4.2). In order to answer the primary research question, five secondary research questions had to be answered (see 1.4.2).

Chapters 2 and 3 were aimed at answering the first secondary research question, namely

(a) What are the current perspectives on staff well-being and AI?

In Chapter 2, a literature review that had been conducted on current perspectives of staff well-being was discussed. The concept of 'well-being' was defined, and theories on staff well-being were explored. The discussion of the literature was concluded by an exploration of the elements, causes and benefits of well-being.

Chapter 3 explained the chosen research strategy and the nature of the empirical investigation that was conducted to answer the primary research question. It included a discussion of literature on the nature of AI.

Chapter 4 provided the data analysis findings and the interpretation of the empirical data, with the aim of answering the following empirical secondary research questions: What works well in the specific organisation, why does it work well and how can those successes be extended through AI?

(b)   What strengths exist pertaining to support services staff's well-being at the particular institution, and how can those identified strengths and the aspirations of support services staff be related to theories on staff's well-being?

(c)   What positive developments would support services staff members like to see in order to enhance their well-being?

(d)   How can support services staff's well-being be enhanced in future?

Questions (a) to (d) above form the basis for my conclusions as formulated in this chapter, based on the empirical findings reported in Chapter 4. Question (e) forms the basis for the recommendations made on how support services staff's well-being could be enhanced in future. Chapter 5 is concluded by stipulating the limitations of the study, making recommendations on how staff's well-being could be improved and pertaining to future research to be conducted; and end with some final conclusions.

Emanating from the literature reviews discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report and the research findings reported in Chapter 4, the current perspectives on staff well-being and AI will now be summarised, followed by the strengths of the institution, and how those strengths and aspirations of support services staff are related to theories on staff well-being.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Ensuing from the examination of arguments in the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report and the research findings reported in Chapter 4, the current perspectives on staff well-being and AI can now be summarised meaningfully, and that will be followed by a discussion of the strengths of the institution as identified during the empirical study, and of how these strengths and aspirations of support services staff are related to theories on staff well-being.

5.2.1 Current perspectives on staff well-being and AI

Whilst well-being theories have been formulated since the 1940s, the most recent well-being theories are aligned with the principles of positive psychology, as identified by Seligman (1998; see 2.2.5). There is a focus on fostering the factors of well-being that enable people and societies to flourish (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000:5; see 2.2.5). Flourishing is seen as the opposite of pathology and languishing (Fredrickson and Losada 2005:678; see 2.2.7). Seligman's well-being theory (2011) identifies five building blocks for optimal well-being, namely positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment (Seligman 2011:14-24; see 2.2.9).

AI theory, established by Cooperrider in 1987 correlates with positive psychology theory, flourishing theory and well-being theory (see 2.2.4; 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.1.3; 3.4.1.4; 3.4.1.5; 3.4.2; 3.4.3). It is based on the belief that we should search for the best in people, and focus on what gives 'life' to an organisation, instead of solving problems (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:5; see 2.2.4; 3.4.2). These current perspectives and theories on staff well-being indicate clearly that well-being is about much more than happiness and that it entails flourishing at different levels (see 2.1.1). This was confirmed by the empirical research findings (see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.2; 4.3.2.3; 4.2.4.4; 5.2.2; 5.2.3; 5.2.4). It was clear from the identified elements of well-being

that came forth from the empirical research that support services staff of the particular HEI regard well-being at physical, emotional, social and psychological levels as important in establishing optimal well-being, or a flourishing support services staff component (see 2.1.1; 4.3.2.1, Table 4.8).

5.2.2   What works well in the organisation, why it works well and how those successes can be extended through AI

The empirical research findings flowing from the AI workshop that was conducted revealed what is working well within the organisation, and why it is working well. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the findings pertaining to the above research question (see 4.3.2.1, Table 4.3 - 4.6):

Table 5.1:   What works well in the organisation, and why

What works well	Why it works well
Engaged institution	Sufficient opportunities for engagement at all levels
Innovations	Part of vision of institution to be strong in innovations; professional staff
Small institution	Not too big – staff has a sense of belonging
Diverse staff and student components	Bring richness of culture, knowledge
Excellent benefits (salaries, leave, pension)	Attract quality staff; staff more likely to stay
Open, transparent culture	Creates trust; strengthens sense of belonging
Physical location	In heart of Free State Province; attracts students from various provinces; we can make a difference here
Open-door policy of management	Improves transparency and trust
Our vision and support thereof by all staff	All moving towards the same goals; creates sense of belonging and sense of accomplishment for each milestone of the vision reached
Positive relations among colleagues	Positivity rubs off; sense of collegiality and belonging
Quality education we offer	Quality education leads to positive feedback from students, parents, community, and we continue to grow
Quality of our staff	Professional, knowledgeable staff leads to effective transfer of knowledge to students; more innovations

From the feedback provided by participants on completion of the AI workshop, it was clear that they believed that the organisation's successes - the things that were working well within the organisation - could be augmented through AI (see 2.2.4; 3.3.4; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1 - 3.4.1.5; 3.4.2 - 3.4.3; 4.3.2.1).

5.2.3 Existing strengths pertaining to staff's well-being, and how those strengths can be related to theories on staff well-being

During the Dream phase of the AI workshop, participants had to focus on the strengths of the organisation, and they had to choose the positive themes that formed the positive core of the organisation (see 4.3.2.3). The themes that were chosen are summarised in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Themes/positive core/strengths of the organisation

Themes/positive core of organisation	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Hard-working, dedicated staff	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Staff willing to go the extra mile	See 2.3.2.3; Annexure A
Positive relationships among colleagues	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Willingness of staff to adapt to change	See 2.3.2.3
Institution offers "value for work" (good remuneration and benefits)	See 2.3.2.7; 2.3.2.10; 2.3.6.4; Annexure A
Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates	See 2.1.1; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.6; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.3 - 2.3.6.4; Annexure A)
Job security	See 2.3.2.1; 2.3.6.4
Supportive work environment	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A

The above-mentioned identified strengths of the organisation, as related to the well-being of support services staff, are confirmed by theories on staff well-being. For instance, Maslow's self-actualisation theory (1943) entails that all people have physiological needs; a need for safety; a need for love, affection and belonging; a need for esteem and a need for self-actualisation (see 2.2.1). The themes 'Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates' and 'Positive relations between colleagues' link with the element of a need for belonging as identified by Maslow (1943; see 2.2.1). Herzberg *et al.*'s job satisfaction theory (1957; see 2.2.2) identifies various factors contributing to job satisfaction, including job security, positive relations among colleagues, good remuneration and benefits, a supportive work environment, and dedication – all themes that came forth from my empirical research (see 4.3.2.1 - 4.3.2.4). Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1985) recognises the importance of integration with others – thus showing resemblance with the themes 'Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates' and 'Positive relations among colleagues' (see 2.2.3; 4.3.2.2). Cooperrider's AI theory (1987; see 2.2.4), focusing on feeling valued and appreciated, shows resemblance with the element of 'belonging' as identified by Maslow (see 2.2.1), and focuses on the power of the positive and being appreciative – thus linking with the themes 'Positive, supportive relations between supervisors and subordinates', and 'Supportive work environment' (see 4.3.2.2; Table 5.2 above).

The positive psychology theory (Seligman 1998) focuses on all factors that enable people and societies to flourish, and therefore also links with the positive principles and focus of AI theory (see 2.2.5; 3.3.4). Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (1998, in Fredrickson 2001), Keyes's flourishing theory (2002), Seligman's authentic happiness theory (2002) and his well-being theory (Seligman 2011) also focus on the positive effects that positive experiences and emotions have on the lives of people (Fredrickson 2001:218) – thus showing resemblance with the theme "Positive, supportive relations" as identified in this report (see 2.2.5; 4.3.2.2, Table 4.10; 5.2.3, Table 5.2.).

The study conducted by Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) revealed that academics were more dedicated when they had sufficient organisational support – irrespective of whether they experienced low, moderate or high job demands (Rothmann and Jordaan 2006:94; see 2.3.2.2; Annexure A). Their research thus confirms the themes of "Hard-working, dedicated staff" and "Willingness to go the extra mile", as identified in this study (see 2.3.2.2). Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) recommend that more research should be done pertaining to the positive aspects of human behaviour in the work context, as "too much attention has been paid to unhealthy and dysfunctional aspects" (Rothmann and Jordaan 2006:95; see 2.3.2.2; Annexure A). Consequently, I attempted to address this gap by focusing on using AI as a well-being theory and research method (see 2.2.4; 3.3.4).

Theron *et al.* (2014) studied the retention factors of academic staff in the South African context. Their study confirms that dissatisfaction with compensation and performance management practices are important factors influencing turnover and retention of academic staff (see 2.3.2.7; Annexure A). Thus, there is also a positive link between the findings of their study and the theme "Institution offers 'value for work', good remuneration and benefits", as identified in my study.

5.2.4 Positive developments support services staff members would like to see in order to enhance their well-being

According to the empirical research conducted (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.8; Table 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11), the support services participants regarded the aspects included in Table 5.3 as the aspects they felt would enhance their well-being (as confirmed during my literature control):

Table 5.3   Positive developments required for improved well-being (see 4.3.2.1, Tables 4.8 - 4.9; Table 4.11)

Factors that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component	Confirmed by literature (cross-references provided as proof of literature control)
Value and acknowledge contributions made by support services staff	See 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A
Equality between academics and support services staff	See 2.3.2.10; Annexure A
An adequate number of staff to do the work (resources)	See 2.1.1; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1 - 2.3.6.2; Annexure A
Manageable workloads	See 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.11
Addressing well-being of staff in totality (physically, psychologically, emotionally) – more support from HR, the Wellness Section, etc.	See 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.6
Opportunities for promotion for support services staff	See 2.3.2.9; Annexure A
Dispelling all negativity at the institution (cultivation of positive mind-sets)	See 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

The answer to the fifth secondary research question for this study formed the basis for the recommendations that are made in section 5.3.1 below. Recommendations for future research are also made in section 5.3.2.

5.3.1 How support services staff's well-being might be enhanced in future

Ensuing from the empirical research conducted on the well-being of support services staff at an HEI, current theories on staff well-being (Keyes 2002; Cooperrider *et al.* *2008;* Seligman 2011); and my literature review on staff well-being, the following recommendations are made towards the enhancement of support services staff's well-being:

5.3.1.1 *Recommendations to the institution's management*

Emanating from the findings of the empirical research that was conducted, and the hopes, dreams and expressed by the support services staff members who participated in the study, the following recommendations are made to the institution's management towards establishing a flourishing support services staff component at the institution:

- To address the matter of inequality between support services and academic staff, it is recommended that management holds a workshop with support services staff, to engage on ways of establishing equality between academic and support services staff – amongst others pertaining to the number of days' leave per year, sabbatical leave for support staff, etc. Furthermore, equality should be established by creating opportunities and avenues for promotion for support services staff, similar to the existing promotional opportunities for academic staff, as became evident from the empirical research findings (see 2.3.2.10; Annexure A; 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.8; Table 4.9; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

- It is recommended that an AI workshop be offered to senior management and support services staff managers, with the aim of creating awareness on the power of appreciation, and how to establish a culture of appreciation at the institution. Furthermore, it is recommended that, upon completion of the AI

workshop for managers of support services staff divisions, all support services staff should attend similar AI workshops. By doing so, a culture of appreciation would be established at the institution (see 1.2; 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.4; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.11; 2.3.2; 2.3.4 - 2.3.5; Annexure A). Finally, it is recommended that top management/managers should make a special effort to make support service staff feel valued, for example by a special ceremony where their achievements are recognised and celebrated. Promotions, achievements and other remarkable actions might be announced in special newsletters and/or during faculty board/departmental meetings as part of the announcements made at such meetings.

The above recommendations emanate from the fact that participants expressed the wish to receive sufficient recognition and appreciation for their work, talents and capabilities. They felt strongly that, should the organisation begin to respect them and realise and acknowledge their value, they would become a flourishing support services staff component, and that it would lead to renewed loyalty and commitment towards the organisation (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.4; Table 4.7; Table 4.8; Table 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).).

- It is recommended that management investigate the staffing of all support services staff divisions to determine if and where divisions are understaffed, and to appoint sufficient support services staff to deliver a quality service. It is further recommended that all vacant support services staff positions be filled as a matter of urgency (see 1.2; 2.1.1; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.2; Annexure A; 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.7 – 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

The matter of limited human resources also featured during the climate survey that was conducted at the institution in 2013 (see 1.2). Participants indicated that high job demands and a lack of sufficient staff in some divisions hampered the outputs of those divisions, and that it had a detrimental effect on support

services staff's levels of job satisfaction, absenteeism and retention, amongst others (Table 4.1; Table 4.7 – 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

- It is recommended that the review process of all institutional policies and procedures be speeded up, and that regular awareness sessions on all institutional policies and procedures should be offered to all staff of the institution (see 1.2; 4.3.2.1. Table 4.9). Furthermore, it is recommended that cumbersome procedures and processes at the institution should be replaced by more efficient online systems and processes.

  The above recommendations are made, since participants expressed the need for simplified processes and systems at the institution. They indicated that there is too much 'red tape' (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.9). The aspect of improved policies and procedures – one aspect of institutional systems – was also indicated as a problematic area during the climate survey conducted at the institution (see 1.2), and is hence strengthened by this research.

- Since support services staff expressed the need for improved facilities for staff and students (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3), it is recommended that the institution budget for the enhancement of the total well-being of its staff (see 2.1.1 - 2.1.2; 2.2.5 - 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.2.6; 2.3.2.8; Annexure A). This could include upgraded cafeterias providing healthy meals made available on campus, more wellness-related programmes and services offered to staff, as well as medical and gymnasium facilities on campus for staff.

- It is recommended that the institution pay serious attention to the determination by management and supervisors of fair workloads for support services staff. This might include a review of the job descriptions of all support services staff.

The above recommendation is made, since support services staff stated that their workloads often were not manageable (see 2.3; 2.3.2.2; 2.3.2.5; 2.3.2.11; 4.3.2.1; Table 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3). This affects their morale and also leads to challenges such as absenteeism, falling ill due to stress and an inability to cope with the heavy workload (see Table 4.9; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

- It is recommended that the ideas of support services staff towards establishing meaningful work should be further explored by management. It is further recommended that the institution encourage line managers to determine during application reviews what a staff member regards as meaningful work, and appoint staff members to whom they might be able to offer 'meaningful work' (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.2; Table 4.5; Table 4.7; 5.3.1.1; Table 5.3).

It became evident from the empirical research conducted that, since support services staff spend many hours per day at work, it is inevitable that their work will impact on their experience of a meaningful life, and hence opportunities for the meaningfulness or purposefulness of the work performed should be created (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.2; Table 4.5; Table 4.7; 5.3.1.1; Table 5.3).

- It is recommended that a positive culture should be created at the institution by doing more of the things that are working well (see Table 5.1), and by conducting regular sensitising sessions, for example using experts to present AI sessions to selected groups of participants (see 2.1.2; 2.2.5 - 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A; 3.4; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.2.4; 3.4.3.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3). This finding emanated from the AI workshop that was conducted (see Table 4.11), and it is in agreement with the aspect of culture and work environment that emerged as a problematic area during the climate survey conducted at the institution (see 1.2).

- It is recommended that an investigation ought to be launched into the current promotion opportunities for support staff. Specific criteria for promotions should be determined and communicated to all staff to ensure that academic and support staff can gain clarity about the performance expected before being promoted (see 2.3.2.9; Annexure A; 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.8; Table 4.9; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

  Opportunities for growth were also indicated as an area requiring improvement during the 2013 institutional climate survey conducted at the institution (see 1.2). During the AI workshop that was conducted, support services staff stated that they would be more engaged in their work and more likely to stay with the institution if attention were to be given to the lack of promotion opportunities that exist for support staff (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.8; Table 4.9; 5.2.4; Table 5.3). This is also linked to the principle of equality as indicated under the first recommendation made in this section (see first bullet, 5.3.1.1).

- It is recommended that AI be used as a transformative tool in enhancing the well-being of support services staff (see 2.2.4; 2.3.2.9; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.1.1; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.1.3; 3.4.1.4; 3.4.1.5; Annexure A). Extremely positive feedback was received from participants on the AI workshop and how it could be used more extensively within the higher education environment to bring about change by focusing on the positive, instead of conducting typical climate surveys aimed at focusing on problems that exist within the organisation (see 4.3.2.4).

- A final recommendation to management is that trust at the institution needs to be improved. This entails that actions should go along with words (see 4.3.2.1; Table 4.1; Table 4.2; Table 4.7; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11). It is recommended that staff members be provided opportunities to meet more often at informal occasions where they could get to know staff from other levels/departments and that they should have opportunities to learn about the special talents of their fellow-workers. 'One cannot love what one does not know.' Mutual trust leads

to improved relations between support services staff and academics, as well as between support services staff and their supervisors and management (see 2.3.2.2 - 2.3.2.4; 2.3.2.8; 2.3.4; Annexure A).

This recommendation emanates from the AI workshop that was conducted, where support services staff indicated that they would be more willing to go the extra mile and would be more engaged in organisational activities if they felt that they were trusted (see 4.3.2.1; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.1; Table 4.2; Table 4.7; Table 4.11).

5.3.1.2   Recommendations for managers of academic and support services staff of the institution

- It is recommended that the institution should endeavour to have mass staff meetings where the positive propositions as in AI are emphasised by top structure, staff are recognised for their role in achieving these, and invited to make recommendations to their managers/top structure about these positive aspects that might be augmented. A weekly/fortnightly letter to staff (electronic newsletter) may also be used for such a purpose. The writers of these letters may alternate between senior academic and senior support staff members. Even junior staff members may be invited to take responsibility for this *positive proposition of the week*. All staff thus can become involved and be motivated to work together to improve the organisational culture, and to cultivate positive mind-sets, as much more can be accomplished by focusing on what is working well in the organisation, and on the positive, than by focusing on the negative (see 2.1.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6; 2.2.9; 2.3.2.4; 2.3.4; 2.3.6.1; 2.3.6.5; Annexure A; 3.4; 3.4.1.2; 3.4.3.4; 4.3.2.4; Table 4.11; 5.2.4; Table 5.3).

5.3.2 Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of this report, the following recommendations for future research are made:

- Since this study was only limited to 20 support services staff members of the particular HEI, the transferability of this research would be increased by doing a similar study across a larger sample of support services staff from various HEIs.

- Research samples should include both academic and support services staff to gain an idea of the factors influencing the well-being of all HEI staff.

- Similar studies should be conducted at other HEIs to test the validity of the research findings.
- AI should be explored by HEIs as a method of bringing about organisational change and improving the well-being of its academic and support services staff.

- Since AI has a positive focus and values the inputs made by all participants during AI summits/workshops, and since AI uses the positive core of organisations to build upon towards desired results, it should be further explored for bringing about desired change in terms of organisational structures, functions, organisational climate changes, and improving the well-being of all HEI staff and management.

- It is further recommended that AI be used increasingly as research method in HE-related studies, as a result of its appreciative focus and the fact the participants do not easily feel threatened in an AI set-up.

However, it is acknowledged that other methods of investigating the well-being of HEI staff (other than AI) should be further explored.

5.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of a study relate to factors such as the theoretical framework underpinning the study, the research methodology, research participants and the data collection techniques used.

I believe the following limitations applied to this study, and therefore should be reflected:

- The limited sample size (see 1.6.2; 3.5; 3.5.1).
- Participants were limited to support services staff members on only one of the campuses of the particular HEI (see 1.2; 1.3; 1.6.2; 3.5.1).
- The lack of existing research related to the well-being of support services staff members of HEIs (see 1.2; 2.3.2.7; 2.3.3).
- The fact that only a four-hour AI workshop could be conducted for the empirical research (see 3.5.1).

5.4.1   Sample size

The sample size was limited to 20 conveniently, purposefully selected support services staff members of the one campus of the particular HEI, as a result of the fact that only a four-hour AI workshop could be conducted, and that the available venue could seat a maximum of approximately 30 people. It is, however, worth mentioning that the participants were all information-rich individuals, and that they were selected with maximum variation in mind pertaining to race, age, post level and number of years' service at the institution (see 1.6.2; 3.5; 3.5.1). Furthermore, Durrheim (in Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:49) proposes that in interpretive, qualitative research, samples should consist of smaller groups. Hence, the sample size of this research also could be regarded as an advantage, as interpretive, qualitative research was conducted within the research paradigm of social constructionism (see 3.3.1; 3.5.1; 3.8).

5.4.2 Participants limited to support services staff members of the particular HEI

Due to financial and physical constraints the research participants were limited to support services staff members on only one of the campuses of the particular HEI. From the literature review conducted for purposes of this study, it became evident that there is much research pertaining to academic staff members of HEIs, but not pertaining to support services staff members of HEIs, or their well-being. Hence, this study, although limited to support services staff members on only one of the campuses of an HEI, attempted to address a gap in the current research available pertaining to the well-being of support services staff of HEIs (see 1.2; 1.3; 1.6.2; 3.5.1). Hence, the transferability of this study is limited; however, this was not the main purpose of the research conducted (see 3.11.2).

5.4.3 Availability of existing research related to the well-being of support services staff members of HEIs

As indicated in 5.4.2 above, there is limited research available related to support services staff of HEIs, or their well-being. However, rich information was available pertaining to theories on staff well-being that could also be applied to this study; and also on staff well-being in general. Part of the reason for conducting this research was because I identified a gap in available research on the well-being of support services staff, and this study was aimed at addressing that gap (see 1.2; 2.3.2.7; 2.3.3).

5.4.4 Length of the AI workshop conducted

As stated in section 5.4, the AI workshop conducted for the empirical research was limited to four hours, since I could only have the participants to participate in the

research workshop for half a day, so as not to disturb their normal work and activities within the higher education institution under research. During a typical AI summit, a day is spent on each of the AI phases (namely Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) (see 3.4.4). Due to institutional constraint, I had no other choice than to settle for an AI workshop done over only half a work day of 4 hours (see 3.4.4).

Although a typical five-day summit was not conducted in this research, the reported benefits of AI summits were still experienced during the AI workshop (see 3.4.4). The positive core of the organisation was explored (see 4.3.2.2; Table 4.10), with a focus on the organisation's strengths pertaining to the well-being of support services staff. Participants became aware of the importance of their own contributions towards a flourishing organisation, and were inspired. They assisted in envisioning positive change within the organisation by realising that they should become the change they wish to see in the institution (see 3.4.4; 4.3.2.4).

5.5   FINAL SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

It is evident from this research and the literature review that was conducted that staff well-being remains a very relevant topic in today's society, and that it affects organisations at all levels. The benefits of staff experiencing optimal well-being are numerous, and organisations can only benefit from having flourishing staff components. Support services staff members form an integral part of HEIs, and also affect the outputs of HEIs in various ways. Hence, more should be done by HEIs to improve the well-being of their support services staff component.

The conclusions emanating from the empirical study indicate that there are 'things' working well within the organisation, and that the organisation should continue to do more of those, including being an engaged institution; the strength of its innovations; the remuneration and benefits offered to staff; the culture of openness and transparency that exists; positive relations between colleagues; quality education

offered, quality of its staff, etc. (see 5.2.2 - 5.2.3). Positive developments were identified by support services staff that would enhance their well-being, namely being valued and appreciated; the acknowledgement of their contributions; equality between academics and support services staff; sufficient human resources to be made available to ensure fair task distribution; opportunities for promotion for support services staff to be established; negativity at the institution to be dispelled; etc. (see 5.2.4). These identified aspects pertaining to the strengths of the organisation and the positive developments identified by research participants during the AI workshop form part of the recommendations made in sections 5.3 and 5.3.1. These recommendations towards the enhanced well-being of support services staff of the particular HEI will be made available to the management of the institution for consideration for implementation.

This study explored how AI could be used as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at a selected HEI. From the empirical research findings, it became evident that AI, with its focus on identifying the strengths and the positive core of organisations, can be an effective tool in transforming organisations by improving the well-being of staff.

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ANNEXURE A

GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW ON STAFF WELL-BEING

ELEMENTS / CAUSES OF WELL-BEING	AUTHOR/RESEARCHER(S) (also see Bibliography)
Sense of belonging	• Maslow (1943, 1962) • Baumeister and Leary (1995) • Dunlap (2004) • Nadler, Malloy and Fisher (2008) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) • Seligman (2002) • Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005) • Seligman (2011)
Feeling valued/appreciated	• Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) • Hammond (1998) • Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) • Ludema, Cooperrider, Barret (2001) • Busche (2001; 2007) • Cooperrider, Sorenson, Whitney and Yeager (2001) • Watkins and Mohr (2001) • Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom and Kaplan (2002) • Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003; 2010) • Ludema, Whitney, Mohr and Griffith (2003) • Powley, Fry, Barret and Bright (2004) • Dunlap (2004) • Barret and Fry (2005) • Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) • Kelm (2005) • Reed (2007) • Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara (2008) • Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) • Lewis (2008) • Chapman and White (2010) • Watkins (2010) • Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) • Zandee, Cooperrider and Avital (2010) • Bester (2011) • Gates (2012) • Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012)

Feeling motivated /job motivation	• Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson and Capwell (1957) • Ryan and Deci (2001) • Keyes (2003) • Kinicki and Kreitner (2007) • Van Lange, Kruglanski and Higgins (2012) • CUT (2013)
Empowerment	• Scott and Jaffe (1992) • Cloete, Crous and Scheepers (2002) • Stander and Rothmann (2010) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010)
Job security	• Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Stander and Rothmann (2010)
Job satisfaction	• Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson and Capwell (1957) • Williams and Anderson (1991) • Dwyer and Ganster (1991) • Cranny, Smith and Stone (1992) • Syptak, Marsland and Ulmer (1999) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Kahn and Juster (2002) • Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) • Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver (2006) • Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Kinicki and Kreitner (2007) • Buys and Rothmann (2010) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) • Upadhyah and Gupta (2012)
Happiness	• Diener (1984) • Ryff (1989) • Diener (2000) • Ryan and Deci (2000) • Seligman (2002) • Diener and Seligman (2002) • Uchida, Norasakkunkit, Kitayama (2004) • Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005) • Seligman (2011) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005) • Dunn and Dougherty (2008) • Field and Buitendach (2011)
Confidence	• Luthans (2002)
Gratefulness	• Seligman (2002) • Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005)

Vigour	• Rothmann and Jordaan (2006)
Dedication/passion	• Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly (2007)
Trust	• Dirks and Ferrin (2002) • Corbit and Maritz (2003) • Costa (2003) • Connell, Ferres, and Travaglione (2003)
Performance	• Upadhyay and Gupta (2012) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) • Bothma and Roodt (2012)
Productivity	• Keyes (2002) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010)
Organisational commitment/citizenship	• Williams and Anderson (1991) • Scott and Jaffe (1992) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers • Field and Buitendach (2011) • Beukes and Botha (2013) • Geldenhuys, Łaba and Venter (2014)
Morale	• Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) • Johnsrud (1996) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) • Ewton (2007) • Upadhyay and Gupta (2012) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) • Ngambi (2011) • Bothma and Roodt (2012) • CUT (2013) • Opie and Henn (2013)
Optimism	• Luthans (2002)
Improved longevity	• Fredrickson (2003) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005)

Staff retention	• Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Janas (2009) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) • Mendes and Stander (2011) • Bothma and Roodt (2012) • Opie and Henn (2013) • Robyn and Du Preez (2013) • Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014)
Improved creativity	• Fredrickson (2004) • Fredrickson and Lusada (2005)
Flourishing	• Rasmussen (1999) • Horwitz (2002) • Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) • Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh and Larkin (2003) • Shah and Marks (2004) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005) • Keyes (2002, 2003, 2005a and 2005b, 2010) • Keyes and Haidt (2003) • Dunn and Dougherty (2008) • Huppert and So (2009) • Ramones (2011) • Seligman (2011)

Positive emotions	- Isen (1990) - Fredrickson and Levenson (1998) - Seligman (1998) - Luthans (2002) - Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom and Kaplan (2002) - Seligman (2002, 2011) - Fredrickson (2001) - Fredrickson and Branigan (2001) - Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) - Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) - Seligman (2002) - Fredrickson (2003) - Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh and Larkin (2003) - Fredrickson (2004) - Fredrickson and Branigan (2005) - Seligman, Steen, Park en Peterson (2005) - Fredrickson and Losada (2005) - Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) - Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara (2008) - Fredrickson (2009) - Lopez (2009) - Snyder, Lopez, Pedrotti (2011) - Seligman (2011)

Engagement/living an engaged life(work/personal/hobbies)	• Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 • Kahn (1990) • Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) • Martin (1995) • Heil, Bennis and Stephens (2000) • Winter, Taylor, Sarros (2000) • Kahn and Juster (2002) • Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma and Bakker (2002) • Keyes (2002; 2003) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005) • Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara (2008) • Seligman (2002, 2011) • Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) • Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) • Buys and Rothman (2010) • Stander and Rothmann (2010) • De Braine and Roodt (2011) • Field and Buitendach (2011) • Mendes and Stander (2011) • Upadhyay and Gupta (2012) • Bothma and Roodt (2012) • Opie and Henn (2013) • Beukes and Botha (2013) • Geldenhuys, Łaba and Venter (2014)
Relationships (social interaction)	• Fredrickson (2002) • Seligman (2011) • CUT (2013)
Meaningful life/work (calling/serving something bigger than the 'self')	• Isaksen (2000) • Winter, Taylor and Sarros (2000) • Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver (2006) • Steger (2009) • Steger, Pickering, Shin and Dik (2010) • Ilardi (2010) • Seligman (2011) • Beukes and Botha (2013) • Geldenhuys, Łaba and Venter (2014)
Accomplishment	• Seligman (2011)

Generally improved well-being	• Ryan and Deci (2001) • Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff (2002) • Keyes (2002, 2003, 2005) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005) • Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) • Seligman (2002) • Seligman, Steen, Park en Peterson (2005) • Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern and Seligman (2011) • Seligman (2011)
Remuneration and fringe benefits	• Robyn and Du Preez (2013) • Theron, Barkhuizen and du Plessis (2014)
Job demands/resources	• Dwyer and Ganster (1991) • Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) • Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer and Schaufeli (2003) • Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) • Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver (2006) • Demerouti and Bakker (2011) • CUT (2013)
Equality	• South Africa (Republic) 1996 Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) • Commissie Gelijke Behandeling (2010)
Opportunities for promotion	• Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) • Robyn and Du Preez (2013) • CUT (2013) • Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014)
EFFECTS OF LACK OF WELL-BEING	**RESEARCHERS**
Burnout	• Firth and Britton (1989) • Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) • Van Emmerik (2002) • Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma and Bakker (2002) • Strumpfer (2003) • Barkhuizen, Hoole and Rothmann (2004) • Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) • Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) • Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010)

Depression	• Keyes (2002) • Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer and Schaufeli (2003) • Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005) • Ilardi (2010)
Absenteeism	• Firth and Britton (1989) • Dwyer and Ganster (1991) • Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) • Keyes (2002)
Lack of sense of coherence	• Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010)
Stress-related and other illnesses	• Griffeth and Hom (1995) • Horwittz (2002) • Fredrickson and Losada (2005) • Vasi, Ruiter, Van den Borne, Dumont and Reddy (2014)
High staff turnover	• Firth and Britton (1989) • Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) • Griffeth and Hom (1995) • Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) • Westover, Westover and Westover (2010) • Mendes and Stander (2011) • Bothma and Roodt (2012) • Robyn and Du Preez (2013) • Opie and Henn (2013) • Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014)

ANNEXURE B

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY WORKSHOP

TOPIC:

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL TOWARDS A FLOURISHING SUPPORT SERVICES STAFF COMPONENT AT [NAME OF INSTITUTION]

17 MARCH 2014

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI)

Introduction

Thank you so much for joining me for this workshop as part of my research! I believe everybody in this room desires to make a positive contribution towards [name of institution], or is already making a positive contribution towards [name of institution]; hence your willingness to participate in this research.

The aim of my research is exactly that: To make a positive contribution towards the well-being of the support services staff component at [name of institution]. The questions that you are about to answer are called Appreciative Questions, from a process called 'Appreciative Inquiry', as developed by David Cooperrider from the Western Case University. I'm going to ask you about times that you felt great and inspired here at [name of institution], and about positive things that happened at [name of institution] that you feel contributed towards the strength of this university, and towards a flourishing support services staff component.

The reason for focusing on support services staff is because there is currently a gap in existing research pertaining to the well-being of support services staff at higher education institutions in South Africa. Moreover, much of the research on the well-being of staff at higher education institutions is done by focusing on what the problems are at those institutions, and how to fix such problems.

In Appreciative Inquiry, the focus is on the positive things and strengths of an organisation; having positive conversations about those things, and using them as a basis to bring about desired change. The reason for this is because looking at what works well in our university is more motivating and effective than focusing on what is not working. Hence, instead of focusing on things at [name of institution] that are not working well – the problems – we will focus on the positive things here at [name of institution]; the things that are working well – our successes – not to 'pacify' you, but so that we can do more of those things. Appreciative Inquiry is a positive action research method. This Appreciative Inquiry Workshop thus is to help us flourish and thrive – and not only survive. Therefore, the best thing that you can do in the conversations to follow is to think about the positive things that you saw, heard of, or experienced here at [name of institution]. From the stories that we all will share, we will get ideas on what works, leading to the question, *"What do we have that we want more of?"* We shall then brainstorm in small groups and identify the topics that we believe are important. So, I invite you to be part of this journey, and to share your stories. By doing so, you will begin the process of bringing about a positive change for all of us here at [name of institution].

The information will be kept anonymous. The data that we gather will be categorised/grouped into themes. No names will be associated with the overall summary or report. Stories and quotes from interviews will not have names associated with them.

Opening

The first part in the AI cycle that we will follow, is what we refer to in AI as the '**Definition'** phase. As researcher, I have already defined the topic for our AI workshop, namely *AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]*. The next AI phase, is the **'Discovery'** phase, during which we shall discover the positive things and strengths of [name of institution]. We shall break up into pairs and have open, positive conversations around the questions that will be provided to you. For the first round, person A will be the scribe, writing down as much as possible about the stories told by person B. You will then swop, and person B will then be the scribe, writing down as much as possible about the stories told by person A. Be a good listener and value what the other person is sharing with you. Use the questions below to probe further:

- Can you tell me more?
- Why was that important to you?
- How did that affect you?
- What was your contribution?
- How did the organisation/your colleagues support you?
- How has it changed you?

Let the interviewee tell his/her story.

Take notes and listen for great quotes and stories.

Be genuinely interested about their experiences, thoughts and feelings. Some people will take longer to think about their answers. Allow time for silence.

If someone cannot or does not want to answer any of the questions, that is okay, let it go.

You will have 50 minutes in total for both of you to answer questions 1 to 6 (i.e. 25 minutes each).

After our discussions in pairs, we shall have small-group discussions of approximately 5 to 6 people in a group. Please appoint one person as scribe in your group, one person as group facilitator and one person as time keeper. You will be required to discuss and write down the things mentioned by the other person during your discussions that you appreciate most. Listen for a theme, an idea, or a concept present or defined in the story being told to you during the interview. From those things, we will then choose six themes, referred to as the 'positive core'. The themes that we've identified will be scored and presented in a dialogue session during the **'Dream'** phase to see if the group thinks these are important. During the 'Dream' phase, we shall dream about 'what might be', and eventually agree about our desired future. Each group will also design a collage from the top themes that we have identified during the "Dream" phase, and present it to the bigger group. The "Dream" phase will be followed by the **'Design'** phase, during which we shall determine "what should be" and agree

about the things to be put into place to make our dream come true; the principles that will ensure that we, as support services staff of [name of institution], will continue to flourish at the highest level possible. We will also come up with a provocative proposition – a metaphor – that defines us as support services staff at [name of institution]. During the last phase, called **'Destiny'**, we shall commit ourselves to do something that will contribute to a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution].

I shall use all the information gathered here today to make recommendations towards how we can deliver on our dream and create "what will be". The Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" model with our affirmative topic, *"AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]"*, is explained in the diagram below:

DEFINE
What is our purpose?
Creating the inquiry process.
Clarifying

DESTINY
What will be?
How to empower, learn and adjust/improvise.
Sustaining

TOPIC:

AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

DISCOVERY
What gives life?
The best of what is.
Appreciating

DESIGN
How can it be?
Determine the ideal.
Co-constructing

DREAM
What might be?
Imagine what the world is calling for.
Envisioning
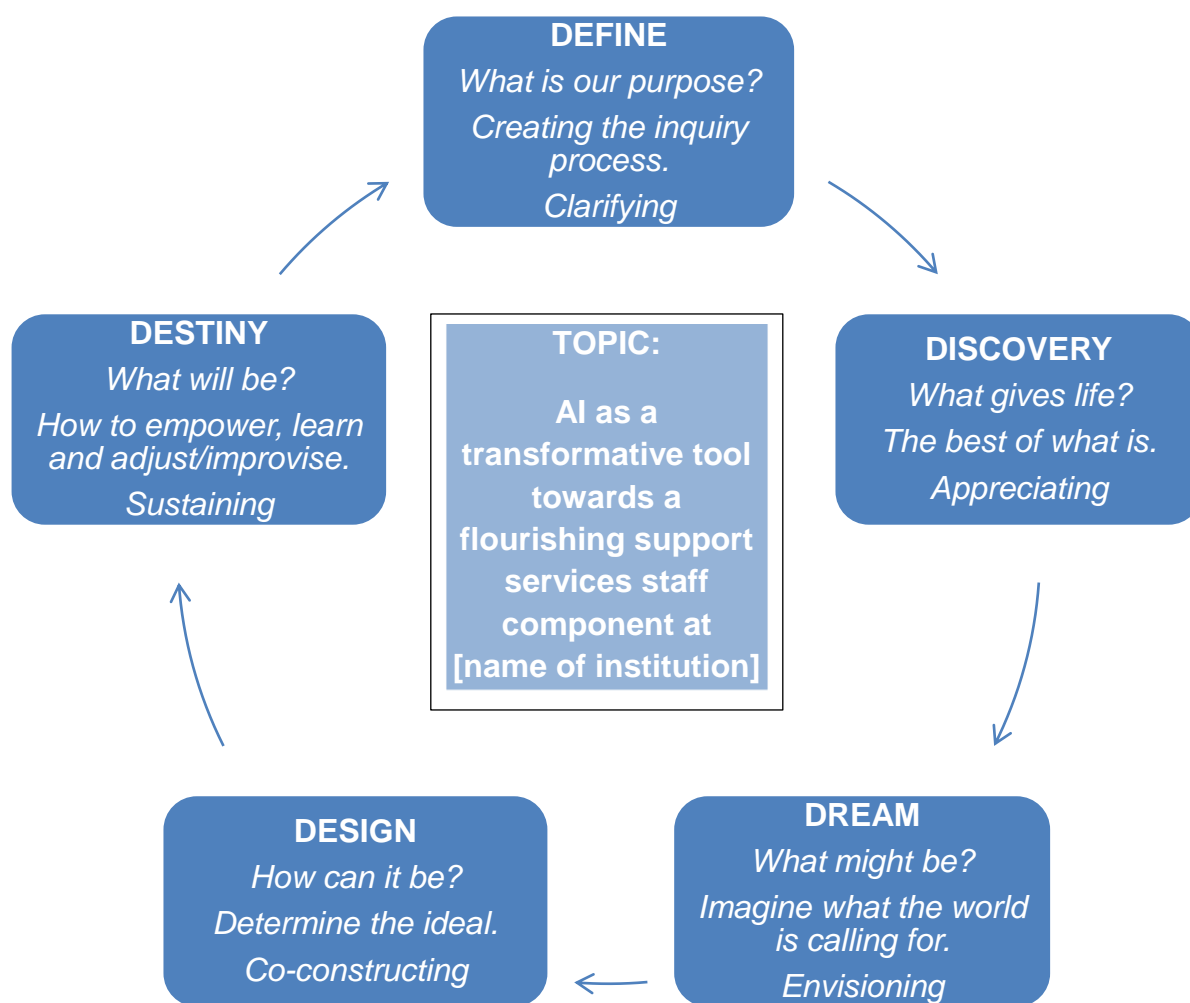
Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" Model: Adapted from Watkins & Mohr (2001)

DISCOVERY

NB: Time limit for questions 1 to 6: 50 minutes

Question 1

(i)   **Tell me about a time when you were flourishing here at [name of institution] – a time when you:**

- **experienced positive emotions; and**
- **felt most alive and engaged in your work here at [name of institution].**

……..………………………………………………………………………………………………..

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……..………………………………………………………………………………………………..

(ii)   **What was it about you, the situation and/or the leadership that allowed you to experience these positive emotions and to feel alive and engaged in your work here at [name of institution]?**

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……..…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Question 2

(a) **Describe or tell me about something that happened here at [name of institution] that made you feel appreciated or valued. How exactly did you feel? Why?**

…….…..……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…….…..……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…….…..…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…….…..……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…….…..……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

(b) **In your work relations here at [name of institution], what do you value most about:**

▪ Your work environment?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………….…………………………………………………..

▪ [Name of institution] as an employer?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

▪ Your colleagues/students?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

- Yourself as an employee?

………

………..

Question 3

(a)   What is the <u>one thing</u> that defines our [institution]/makes our [institution] unique?

……..………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……..……

……..………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……..……

(b)   Why does it (the one thing you mentioned in (a) above) contribute to you having a meaningful life here at [name of institution]? (I.e. explain why you feel this has changed your life here at [name of institution] for the better and why your life is more meaningful because of this).

……..………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……..……

……..………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……..……

Question 4

(a)   Describe your most extraordinary accomplishment (the best thing that you ever did), in your opinion, here at [name of institution].

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………..

(b)   What circumstances have contributed to this accomplishment/experience?

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Question 5

What is the <u>one</u> thing, in your opinion, that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component here at [name of institution]?

………..………………………………………………………………………………………

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………

………..…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Question 6

What are your wishes/hopes for our [institution]? Name three wishes, and substantiate why/give a reason why.

(i)…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………

(ii)…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………

(iii)…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Interview summary sheet

Name of Interviewer (your name): ………………………………….…………………

Date of interview: ……………………………………………………………………….

Interviewee's (person being interviewed) division: ……………………….…………….

Number of years' service at [name of institution]: …………………………..…………….

1.   What were the two (2) best stories that you've heard today?

…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…….…………………………………………………………………………………………………

POSITIVE THEMES

The 8 (eight) themes that represent the positive core of [name of institution] are:

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

➢ ....

DREAM

Dream activity

"Allow yourself to dream and you will discover that destiny is yours to design." – Jackie Stavros

It is three years from now. You are fulfilled in your work environment; you experience optimal well-being; you are flourishing here at [name of institution].

Take the positive themes that we have identified into this future. Use these themes to design a collage, in your groups, that you feel is a visual representation of these themes.

Upon completion of the collage, one person from each group will present the collage to all of us, describing the situation and the opportunities that support services staff members of [name of institution] have seized in order to become flourishing individuals.

NB: Whilst in your groups, the scribe for the group must write down the situation and opportunities seized by support staff to become flourishing individuals in the space below.

<u>Situation and opportunities seized by support staff to become flourishing individuals:</u>

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

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………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

DESIGN

Design exercise

What is required to make our dream come true?

Be very practical and please describe in as much detail as possible.

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………………

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

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………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Provocative proposition

The metaphor that defines us (describes us) as support service staff at [name of institution] is:

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………………

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

………..………………………………………………………………………………………………

………..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

DESTINY

Destiny exercise

I commit myself to do the following in order to make [name of institution] support services staff members flourish:

……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

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……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Valuation (To be completed at the end of the AI Workshop by each individual):

What about the Appreciative Inquiry approach most enlivened you/what did it mean to you?

……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……….…………………………………………………………………………………………

……….……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……….…………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences, thoughts and feelings with me. I have learnt a lot about you and your positive experiences here at [name of institution], and also about the positive contributions that you've made at [name of institution], as well as your hopes and desires for a flourishing [name of institution].

Ms Laurika van Straaten

AI interview guide adapted from the generic AI questions (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005) and the *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* of Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros (2008). Seligman's "*flourishing*" principles according to the PERMA model (2011) were incorporated into the AI questions.

ANNEXURE C

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY WORKSHOP

TOPIC:

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL TOWARDS A FLOURISHING SUPPORT SERVICES STAFF COMPONENT AT [NAME OF INSTITUTION]

AI questions in English, Afrikaans and Sesotho

17 MARCH 2014

Question 1

(iii) **Tell me about a time when you were flourishing here at [name of institution] – a time when you:**

- **experienced positive emotions; and**
- **felt most alive and engaged in your work here at [name of institution].**

(iv) **What was it about you, the situation and/or the leadership that allowed you to experience these positive emotions, and to feel alive and engaged in your work here at [name of institution]?**

Vraag 1

(i) **Vertel my van 'n tyd toe jy hier by [naam van instelling] floreer het – 'n tyd toe jy:**

- **Positiewe emosies ervaar het; en**
- **Gevoel het jy lééf werklik en dat jy verbind is tot jou werk hier by [naam van instelling].**

(ii) **Wat was dit omtrent jou, die situasie en/of die leierskap wat jou in staat gestel het om hierdie positiewe emosies te ervaar, te lééf en verbind te wees tot jou werk hier by [naam van instelling]?**

Potso ya 1

(i) **Mpolelle ka nako eo dintho di neng di o tsamaela hantle o tswetsepele mona [lebitso la setheo] nakong eo o neng:**

- **o nale maikutlo a monate; ebile**
- **o ikutlwa o phetse hantle o le morolo, o etsa mosebetsi wa hao mona [lebitso la setheo].**

(ii) **Na e ne ele ka baka la hao, kapa ka baka la maemo/kapa boetapele tse entseng hore o be le maikutlo a na a nepahetseng, le hore o ikutlwe o phetse hantle ebile o ikakgetse ka matla mosebetsing wa hao mona [lebitso le setheo]?**

Question 2

(c) Describe or tell me about something that happened here at [name of institution] that made you feel appreciated or valued. How exactly did you feel? Why?

(d) In your work relations here at [name of institution], what do you value most about:

- Your work environment?
- [Name of institution] as an employer?
- Your colleagues/students?
- Yourself as an employee?

Vraag 2

(a) Beskryf of vertel my van iets wat hier by [naam van instelling] gebeur het wat jou laat voel het jy word waardeer of waardevol geag. Presies hoe het jy gevoel? Hoekom?

(b) In jou werksverhoudinge hier by [naam van instelling], wat waardeer jy die meeste omtrent:

- Jou werksomgewing?
- [Naam van instelling] as werkgewer?
- Jou kollegas/studente?
- Jouself as werknemer?

Potso ya 2

(a) Hlalosa kapa o mpolelle ka ntho e nngwe e etsahetseng mona [lebitso la setheo] moo o neng o ikutlwa o ananelwa o le bohlokwa. Hantle ntle o ne o ikutlwa jwang? Hobaneng?

(b) Kamanong tsa hao mona [lebitso la setheo], ke eng se bohlokwahadi mabapi le:

- Tikoloho ya moo o sebetsang?
- [Lebitso la setheo] jwaloka ramosebetsi?
- Basebetsi mmoho/baithuti
- Wena jwaloka mosebetsi?

Question 3

(c) What is the <u>one thing</u> that defines our [institution]/makes our [institution] unique?

(d) Why does it (the one thing you mentioned in (a) above) contribute to you having a meaningful life here at [name of institution]? (I.e. explain why you feel this has changed your life here at [name of institution] for the better, and why your life is more meaningful because of this).

Vraag 3

(a) Noem <u>een</u> ding wat kenmerkend is van ons [instelling]/wat ons [instelling] uniek maak?

(b) Waarom dra hierdie een ding wat jy in (a) hierbo genoem het, daartoe by dat jy 'n betekenisvolle lewe hier by [naam van instelling] kan lei? (Verduidelik hoekom jy voel hierdie een iets jou lewe hier by [naam van instelling] positief verander het, en hoekom jou lewe meer betekenisvol is as gevolg daarvan.

Potso 3

(a) Ke eng ntho <u>e le nngwe</u> e hlalosang [setheo sa rona]/e etsang [setheo sa rona] se ikgethang?

(b) Ke eng ntho eo o e boletseng ka hodimo ho (a) e nang le seabo e bakang hore o be le bophelo bo bohlokwa mona [lebitso la setheo]? (Mohlala: hlalosa hore na hobaneng o ikutlwa hore taba ena e fetotse bophelo ba hao mona [lebitso la setheo] e bo entse bo ntlafetseng; le hore hobaneng bophelo ba hao bo nale molemo ka baka la sena).

Question 4

(a)   Describe your most extraordinary accomplishment (the best thing that you ever did), in your opinion, here at [name of institution].

(b)   What circumstances have contributed to this accomplishment/experience?

Vraag 4

(c)   Beskryf jou mees uitsonderlike prestasie (die beste ding wat jy nog ooit gedoen het) hier by [naam van instelling].

(d)   Watter omstandighede het bygedra tot hierdie prestasie/?

Potso ya 4

(a)   Hlalosa phihlello ya hao e ikgethang (ntho e ntlehadi/bohlokwa haholo eo o kileng wa e etsa) ho ya ka maikutlo a hao mona [lebitso le setheo].

(b)   Ke maemo a fe a bapetseng karolo phihlellong ena/kapa boiphihlellong bona?

Question 5

What is the <u>one</u> thing, in your opinion, that would contribute to a flourishing support services staff component here at [name of institution]?

Vraag 5

Wat, volgens jou, is die <u>een</u> ding wat sal bydra tot 'n florerende ondersteuningsdiens-personeelkomponent hier by [naam van instelling]?

Potso ya 5

Ke ntho e feng <u>e le nngwe</u> ho ya ka maikutlo a hao, e ka bakang hore basebetsi ba tshehetso ba atlehe mona [lebitso la setheo]?

Question 6

What are your wishes/hopes for our [institution]? Name three wishes, and substantiate why/give a reason why.

Vraag 6

Wat is jou wense vir [naam van instelling]? Noem drie, en verduidelik hoekom/verstrek 'n rede hoekom.

Potso ya 6

Ke ditakalletso dife kapa tshepo eo o nang le yona ka asetheo sa rona? Bolela ditakalletso tse tharo, le hore o tlatselletse hore hobaneng o re jwalo/fana ka lebaka hobaneng.

The Interpreter and/or [name of staff member] will assist with interpreting any questions for the phases 'Dream', 'Design' and 'Destiny' from English into Sesotho.

Die tolk en/of [naam van personeellid] sal hulp verskaf met betrekking tot vertolking vanaf Engels na Sesotho tydens die fases '*Dream'*, '*Design'* en '*Destiny'.*

The workshop Facilitator will assist with interpreting any questions for the phases 'Dream', 'Design' and 'Destiny' from English into Afrikaans.

Die werkswinkel-fasiliteerder sal hulp verleen met betrekking tot vertolking vanaf Engels na Afrikaans tydens die fases '*Dream'*, '*Design'* en '*Destiny'.*

Toloko kapa [lebitso la mosebetsi] o tla thusa ka ho toloka dipotso tse ding le tse ding ho tswa ho Senyesemane ho ya ho Sesotho tse mabapi le mantswe ana, '*Toro', 'Betla'* le '*Leeto'.*

ANNEXURE D

Researcher:	Study leader:
Ms L van Straaten	Dr A du Plessis
Room 101	School of Higher Education Studies
ZR Mahabane Building	Winkie Direko Building
20 President Brand St.	UFS
[Name of institution]	
Tel. 27(0)51 507 3016	Tel. 27(0)51 401 3620
E-mail: lvstraat@cut.ac.za	E-mail: aventer@ufs.ac.za

2014-02-27

Invitation to participate in research project / informed consent

Dear Participant

I take pleasure in inviting you to participate in the following research project:

An appreciative inquiry of selected elements of staff well-being at a higher education institution

The research will be conducted as part of my studies for a master's degree in Higher Education.
It will entail appreciating the best of what we have at [name of institution] and focusing on those things that create an optimal working environment in which we, as [name of institution] support services staff, can flourish.

You are invited to participate in this research since you are a support services staff member at [name of institution]. I am conducting this study to determine what works well at [name of institution], why it is working well, and how that success can be extended through Appreciative Inquiry (AI). I therefore intend to discover existing and envisaged strengths pertaining to the well-being of support services staff members. I anticipate that valuable information will flow from the research, to such an extent that the well-being of support services staff will be enhanced.

I do not foresee any risks for participating staff members; however, should you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may withdraw from the research with immediate effect. Should any difficult personal issues arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to ensure that a qualified expert is contacted to assist you. Your participation is entirely voluntary and will be required only if and when your work schedule allows.

Please be assured that all data collected will be processed confidentially and reported anonymously – no names will be disclosed.

Yours sincerely

MS L VAN STRAATEN
Student number: 2011099955

Please complete and return this page to Ms L van Straaten, Room 101, ZR Mahabane Building. Keep the letter above for future reference.

Study: *An appreciative inquiry into of selected elements of staff well-being at a higher education institution*

Researcher: Ms L van Straaten

Your name and surname: …………………………………………………..

Age: ………………………….

Your contact number: …………………………………

Your email address: …………………………………..

I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the above-mentioned study.
I understand what the study involves, why I am participating and what the possible risks/benefits are.

I give the researcher permission to make use of the data collected from my participation, subject to the stipulations she has indicated in the above letter.

…………………………………….   …………………………

Signature   **Date**

ANNEXURE E

NOTES FOR APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY WORKSHOP:

MONDAY, 17 MARCH 2014

TOPIC:

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL TOWARDS A FLOURISHING SUPPORT SERVICES STAFF COMPONENT AT [name of institution]

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI)

Introduction

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this research project! I believe you desire to make a positive contribution towards [name of institution], or is already making a positive contribution towards [name of institution]; hence your willingness to participate in this research.

I would appreciate if you would be so kind as to reach through this material, in order for you to have some background of Appreciative Inquiry, and what we will be doing during the workshop. A hard copy of this document will also be sent to you via internal mail.

The aim of my research is to make a positive contribution towards the well-being of the support services staff component at [name of institution]. The questions that you are about to answer during the workshop of 17 March 2014 are called Appreciative Questions, from a process called "Appreciative Inquiry", as developed by David Cooperrider from Western Case University. I'm going to ask you about times that you felt great and inspired here at [name of institution], and about positive things that have happened at [name of institution] that you feel contribute towards the strength of this university, and towards a flourishing support services staff component.

The reason for focusing on support services staff is because there is currently a gap in existing research pertaining to the well-being of support services staff at higher education institutions in South Africa. Moreover, much of the research on the well-being of staff at higher education institutions are done by focusing on what the problems are at those institutions, and how to fix such problems.

In Appreciative Inquiry, the focus is on the positive things and strengths of an organisation; having positive conversations about those things, and using that as a basis to bring about desired change. The reason for this is because looking at what works well in our [institution] is more motivating and effective than focusing on what is not working. Hence, instead of focusing on things at [name of institution] that are not working well – the problems – we will focus on the positive things here at [name of institution]; the things that are working well – our successes – not to "pacify" you, but so that we can do more of that. Appreciative Inquiry is a positive action research method. This Appreciative Inquiry Workshop is thus to help us flourish and thrive – and not only survive. Therefore, the best thing that you can do in the conversations to follow is to think about the positive things that you have seen, heard of, or experienced here at [name of institution]. From the stories that we all will share, we will get ideas on what works, leading to the question, *"What do we have that we want more of?"* We shall then brainstorm in small groups and identify the topics that we believe are important. So, I invite you to be part of this journey, and to share your stories. By doing so, you will begin the process of bringing about a positive change for all of us here at [name of institution].

The information will be kept anonymous. The data that we gather will be categorised/grouped into themes. No names will be associated with the overall summary or report. Stories and quotes from interviews will not have names associated with them.

The Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" cycle

The first part in the AI cycle that we will follow, is what we refer to in AI as the **'Definition'** phase. As researcher, I have already defined the topic for our AI workshop, namely *"AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]"*. The next AI phase, is the **'Discovery'** phase, during which we will discover the positive things and strengths of [name of institution]. At the workshop, we shall break up in pairs of two and have open, positive conversations around the questions that will be provided to you. For the first round, person A will be the scribe, writing down as much as possible about the stories told by person B. You will then swop, and person B will then be the scribe, writing down as much as possible about the stories told by person A. Be a good listener and value what the other person is sharing with you. Use the questions below to probe further:

- Can you tell me more?
- Why was that important to you?
- How did that affect you?
- What was your contribution?
- How did the organisation/your colleagues support you?
- How has it changed you?

Let the interviewee tell his/her story.

Take notes and listen for great quotes and stories.

Be genuinely interested about their experiences, thoughts and feelings. Some people will take longer to think about their answers. Allow time for silence.
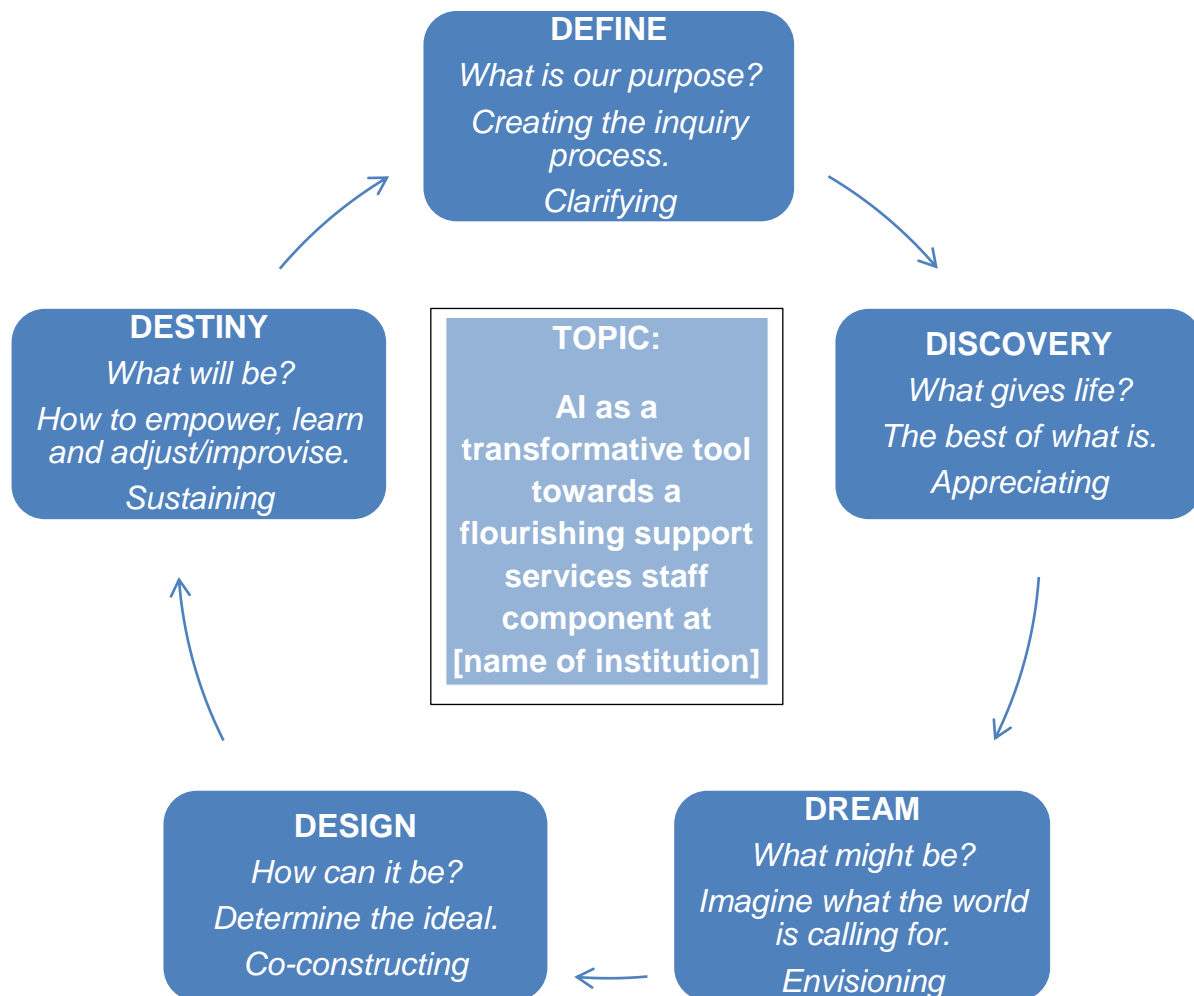
If someone cannot or does not want to answer any of the questions, that is okay, let it go.

You will have 45 minutes in total for both of you to answer questions 1 to 6.

After our discussions in pairs, we will have small group discussions of approximately 5 to 6 people in a group. Please appoint one person as scribe in your group, one person as group facilitator and one person as time keeper. You will be required to discuss and write down the things mentioned by the other person during your discussions that you appreciate most. Listen for a theme, an idea, or a concept present or defined in the story being told to you during the interview. From those things, we will then choose six themes, referred to as the "positive core". The themes that we've identified will be scored and presented in a dialogue session during the **'Dream'** phase to see if the group thinks these are important. During the

"Dream" phase, we will dream about "what might be" and eventually agree about our desired future. Each group will also design a collage from the top themes that we have identified during the "Dream" phase, and present it to the bigger group. The "Dream" phase will be followed by the **'Design'** phase, during which we will determine "what should be" and agree around the things to be put in place to make our dream come true; the principles that will ensure that we, as support services staff of [name of institution], will continue to flourish at the highest level possible. We will also come up with a provocative proposition – a metaphor – that defines us as support services staff at [name of institution]. During the last phase, called **'Destiny'**, we will commit ourselves to do something that will contribute to a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution].

I shall use all the information gathered during the workshop, with your valuable inputs, to make recommendations towards how we can deliver on our dream and create "what will be". The Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" model with our affirmative topic, *"AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]"*, is explained in the diagram below:

DEFINE
What is our purpose?
Creating the inquiry process.
Clarifying

DESTINY
What will be?
How to empower, learn and adjust/improvise.
Sustaining

TOPIC:
AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

DISCOVERY
What gives life?
The best of what is.
Appreciating

DESIGN
How can it be?
Determine the ideal.
Co-constructing

DREAM
What might be?
Imagine what the world is calling for.
Envisioning

Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" Model: Adapted from Watkins & Mohr (2001)

Meanwhile, should you wish to read more about Appreciative Inquiry, you can read more by following the link below, or any of the many other links on Appreciative Inquiry on the internet:

http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/comment.cfm

Looking forward to a productive workshop!

Once again, I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.

Kind regards

Ms Laurika van Straaten

Researcher

ANNEXURE F

Appreciative Inquiry

Theme: AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

Researcher:

Laurika van Straaten

March 2014

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1. Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry
2. What's different about AI
3. AI as research method / AI 5-D cycle:
   - Definition
   - Discovery
   - Dream
   - Design
   - Destiny
4. Aims of the study
5. Inquiry process
6. References

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

➤ THEORETICAL BASIS FOR STUDY:

- Cooperrider & Whitney (Appreciative Inquiry)(2005)
- In AI, we focus on POSITIVE things
- Existing STRENGTHS
- Use these as basis to bring about desired change

- Seligman (2003, 2005) – *"Flourishing"* model (PERMA Model)(related to well-being)
- To flourish in life, one should:
- (i) Experience Positive Emotions;
- (ii) Live and Engaged life;
- (iii) Have positive Relationships;
- (iv) Live a Meaningful life;
- (v) Have a level of Accomplishment

What's different about AI

- Purposefully positive (research proves that it is more effective and motivating to focus on what works well, than focusing on what is not working in an organisation, or in our lives.
- We want to discover how our positive past, the best of our experiences, can help us become a flourishing support services staff component; a flourishing organisation.
- Organisation is seen as the solution – not the problem.
- We will thus focus on the positive things we are experiencing at [name of institution] – the things we want more of - not to pacify us, but so we can do more of that.
- Highly participative process
- Nurtures positive "inner dialogue"
- Stimulate vision and creativity
- Accelerates change - AI can thus help us to flourish and thrive – and not only survive.

Appreciative Inquiry "5-D" Model: Adapted from Watkins & Mohr (2001)

AIMS OF THE STUDY

TO FIND OUT:

- ✓ What works well at [name of institution]
- ✓ Why it works well
- ✓ How the success can be extended through AI (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005:4)
- ✓ Make positive developments towards enhancing identified elements of staff's well-being
- ✓ Use the institution's vision to create the energy to drive change through AI (Watkins 2010: 3)

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Inquiry process

Conduct one-on-one conversations

➤ Share positive, exciting stories around the questions asked

Making meaning/reflections:

➤ Seek inspiration, not common ground (Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros: 2008: 76)

➤ Determine the necessary components of a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

➤ Interpret data & come up with themes

➤ From themes, we will identify the "positive core" of [name of institution]

➤ We will dream about our desired future, & design a framework towards our desired destiny

Meeting outcomes:

➤ Broad sharing of interview insights

➤ Data and themes gathered to be used by researcher to come up with recommendations towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

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ANNEXURE G

5-D Appreciative Inquiry Model applied

Theme: AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]

Researcher:
Laurika van Straaten
March 2014

DEFINITION

❑ Topic for our workshop has already been defined, namely:

❑ *"AI as a transformative tool towards a flourishing support services staff component at [name of institution]".*

❑ *Next step in AI 5-D model is called the Discovery phase.*

DISCOVERY

- During this phase, we will share stories about positive experiences we've had at [name of institution], and by doing so, discover the positive things and strengths of [name of institution].

- We will break up in pairs of two and have open, positive conversations around the questions that will be provided to you.
- For the first round, person A will be the scribe, writing down as much as possible about the stories told by person B.
- Then swop.
- Be a good listener and value what the other person in sharing with you.
- Please do not write in bullet format – write as much detail about the conversation as possible.

DISCOVERY

- Use the questions below to probe further:

  - Can you tell me more?/What was happening?
  - Why was that important to you?/What made it a great moment for you?
  - How did you feel? How did that affect you?
  - How did the organisation/your colleagues support you?
  - What were others doing that made it a great moment?
  - How has it changed your life?

DISCOVERY: ONE-ON-ONE SESSIONS

➤ Let the interviewee tell his/her story.
➤ Take notes and listen for great quotes or stories.
➤ Be genuinely interested about their experiences, thoughts and feelings.
➤ Some people will take longer to think about their answers. Allow time for silence.
➤ If someone cannot or does not want to answer any of the questions, that is okay, let it go.
➤ You have 50 minutes in total (25 minutes per person) to answer questions 1 to 6.

DISCOVERY: SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

➤ Appoint a person in group as scribe.
➤ Appoint another person in group as facilitator.
➤ Appoint another person in group as time keeper.
➤ In groups, discuss & scribe to write down the things that have been mentioned by the person you interviewed in your one-on-one sessions that you appreciate most.
➤ Another person in group to write about the interview with the scribe.
➤ Listen for a theme, an idea or a concept present or defined in the stories that were told to you during the interview.

DISCOVERY: SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

➤ Each group to decide on the two best stories that they've heard. Write it down on the interview summary sheet provided to you, and ALSO on the large sheet of paper, which we will stick on the wall for all to see.

➤ We will have 10 top stories.

➤ From those 10 top stories/things, we will choose **six** themes, referred to as the "positive core".

➤ NB: Group facilitators to assist workshop facilitator with this.

➤ The themes will be scored by each group by means of coloured, round stickers. (1 = top theme, 6 = last choice for theme).

➤ Comfort break: 5 minutes (whilst scoring is in process by workshop facilitator and group facilitators). Get tea/coffee & bring back to venue.

➤ After comfort break: Workshop facilitator to present 6 top themes to whole group to see if the bigger group thinks they are important.

DREAM PHASE

➤ We have shared stories about our positive experiences at [name of institution].

➤ From those, we have identified the top 6 themes = positive core of [name of institution].

➤ Look at question in dream phase. Discuss that.

DREAM ACTIVITY

- Dream activity/"energizing" activity: Small groups to make collage on one of positive themes identified.
- Scribe take notes on question/answer sheet.
- Group facilitator present collage to bigger group – two minutes each.

DESIGN PHASE

- During the 'Design' phase, groups will discuss and write down notes on the following question:
- "*What is required to make our dream come true?*"
- Be very practical and please describe in as much detail as possible.
- Scribes: Please write down notes on the question sheets provided to you.

DESIGN PHASE

- Provocative proposition:
- During the 'Design' phase, we all will agree on a provocative proposition – a metaphor that defines us/describes us as support services staff at [name of institution] (i.e. "[name of institution] is….").
- Scribes: Please write down your group's provocative proposition and present to bigger group on big sheet of paper.
- We will then agree on one provocative proposition for [name of institution] support services staff.

DESTINY PHASE

- Each person to write down on the question sheet provided to you:
- I commit myself to do the following in order to make [name of institution] support services staff members flourish: ………………………

VALUATION

- On completion of our workshop, please complete the valuation form – just one question, on the question sheet provided to you:
- What about the AI approach most enlivened you/what did it mean to you?

WORD OF APPRECIATION

- Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences, thoughts and feelings with me.
- I have learnt a lot about you and your positive experiences at [name of institution], and also about the positive contributions you've made at [name of institution], as well as your hopes and desires for a flourishing [name of institution].
- *NB: Please do not forget to hand in the AI interview guide and answer sheet that you have been provided with before you leave!*