The Facilitation of Multi-stakeholder Collaboration Addressing Wicked Problems Confronting Business:

Identifying Competencies of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Facilitators

by

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Date: March 2018

Abstract

Complex-adaptive challenges, known as wicked problems, are increasingly threatening economic, societal and ecological resilience. Businesses both contribute to and are affected by many wicked problems on a daily basis. Organisations cannot in isolation address wicked problems, resulting in calls for cross-sectoral collaboration. Prior research has established that collaborative multi-stakeholder processes can achieve collaborative advantage for participating stakeholders and society at large. However, less research has been conducted on how such collaborative processes can be facilitated and what competencies are required of a facilitator of such processes. My research sought to identify the competencies of a facilitator of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes addressing wicked problems.

I adopted a qualitative research approach applying grounded theory principles, informed by an interpretivist-constructionist research paradigm to answer my research questions. I gathered data through semi-structured interviews with experienced facilitators and drew on a literature study to compare and affirm interview findings against, as well as to identify other knowledge gaps.

I established that the facilitation processes consist of a primary and secondary process that is cumulatively best represented by Theory U's five-phases. Stakeholders, the facilitator and the process pose numerous risks to the successful outcomes of a collaborative process, but the risks are likely to vary subject to the problem domain context and the relevant stakeholders. I identified design, container building and holding, intentional communication, self-awareness, and capacitation as five key facilitator competencies, together with the underlying knowledge, skills, aptitudes and character traits that constitute these. Further research can be conducted to affirm and substantiate the competencies identified together with exploring the mechanisms by which such competencies can be developed.

Opsomming

Kompleks-aanpasbare uitdagings, beter bekend as "bose" probleme, bedreig toenemend ekonomiese, gemeenskaps-, en ekologiese aanpasbaarheid. Besighede dra by tot en word daagliks deur hierdie bose probleme geraak. Organisasies kan nie in afsondering hierdie bose probleme aanspreek nie, wat lei tot versoeke vir intersektorale samewerking. Bestaande navorsing het vasgestel dat samewerkende multi-belanghebbende prosesse samewerkende voordeel vir deelnemende belanghebbendes en die samelewing as geheel kan inhou. Daar is egter baie min navorsing gedoen oor hoe sulke samewerkingsprosesse gefasiliteer kan word, en oor watter bevoegdhede 'n fasiliteerder van sulke prosesse moet beskik. My navorsing het gepoog om die vaardighede waaroor 'n fasiliteerder van multi-belanghebbende medewerkende prosesse wat bose probleme aanspreek moet beskik, te identifiseer.

Ek het 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering aangewend wat beginsels van gegronde teorie toepas, met 'n interpreterende-konstruksionistiese navorsingsparadigma om my navorsingsvrae te beantwoord. Ek het data versamel deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met ervare fasiliteerders en ek het ook 'n literatuurstudie onderneem om die bevindinge te vergelyk en te bevestig, asook om verdere kennisgapings te identifiseer.

Ek het vasgestel dat die fasiliteringsprosesse bestaan uit primêre en sekondêre prosesse wat kumulatief die beste deur 'Theory U' se vyf fases verteenwoordig word. Belanghebbendes, die fasiliteerder, en die proses hou talle risiko's in vir die suksesvolle uitkomste van 'n samewerkingsproses, maar die risiko's sal waarskynlik wissel onderhewig aan die probleem-domein-konteks en die betrokke toepaslike belanghebbendes. Ek het ontwerp, 'container building' en 'holding', intensionele kommunikasie, selfbewustheid, en vaardigheid as vyf bevoegdhede van sleutelfasiliteerders, tesame met die onderliggende kennis, vaardighede, aanlegte, en karaktertrekke wat dit verteenwoordig, gebruik. Verdere navorsing kan gedoen word om die vaardighede wat geïdentifiseer is te bevestig, tesame met 'n ondersoek na die meganismes waardeur sulke vaardighede ontwikkel kan word.

Acknowledgements

Thank you very much to each of my study participants – without the generosity of your time and granting me the opportunity to dissect your 'day-jobs' this study would never have succeeded. Through your insight you have affirmed the *voices* in my head and together with Jess have contributed to an immensely rewarding personal journey. I hope I have done your craft justice!

Superwoman Jess, thank you are two very feeble words! Your persistent gentle guidance, knowing very-well that at times I am causing you great frustration, is heartily appreciated. I have learnt countless valuable lessons from you too. I hope the end product is something that you too are proud of as it was most certainly co-crafted. I will *eventually* learn to allow you to finish your sentence ☺

Charles daar is geen ander mens wie weet hoe baie ons moes op offer om hierdie M gedoen te kry nie. Jou onbaatsugtige opoffering en eindelose liefde en ondersteuning word inniglik baie waardeer. Hopelik sal ons nou jou houtwerk, vakansies en aftrede kan befonds!

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Never before has humanity been confronted with such a continuous onslaught of vastly diverse materialising risks. Figure 1 captures the greatest of these risks across all spheres of humanity – economic, social and environmental systems – in terms of likelihood and impact, as determined in 2017. Each of these risks represents 'wicked problems' rooted in systems that are in a state of near collapse (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Wahl & Baxter, 2008; Waddock, 2012; Gray & Stites, 2013). This onslaught of wicked problems each has a global and / or local impact across all aspects of business value chains, interrupting operations or threatening them as going-concerns. Business is, however, not blameless for the existence of many of these risks or rather wicked problems and should the root causes of many of them be mapped, business will prominently feature as a contributor (World Economic Forum, 2017). But what are such wicked problems?
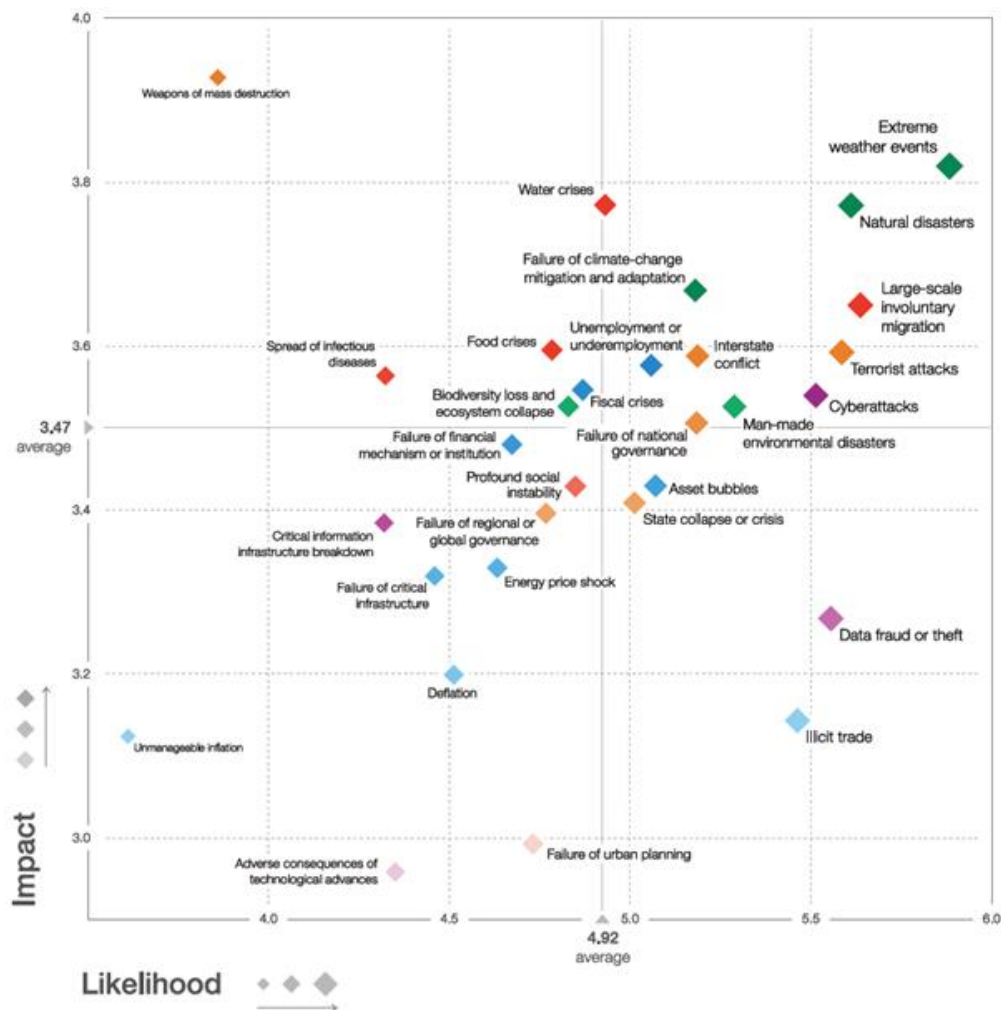
Figure 1: The Global Risks Landscape 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017:5)

1.1 Comprehending Wicked Problems

Wicked problems are defined as problems that involve many stakeholders with different values and priorities (Rittel, 1973). The roots of these problems are complex and encompass an evolving set of interlocking dynamic factors and constraints, with each problem being unique and novel. A wicked problem is difficult to come to terms with and with every attempt to address it, the problem evolves. There are no definitive solutions to the problem, merely 'tentative solutions' that improve or worsen the status quo of the problem domain (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Camillus, 2008). A simplified explanation of a problem domain is that it is a 'set of actors (individuals, groups and / or organisations) that become joined by a common problem or interest' (Gray, 1985:912).

As recognised by Gray (1985:914), 'many of these problems exceed the capability of any single firm to control' and 'attempts by individual organisations to manage such turbulence are maladaptive at the [problem] domain level because they are uncoordinated and often create unanticipated problems for other stakeholders'. This 'maladaptation' is further exacerbated by resource competition, given that the value system of one stakeholder is often promoted at the expense of another when attempting to address the problem in an isolated capacity. Given both the role of business in contributing to wicked problems and the impact of wicked problems on businesses going forward, how should these wicked problems be addressed?

1.2 Collaboration

In order to confront the 'complexly-interconnected system' which wicked problems are nested in, prior research suggests solutions must adopt the same multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, dynamic, interconnected nature of the problems (Wahl & Baxter, 2008:76).

Businesses that are affected by one or more wicked problems have often established participatory forums for stakeholders to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration, allowing for a 'broader knowledge base' to collectively and inclusively create an elevated level of thinking (Wahl & Baxter, 2008:76; Crous, 2011). As wicked problems involve multiple stakeholders, they also call for multiple stakeholders to be involved in co-creating possible solutions. Facilitators coordinating a collaborative process form 'work-groups' (Phillips & Phillips 1993:533) of stakeholders, defined as

'those people who have an interest in a particular decision either as individuals or representatives of a group' (Dodds and Benson, 2013:1). Representation within the work-groups is usually cross-sectoral including participants from business, government, non-governmental organisations and civil society (Gray & Stites, 2013).

Since the 1980s, there have been many calls for collaboration in solving such wicked problems (Gray, 1985; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; Bendell, Collins & Roper, 2010; Waddock, 2012) and a marked increase in collaborative engagements to the extent that:

> these multi-stakeholder partnerships have been called the 'collaboration paradigm of the 21st century', the 'new organisational zeitgeist in dealing with societal issues', and a stunning evolutionary change in institutional form of governance' (Gray & Stites, 2013:11).

The collaboration process strives to achieve collective decision making and actions taken to address the mutual problem domain between a 'set of actors' (Gray, 1985:912). In this study, I draw on a definition of collaboration as the 'pooling of appreciations and / or tangible resources, e.g. information, money, labour etc. by two or more stakeholders to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually' (Gray, 1985:912). Collaboration is both a process and an outcome, and I use the term interchangeably. I focus on inter-organisational collaboration as opposed to collaboration within a single organisation (intra-organisational). A problem domain ascribes to the definition of a wicked problem and includes various humanitarian and environmental crises such as water scarcity, food security, deforestation, AIDS, child labour and so on.

1.2.1 How to Successfully Achieve Collaboration

In his extensive research on collaboration, Huxham (2003) co-developed the theory that inter-organisational collaboration (namely multi-stakeholder collaboration) is driven by stakeholders hoping to harness 'collaborative advantage', while Phillips and Phillips (1993:538) contend that, 'under the right circumstance' collaboration amounts to a whole 'greater than the sum of its parts' with stakeholders attempting to capture these emergent synergies. Such emergent synergistic benefits could not be achieved by attempting to address the problem domain in isolation (Hardy, Lawrence & Grant, 2005). Collaboration also allows for risks, outcomes and accountability of shared

efforts to be assumed collectively (Gray & Stites, 2013). Huxham (2003:403), however, warns of possible 'collaborative inertia' within collaborations, when 'the output from collaborative arrangements often appears to be negligible or the rate of output is extremely slow'.

The objective of my research is to understand how facilitators can achieve collaborative advantage and mitigate the risks associated with collaborative inertia. The premise of my study is that facilitators need to have a good awareness of the phases inherent to collaboration processes, as well as of the risks associated with each phase. By studying how collaboration processes are facilitated, I undertake to identify the competencies that a facilitator may need to develop accordingly.

1.2.2 Collaboration, Facilitation and Dialogue

Collaboration has been explored through various lenses in research to date. Figure 2 summarises Dentoni and Ross's (2013) review of existing literature of 'when', 'which', 'why and 'how' multi-stakeholder collaborations are effective in dealing with wicked problems.
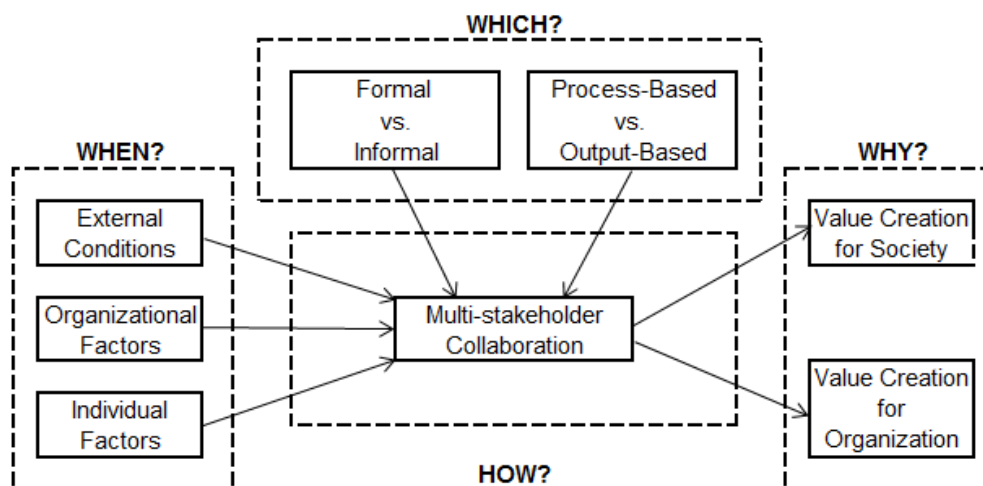
Figure 2: *When, Which, Why and How are multi-stakeholder collaborations effective in dealing with wicked problems?* (Dentoni & Ross, 2013:4)

'When' research has previously investigated the conditions internal and external to an organisation that would motivate participation in collaboration (Gray, 1985; Wood & Gray, 1991); 'which' research has sought to establish what type of governance

mechanisms would best accommodate the purpose of the collaboration (Roloff 2008; Rondinelli & London 2003; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos 2011) and 'why' research has examined the objectives motivating an organisation to enter into collaboration (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2013).

Scholars have also explored 'how' multi-stakeholder collaboration can effectively deal with wicked problems, but the findings are inconclusive (Dentoni & Ross, 2013). Most prior research has predominantly focused on either the governance frameworks of collaboration partnerships or is case-study orientated on successful or failed collaboration attempts (Gray, 1985; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Kanter, 1994; Huxham & Vangen, 2013).

Although less scholarly attention has been given to facilitation as being the mechanism that enables collaboration, considerable work has been published on dialogue which I consider relevant to this study. The concept of dialogue in the form it is used here 'arose out of series of conversations begun in 1983' and was first proposed by theoretical physicist David Bohm (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991:¶1-6). Bohm reasoned that humanity's though processes are fragmented (Bohm et al., 1991; Freeth & Annecke, 2016) and that it is this fragmentation of thought which interferes with our ability to meaningfully communicate and engage across the various spheres of society without it resulting in 'dispute, division and often violence' (Bohm et al., 1991:1). Dialogue provides a platform to examine the roots of the many present day humanitarian crises which Bohm et al. (1991) argues were caused by *this* fragmented thought.

Dialogue does not provide a solution to humanity's thought fragmentation, but rather is seen as a strategy that can induce an alternative 'condition of thought' (Isaacs, 1993b:30). Bohm explained that based on its origins, 'dia' and 'logos', the word dialogue can be understood as 'flow of meaning' (Isaacs, 1993b:25-26). He argued that by slowing down the flow of thoughts individuals and groups could better observe their fragmentation and the problems they generated (Bohm et al., 1991; Isaacs, 1993b; Freeth & Annecke, 2016). The slowing down of thought processes would thus enable the dismantling of entrenched mental positions and loosen the assumptions on which these are built (Burchell & Cook, 2008). How dialogue is able to achieve this will be extensively explored in the literature review.

Schein (1993:41) identifies the 'skill of dialogue … [as] one of the most fundamental' human skills to possess. This skill is an increasingly important one considering the shift in humanity to explore and resolve the increasingly complex problems (Payne & Calton, 2002). Freeth and Annecke (2016:369) agree with Schein, but rather refer to the skill as facilitation. Phillips and Phillips (1993:533) define facilitation as helping a 'work group' to develop a 'shared understanding of the issues' they are confronting; to identify a communal purpose, undertaking a joint commitment to take action; and to realise these objectives. Harvey, Loftus-Hills, Rycroft-Malone, Titchen, Kitson, McCormack, and Seers's (2002:579) definition emphasises helping as 'a technique by which on person makes things easier for others'. This definition is consistent with the Oxford English Dictionary – 'to make easier, to promote, to help forward, to lessen the labour of'. Harvey et al. (2002:579) further propose that these definitions suggest that facilitation 'is achieved by an individual carrying out a specific role (a facilitator), which aims to help others … [these] are individuals with the appropriate roles, skills and knowledge to help individuals, teams and organizations'.

While prior research has established why, when and which collaborative processes are undertaken in order to address wicked problems (Bendell et al, 2010, Dentoni and Ross, 2013), we know less about how a collaboration process is actually facilitated in practice, and what would be required of an individual to successfully facilitate it. The aim of my research is to address this gap and contribute to our understanding of the deemed competencies of a multi-stakeholder collaboration facilitator.

1.3 Problem Statement, Research Questions and Objectives

Collaboration offers a meaningful approach for organisations seeking to address wicked problems, yet we know little about the competencies required of an individual to facilitate such a collaborative process. My research therefore aims to understand:

i. What are the core components which could form part of successfully facilitated multi-stakeholder collaboration processes addressing wicked problems confronting business?

ii. What are the risks to facilitating such multi-stakeholder collaboration processes?

iii. What are the core competencies required of a facilitator in order to facilitate such a process?

iv.   How are these competencies developed?

By answering the above research questions, the objective of this study is to:

i.   Identify core components or phases of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes.
ii.   Identify risks to such multi-stakeholder collaboration processes.
iii. Identify core competencies required by multi-stakeholder collaboration facilitators.
iv.   Identify how these competencies can be developed or learnt by individuals.

1.4 Importance and Significance of the Research Problem

I undertook this research because of my personal interest in multi-stakeholder facilitation. I recognise the pressing need for such facilitators as well as their potential contribution in helping to address the wicked problems confronting humanity. I believe the findings will serve as guidance on how to steer my personal and professional development so I too can develop into a facilitator of such processes. I also hope that this research will clarify to other sustainable development graduates who are aspiring facilitators that developing the competencies to facilitate such processes is a life-long learning and development journey.

Furthermore, my research may provide further practical guidance and insight to organisations of the importance and relevance of an independent facilitator and the need for 'professional' facilitation when partaking in multi-stakeholder collaborative engagements.

Lastly, I endeavour for this research to highlight the importance of engaged scholarship in redressing gaps in research and for my research to contribute to the facilitation and collaboration discourse within academia.

1.5 Thesis Outline

My thesis proceeds as follows. In chapter two I conduct a literature review – I reference various discourses (collaboration, dialogue, psychology, transformative adult education, and various practitioner literature sources) to identify the core collaboration facilitation process components, key risks thereto and core

competencies of such facilitators. In chapter three, I outline my research design, data collection and analysis, and strategies to improve research rigour. In chapter four, I present my interview findings, in a manner consistent with the conceptual framework structure the research questions provide. I identify five core competencies (design, container building and holding, intentional communication, self-awareness, and capacitation) that are essential to a facilitator facilitating the core phases of the collaborative process whilst mitigating potential risks identified thereto. In chapter five I contrast my findings and literature, highlighting agreements and differences as well as discussing some of the implications for both academia and practitioners. Finally, in chapter six, I conclude my thesis with directions for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

I have structured my literature study using my research questions as a conceptual framework for exploring both academic and practitioner literatures. I first seek to identify the core components of a multi-stakeholder collaboration process. I examine how dialogue has been established as a foundation to facilitation followed by exploring the principles practitioners have used to extend the practice thereof. Drawing on arguments and conclusions within the literature, I answer my second research question by identifying risks to the process and other aspects of facilitation. From the aforementioned discussions, I am able to answer my third research question and identify competencies that a facilitator would need to possess in order to successfully facilitate such multi-stakeholder collaboration processes.

2.1 Question 1 – Process: Identifying Core components of multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Processes

Much has been written about the complex interdependencies of 21st century problems and the need for nurturing a broader spectrum of 'patterns of mind and consciousness to meet the demands' of these problems (Gunnlaugson, 2007:139). Indeed, mankind is being compelled to develop 'the capacity to think together to develop collaborative thought and coordinated action' (Isaacs, 1993b:24). Schamer (2006:7) presents that we are required 'to become aware and change the inner place from where we operate', and that this 'represents the only part of our common consciousness that we can have complete control of'. Transformation begins with the ability to see afresh, 'requiring suspension of preconceptions, of fear, of judgment and indeed, of thought as we commonly know it in the western traditions', but such suspension entails disorientating and potentially frightening personal work (Walker, n.d:3). Freeth and Annecke (2016:370) believe humanity then has to *pro-actively* disrupt these 'old patterns of thinking, seeing and being'.

Prior research has focused largely on the concept of *dialogue* and the transformation of 'habits of mind' (Mezirow, 1997), and less scholarly attention has been paid to facilitation. In this study, I focus on processes that have enabled mental transformation, which require individuals to be prompted or guided to ask very different questions of themselves to create a shift in mind-sets, elevating

consciousness and generating new insights – a *metanoia[1]-of-sorts.* I adopt this *metanoia-of-sorts* as my examination lens for my first research question, namely: what are the core components which form part of a successfully facilitated multi-stakeholder collaboration process addressing wicked problems confronting business?

I answer this question by first establishing a foundation based on Bohm's dialogue concept followed by integrating it with Transformative Adult Education literature, Theory U, generative dialogue and other common facilitation themes that emerge from literature. I conclude by transposing a synthesis of practitioner frameworks onto the facilitation principles established.

2.1.1 Bohmian Dialogue

In the past, collaborative processes have tried to reconcile stakeholders' various frames of reference using a 'contemporary science' lens. However, this approach has proven largely unsuccessful in addressing wicked problems, restricted by its reductionist perspective and its 'dogmatic adherence to a particular set of onto-epistemological assumptions'. (Wahl & Baxter, 2008:76).

Wahl and Baxter (2008:76) propose that dialogue provides a platform that enables the observation and exploration of the 'pluralism of perspectives' and the 'wisdom of many minds' in order to engage in the progression of human consciousness. It is a multi-faceted process which is not only concerned with 'conversational parlance and exchange' (Wahl & Baxter, 2008:76), but rather examines individual and collective 'feelings, emotions, intentions and desires', which constitute human thought (Bohm et al., 1991:¶2-2). As further explained by Diamond (in Burchell & Cook, 2008:37), the intention of dialogue 'is not to advocate, but to inquire, not to argue but to explore, [and] not to convince but to discover'.

Dialogue explores the mental modes (Schein, 1993:41) as well as the perspectives, culture and value systems of both individuals and organisations (Bohm et al., 1991). Dialogue attempts to invoke reflection on how these mental modes control or manipulate human behaviour, as well as how 'unnoticed cultural differences' can ignorantly cause conflict (Bohm et al., 1991:¶1-3). It also attempts to surface the

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[1] A fundamental change or transformation in mind, character or outlook; often associated with spiritual penitence

'hidden meaning of words', creating shared meaning and mutual understanding (Schein, 1993:41). Dialogue consequently facilitates a 'more progressive form of engagement and understanding' transcending traditional communication (Burchell & Cook, 2008:37; Schein, 1993). This collectively leads to the co-creation of shared knowledge and insight, creativity, innovation and a fellowship-of-sorts within the collaboration forum (Bohm et al., 1991; van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2008).

Dialogue can help humanity evolve the fragmented individual and collective thoughts that have led to socio-ecological devastation. Optimally facilitated dialogue has the ability to 'create more sustainable solutions' (Wahl & Baxter, 2008:76) stemming from a synthesis of inclusive, collective and integrative trans-disciplinary decision making. It is a process that allows for diverse constituencies to be brought together that are attempting to establish consensus on a 'complex, multifaceted and in some cases, divisive issue' (Dodds & Benson, 2013:1).

Dialogue can further help us gain insights into our perception of reality, a construct of 'concepts, memories and reflexes coloured by our personal needs, fears, and desires' and frames of reference (Bohm et al., 1991:¶2-3). By doing so, dialogue has the potential to redresses the 'mistaken belief that [our] perception of reality reflects reality and that there is only one true perspective' (Freeth & Annecke, 2016:372).

2.1.1.1 No goal or purpose

Bohm's original concept of dialogue was limited by its lack of apparent goal and 'detectable direction' (Bohm et al., 1991:¶4-2). This lack of guidance carried the risk of generating immense inner turmoil, frustration and anxiety (Bohm et al., 1991). To address this limitation, Phillips and Phillips (1993:58) explain that a facilitator would be present in initial phases to 'help the group manage its anxiety and frustration'.

2.1.1.2 Suspension

Dialogue has been established on the foundation of 'suspension'. Bohm et al. (1991) describe this seeming action as paying attention – observing and listening – to the emotions that are evoked within oneself when processing what others say. They explain that thought processes slow down when an individual pays attention to the feelings that accompany a particular thought – cumulatively becoming aware of their own psyche and those of others (Bohm et al., 1991). The purpose thereof is for the

individual and group to develop the ability to observe 'the deeper meanings' underpinning their thought processes and to sense the action that would otherwise automatically accompany it (Bohm et al., 1991:¶5-4).). Schein (1993:43) elaborates that it is focusing 'more on the thinking process and how our perceptions and cognitions are pre-formed by our past experiences'.

Suspension cultivates the ability within a person to 'experience the nature of thought, rationality and consciousness' to the extent that they are less reified in their frames of references. This allows an individual to develop a less attached yet more attentive relationship with their own 'knowledge, beliefs and perspectives' (Gunnlaugson, 2006:5). Individuals are therefore able to put distance between themselves and their thoughts – 'to learn to have our thoughts and not be our thoughts, to have our feelings rather than be our feelings' (Kegan in Gunnlaugson, 2007). This is the development within an individual of the 'subject-object' psychology principle, an essential facilitation and self-awareness skill (Gunnlaugson, 2007:144). This principle can be explained as:

- Subject – that which you are associated with, are embedded in or tied to
- Object – is the transcendence of subject, being able to hold, observe and reflect on your 'ideas, beliefs, feelings, experiences' and relationships with self and others (Gunnlaugson, 2007:144).

This frees up energy and capacity within the individual to consider the perspectives or manner of thinking of others in a respectful and inclusive way. This open 'field of inquiry' stimulates a 'shared willingness' by participants to be cautiously inquisitive 'and ultimately less invested in either asserting [personal] perspectives or refuting others' perspectives' (Gunnlaugson, 2006:5).

Suspension is of even greater value when encountering 'difference, dissonance' and 'judgment' as illustrated in Figure 2 below. In Figure 2, Schein (1993:46) demonstrates the flow of thought when an individual is confronted by a 'form of disconfirmation'. The process flow on the right reflects the avenue an individual would 'ordinarily' pursue when they assume their point was misunderstood. Schein (1993) infers that a 'conscious' individual would pursue the avenue to the left. This illustration of suspension of feelings, judgment and impulses emphasises the need to first acutely listen to ourselves before actively listening to others.
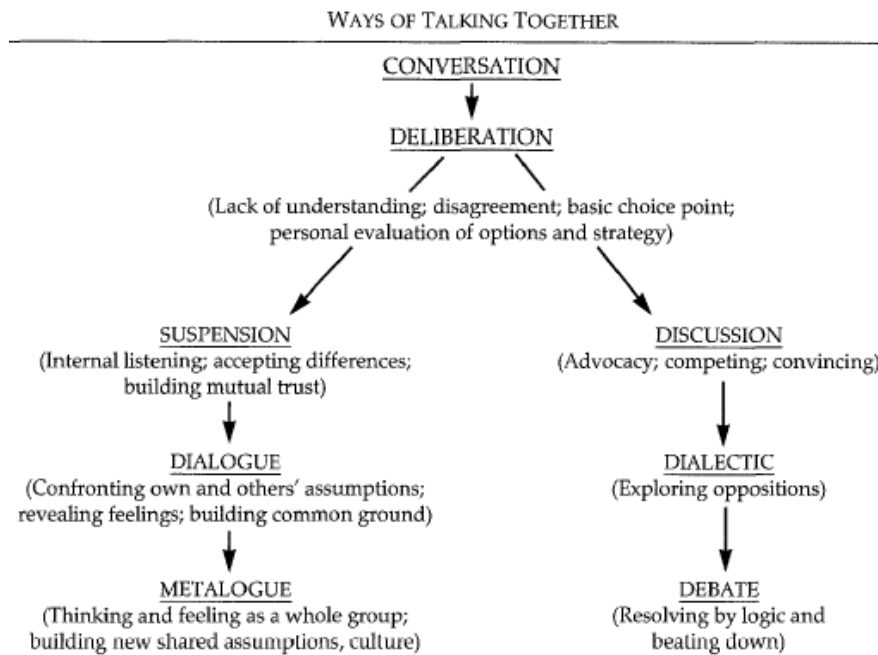
Figure 3: *Ways of talking together* (Schein, 1993:46)

If the individual and group become more aware of their preformed responses, the premise is that they will develop the ability to think better collectively and communicate better (Bohm et al., 1991). The authors reiterate that this creates room for 'coherent, collective intelligence' to evolve within the group (Bohm et al.1991:¶5-4). Schein (1993:43) explains that they are able to 'reach a higher level of consciousness and creativity through the gradual creation of a shared set of meanings and common thinking process'. This ability however only develops through 'arduous' work, until it becomes effortless (Bohm et al., 1991:¶5-4).

The skill of the facilitator is tested in such a scenario as they should not seek to 'correct or impose order' on the situation but instead 'model how to suspend what is happening' and allow for greater insight of the present to surface (Isaacs, 1993b:37).

Several authors (Bohm et al. 1991; Isaacs, 1993b; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Freeth & Annecke, 2016) agree that when the individuals and the group have developed the ability of suspension, it is possible 'for the bottom of the bucket to fall out' (Cranton & Roy, 2003:86). It is likely that the individuals and the group may experience a sense of pain and loss, because all they knew to be reality has been brought into question. The pain stems 'from the loss of comforting beliefs and from the exercise of new

cognitive and emotional muscles' (Isaacs, 1993b:37-38; Cranton & Roy, 2003). Isaacs (1993b:38) reasons that a 'crisis of collective pain' may form within the group too because of the isolation experienced from their now greater awareness of their previous thought limitations.

Bohm et al's. (1991) research, however, concludes that euphoria and relaxation will eventually replace the 'vertigo and disequilibrium' (Freeth & Annecke, 2016:375) once 'increased coherence' (Bohm et al., 1991:¶4-6) and the generation of 'new meaning' (Cranton & Roy, 2003: 86) is stimulated. This is because the group would have loosened their 'rigid thought patterns' (Isaacs, 1993b:38) or removed 'perceived blocks [and] limitations', and would have moved 'into new territory' (Bohm et al., 1991:¶4-6) namely a higher level of consciousness. A sensation of fellowship or relational connectedness may be experienced within the group – this is akin to the sense of safety, security and belonging experienced in group therapy or team building workshops (Bohm et al., 1991). It also assures the group that, with enough inward looking, new solutions can be crafted within the group and they do not need to look outwards for assistance (Phillips & Phillips, 1993).

The spectrum of emotion felt and experienced becomes a central focus of the 'meta-dialogue' exploration as 'thoughts and feelings that are usually kept hidden' are permitted to surface (Bohm et al., 1991:¶4-4). They further infer that this aids:

- Generating shared meaning with participants no longer opposing one another.
- Fostering increased trust in the group and the process.
- Building consensus that is not imposed nor is conflict avoided.
- Avoiding domination of an individual or sub-group as both domination and submission are 'always available to be considered'. (Bohm et al., 1991:¶4-4).

To conclude, Schein (1993:47) proposes that the greater the collective understanding of bias; hidden meaning in discourse; individual thinking and expression of each participant is, 'the easier decision making becomes and the more likely the decision will be implemented in the way the group meant it'. Suspension is an important component of the facilitation process and is essential to bringing about a metanoia within the individuals and group.

2.1.1.3 Reconciling and Transforming Frames of References

One of the greatest obstacles for facilitators in a multi-stakeholder collaborative process is that of capacitating participants to reconcile, evaluate and elevate the individual and organisational frames of references held by stakeholders. The literature referenced interchangeably refers to frames of references as perspectives or positions held. Building on suspension, I further examine this obstacle from a Transformative Adult Learning and Education scholarship lens.

Frames of references are constructed from the assumptions we formulate to comprehend our experiences and are 'primarily the result of cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers' (Mezirow, 1997:5). This body of inner knowledge and experiences 'shape and delimit [an individual's] expectations, perceptions, cognitions and feelings' and, once formulated, allow the individual to 'automatically move from one activity (mental or behavioural) to another' (Mezirow, 1997:5). An individual's frame of reference includes:

- 'Interpersonal relationships
- Political orientations
- Cultural bias
- Ideologies
- Schemata
- Stereotyped attitudes and practices
- Occupational habits of mind
- Religious doctrine
- Moral-ethical norms
- Psychological preferences and schema
- Paradigms in science and mathematics
- Frames in linguistics and social sciences frames, and
- Aesthetic values and standards'. (Mezirow in Gunnlaugson, 2007:136).

Mezirow (in Gunnlaugson, 2007:136) further divides a frame of reference into two distinct parts:

- Habits of mind – the 'deeply embedded assumptions we hold'

- Point of view – 'an outward perspective' 'in response to a given life-world situation or set of circumstances' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:136), it is a 'constellation' of beliefs, value judgments, attitudes and feelings which frame this outward perspective (Mezirow, 1997:6)

The latter is articulated out of the former, which Mezirow argues is more 'deeply woven into [an individual's] character, worldview and habitual ways of interpretation' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:136). Mezirow (1997:6) explains that 'habits of mind' are more robust than points of view which may continuously fluctuate if events or actions do not unfold as anticipated. An individual would then begin to critically reflect on either the content or process around which the problem is centred, identifying and altering incorrect assumptions (Mezirow, 1997). This represents the apex of transformative adult learning (Gunnalugson, 2007).

Habermas (in Mezirow 1997:6) called such critical reflection 'communicative learning'. Gunnlaugson (2007) consequently reasons that the chief vehicle of communicative learning is spoken discourse. To fully participate in critical discourse, Mezirow (2003:60) concludes that participants need to develop two distinct capabilities – that of 'critical self-reflection' and 'reflective judgment'. The latter is the ability to critically engage in the 'assessment of assumptions and expectations supporting beliefs, values and feelings' (Mezirow, 2003:60). A facilitator must be able to impart these abilities to participants.

Transformative Learning literature proposes that there are four processes of learning (Mezirow, 1997:7):

- Affirming an 'existing point of view' by seeking further 'evidence to support' it – this serves to 'expand the range of intensity of [the] point of view'.
- 'Establishing new points of view' – encountering new evidence that creates new 'meaning schemes'.
- Transformation of a point of view – an individual critically reflects on their own 'misconceptions', which may result in changed assumptions.
- Transformation of habit of mind – an individual becomes critically aware and reflective of their own 'generalized bias' (Mezirow, 1997:7). Cranton and Roy (2003:95) state that previous 'uncritically assimilated assumptions or perspectives' would be rejected, generating capacity for 'beliefs to become

more open, permeable, and better validated'. This transformation differentiates the individual 'from the collective', bringing 'the unconscious to the consciousness' and creating the need to 'regroup with more like-minded individuals'. To become an 'authentic' human being, a person has to reiteratively engage in such 'individuation'. (Cranton & Roy, 2003:95).

Within the context of this research, the process strives to stimulate the latter two learning transformation processes within participants of the group.

Gunnlaugson (2007) likens the process of learning to that of suspension within dialogue and Otto Scharmer's presencing within Theory U and the generative dialogue frameworks. Presencing is learning from that which is emerging. Before moving into the realm of presencing, an individual first has to be able to recognise their 'habitual ways of interpreting' and responding to circumstances and the assumptions on which these interpretations are based. This requires suspension of judgment, silent observations and patience (Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer & Flowers, 2004:4). Where suspension is a reflective practice on the present and the past, presencing is orientated to the present and the future.

Presencing requires an individual to pay attention to that which they sense within themselves but which has not yet been processed into coherent knowledge and understanding (Gunnlaugson, 2007:140). It moves away from purely deriving meaning and comprehension from 'discursive reasoning', evolving into a contemplative practice of observing ideas and beliefs and 'pre-sensing emerging meaning and knowledge' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:141). This could be summarised as developing a capacity or rather skill for 'meta-awareness' – an 'awareness of sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being' (Jordan in Gunnlaugson, 2007:145).

In a facilitative session this 'meta-awareness' presents as having a 'meta-conversation about the existing conversation' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:145). Facilitators will initially have to force this 'recursive conversation' of what was spoken of, 'felt, intuited, or sensed' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:145) on members of the group, who may become frustrated because it may appear as though the conversation is not moving forward. Various authors argue that this is an important element to negotiate within the realm of facilitation as participants need to learn to observe and explore such discursive subtleties as spoken words, tone, emotion and body language. Rapid

prototyping and experimentation is recommended next in the process so the group acts whilst still open to inspiration. Walker (n.d.) claims that we only learn something new through executing it and then consequently adapting it as needed.

Unlike Bohm who gave no learning guidance, Scharmer presents the framework depicted in Figure 3 below to represent the manner in which learners may develop the competencies of thinking and learning together, moving counter clockwise starting at the bottom left. Each development phase lists a set of characteristics consisting of 'ways of listening, orientation to learning in relation to time, habits of attention and speech acts' (Gunnlaugson, 2006: 7). Facilitating 'generative dialogue is a discipline of lifelong learning and practices' (Gunnlaugson, 2006:9).

Enacting Emerging Futures

Generative Dialogue	**Reflective Dialogue**
Presencing flow	Inquiry
Time: slowing down	I change my view
Space: boundaries collapse	Empathic listening
Listening from one's future self	(From within the other self)
	Other = you

Primacy of the whole   **Primacy of the Parts**

Talk Nice	**Talk Tough**
Downloading	Debate, clash
Polite, cautious	I am my point of view
Listening = projecting	Listening = reloading

Re-enacting Patterns of the Past

Figure 3: *Adapted from 'Four fields of generative dialogue'* (Scharmer in Gunnlaugson, 2006)

Learning has three sources – the past, the present and the future. Although looking to the past to comprehend how the wicked problem came to be, the solutions cannot stem from historical thinking, as previously discussed. The concepts suspension and presencing explore solutions in the present and the future hence the potential for a knowledge revolution. While suspension or presencing alone may not bring 'about a fundamental change' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:144) in a participant's position held within a collaborative process, they facilitate and stimulate a transition within an individual from 'being focally identified with [their] thoughts or feelings to being free to witness them'. This could be argued to represent a more 'complex order of consciousness' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:144) and 'can alter people's ways of thinking and acting in their systems (Isaacs, 1993b:27).

2.1.2 Holding and Containing Environments

Crous (2011:100) suggest that participants in a collaboration process require a 'nurturing environment' which enables them to constructively deal 'with complex issues'. To achieve successful facilitation, a facilitator is encouraged to cultivate a 'safe-enough' environment that permeates an atmosphere of 'mutual trust, respect and transparency' (Crous, 2011:100). Gunnlaugson interchangeably compares such a safe space to a 'holding environment', first conceived by Donald Winnicott in 1953 (Gunnlaugson, 2007) and a 'container', first referenced by Wilfred Bion in 1959 – (Finlay 2015). I explore these two concepts next.

2.1.2.1 The Holding Environment

The concept of the holding environment initially served to describe the 'optimal environment for 'good-enough' parenting' (Finlay, 2015:1). Winnicott's theory can be explained drawing on the metaphor of the 'good-enough' mother who has the ability to anticipate and identify 'with what the child is feeling' (Castelloe, 2010:1). The manner by which she expresses this psychic presence and empathy (Castelloe, 2010) is through holding the infant – metaphorically and literally. The mother would purposefully attempt to 'insulate her baby from the impact of stress, carefully choosing the moments' when frustrations are to be slowly allowed 'into the child's experience' (Finlay, 2015:1). The mother would initially adapt her being almost completely to the 'infant's needs' and with time gradually adapt 'less and less' as the infant's capacity to deal with- and process- failure grows (Finlay, 2015:1). A parent would systematically 'increase the amount of time between a child's emotional expression of a reaction/need (e.g. crying) and the meeting of that need (feeding, comforting)' (Finlay, 2015:1). This process allows infants to develop the understanding that they can survive (even flourish) without 'being overwhelmed by emotions or needs, until the parent eventually comes and provides' (Finlay, 2015:1) it. This consequently develops the infant's own capacity for 'tolerating displeasure and handling intense emotion' (Castelloe, 2010:1).

Castelloe (2010:1) states that an individual's or a group's 'experience of receiving empathy during' trauma of any sort in turn fosters 'empathy for others'. 'When a person or group is a holding environment they foster a sense of emotional cohesiveness' – creating a space which allows the other to feel. She further quotes psychoanalyst Benjamin's description of holding: 'the ability to bear one's feelings

without losing or fragmenting oneself' – very apt within the dialogue context (Castelloe, 2010:1).

Within the context of Transformative Learning, Gunnlaugson (2007:141) positions a holding environment as 'a reference to the quality of the contexts out of which [individuals] grow'. He proposes that generative dialogue practice produces a 'collective learning space' that with time creates a supportive holding environment for participants' needs. This is of particular importance when the dialogue surfaces 'disorienting dilemmas' or 'destabilising' issues that could cause great anxiety within individuals and the collaboration group. He further reasons that the practices of suspension and presencing within generative dialogue enhance the holding environment as it promotes 'a sense of safety, openness and trust'. The capacity to 'simply be' in the moment and to 'co-construct meaning from the shared' 'presencing of the group', aids these characteristics of the holding environment (Gunnnlaugson, 2007:141).

A first building block for initiating a holding environment is the establishment of a reliable and consistent approach by the facilitator (Ferraro, 2012). This clarifies what the group can expect and makes it easier for the facilitator to maintain appropriate boundaries with the group. Such consistency should ultimately (as it may take longer with some individuals) manifest itself as a safe, trustworthy space between the individuals and the facilitator (Ferraro, 2012).

2.1.2.2 Container – Containing

The metaphorical 'container' bears a close resemblance to the 'holding environment', but Parry (2010) explains that these are different constructs. Holding or the holding environment focuses on the external environment or the "transitional stage between internal and external" (Symington & Symington in Parry, 2010:5) whereas a 'container is an internal phenomenon' (Parry, 2010:5).

Bion's theory examines 'how a mother receives unwanted and/or overwhelming projections from an infant; processes them; and then returns the experience to the infant in a modified, palatable form' (Bion in Finlay, 2015:1). Bion believed that 'infants become overwhelmed by their experience as they lack sufficient internal controls' and that the mother's containing aids the development of the infant's self-regulation capacity (Bion in Finlay, 2015:1). The infant internalises the sensation of

being contained and 'experiences the mother's emotional availability', inevitably developing the 'capacity to do the same' (Finlay, 2015:1). The term container refers to the place of projection (for example the mother or facilitator) and contained refers to that which is projected (for example anxiety, fear, stress).

This concept was extended to psychotherapy and the role of the therapist, who metabolises the thoughts and feelings of the patient and re-represents them in a 'more understandable and less potentially destructive' way (Finlay, 2015:1). I propose that facilitators fulfil a role similar to that of a therapist. They metabolise and digest any anxiety, apprehension, ambiguity and uncertainty participants may be experiencing and reproduce it in a manner that can be accepted and internalised by participants. Participants would again feel safe and supported but importantly experience the freedom of not having to 'hold it all in' themselves (Lacombe, n.d.). It is important that the facilitator is able to 'self-regulate' and possess the capacity to actually consume and metabolise the spectrum of emotions (Lacombe, n.d.).

To conclude, a 'high quality container can support the emergence of polarised or controversial perspectives and sensitive topics in a way that does not threaten' participants (Gunnlaugson, 2006:13). The holding environment created by the facilitator and / or the group) thus provides the safety for the individual to let go and express the turmoil originating from the 'unknown' that is surfaced through suspension and presencing. The container (namely the facilitator) absorbs and metabolises the turmoil of the individual and / or group and reproduces it in a manner that the individual and / or group are able to process. These processes should systematically enhance the internal control capacity of the individual and / or group. Schein (1993) infers that it is this 'safety' within a container that permits and motivates change within the individual and system as opposed to the process of dialogue itself.

2.1.3 Critique of Bohmian Dialogue

Gunnlaugson's (2006:6) criticism of Bohmiam dialogue includes the over-fascination with 'observing and learning about the process of thought itself'. It is possible to argue that should true Bohmian dialogue be deployed within the research context that groups may be led to focus more on the 'exploration of the nature and process of thought' 'teasing out nuanced distinctions and abstractions of meaning' rather than focusing on the wicked problem at hand (Gunnlaugson, 2006:6).

Bohm's definition of thought incorporates all the dimensions of the human experience, namely the 'physical, emotional, intellectual and intuitional'. As a result the definition 'overlooks important distinctions' between each of these – restricting the 'validity' and the contribution of each dimension to human cognition as well as its 'expression' (Gunnlaugson, 2006:6).

Although permitted with a very light touch in the initial phases of dialogue, Bohm restricted the further assistance of a facilitator – leaving participants to deal with their own confusion and anxiety. Lastly, Bohm did not propose any frameworks or methodologies to assist 'the vast majority of people' to actually comprehend and make sense of the dialogue experience (Cayer in Gunnlaugson, 2006:6). Cayer indicates that this has resulted in it being misunderstood and practitioners have diluted its application from the original intention. In light of the aforementioned relevant and valid critique, I would not propose that pure Bohmian dialogue be solely used to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration processes.

2.1.4 Extending on the Dialogue Principles

Research to date presents the principles of dialogue as the foundation for many facilitators who subsequently expand on this using other frameworks, methodologies and techniques. In this section, I examine core components within the process and other facilitation principles deployed in multi-stakeholder collaboration processes.

2.1.4.1 The convener

The collaboration process requires convening in order to be initiated. An umbrella organisation may exist that governs a domain and it may be necessary to appeal to such an authority to convene a process (Gray, 1985). In the absence of such a governing authority, a stakeholder whose values are congruent with those of other stakeholders may be deemed a 'legitimate and sufficiently unbiased' choice (Gray, 1985:924). A 'neutral third party' may, however, still be regarded as the first choice to convene the process, irrespective of the presence of 'overt conflict' or not (Gray, 1985:924). The ability to be completely neutral is still a debatable perception. Regardless, a convener possessing appreciative skills, legitimate authority and the ability to rally stakeholders to participate is needed to commence the collaboration process.

2.1.4.2 Scoping the Wicked Problem

Van Huijstee and Glasbergen (2008) show that businesses can plot problems on an 'Issue Matrix'– the vertical axis indicating the probability of occurrence whilst the horizontal axis shows its impact on the organisation.

Van Huijstee and Glasbergen (2008:303) infer that problem identification may also be initiated in a more 'intuitive manner' when stakeholders meet at a neutral event and identify mutual concerns, or when business is invited by other parties such as non-governmental organisations, industry, communities, environmental representatives and / or various levels of government to collaborate on shared problems or projects. International roundtables held at 'industry, sector or product [value] chain' level also provide a platform to identify and begin engagement on mutual problem areas. The authors infer that these forums typically provide a more 'relaxed and open atmosphere' more conducive to positive engagement as opposed to the potentially hostile initial phases of a dialogue process. Ultimately the chosen problem should be the central focus of the collaboration and not the convening organisation. (van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2008:303-304).

The different discourses used by the various stakeholders should begin to be surfaced when attempting to understand and frame the problem domain. Hardy, Lawrence and Grant (2005) conclude that language used within organisations does not merely reflect its reality, it actually constructs an organisation's reality. Discourse frames 'identities, contexts, objects of value, and correct procedures', ultimately shaping what is said, how and by whom (Hardy et al, 2005:60). It is essential that the facilitator develop an understanding of the various discourses so that they are able to act as a bridge between the different discourse and perception divides.

2.1.4.3 Identification and Selection of Stakeholders

Gray (1985) argues that a collaborative process should have the requisite diversity amongst the stakeholders to fairly represent the complexity and information needs of the wicked problem under consideration. She reflects that such diversity strengthens the problem domain (or container's) capacity to continually learn from the evolving and adapting system at the centre of the wicked problem. All stakeholders may not be relevant to, nor interested in the process simultaneously and it is recommended

that the 'inclusions of [relevant and necessary] stakeholders be continuously assessed'. Gray (1985) concludes that the better the selection and inclusion of stakeholders in the problem solution development, the greater the acceptance and implementation of the solution. (Gray, 1985:919).

Van de Kerkhof (2006:286) explains stakeholders can be selected in the preparation phase of the process 'on the basis of extensive' interviewing by the organising (facilitation and convening) team. This method reinforces the need to identify stakeholders that have a legitimate[2] stake within the problem. Gray (1985:922) describes such stakeholders with the right to participate as 'those being impacted by the actions of other stakeholders' whereas the capacity to participate implies that the stakeholder 'possess resources and skills sufficient to justify their involvement in collaborative efforts'. Being transparent about the selection of the stakeholders lends credibility to the process as well as ensuring quality of the process as 'dissident, more critical voices about different approaches' will also be heard (Gray & Stites, 2013). At the same time, the facilitation team have to establish an idea of the optimal working group size and to what extent 'individuality' needs to be maintained (Phillips & Phillips, 1993:540).

2.1.4.4 The Motivation of each Participating Stakeholder

Drawing on prior research which considered the 'when' and 'why' of collaborations, Schein (1993) and Burchell and Cook (2008) concur that a facilitator must comprehend the motivation for stakeholders to partake in the collaboration process. These may range from:

- leveraging off 'complementary resources' (Gray & Stites, 2013)
- 'influencing business practice
- representing their organisation or members' interest
- retaining legitimacy and operability'
- gaining insight into various perspectives of the debate
- achieving 'outcomes that can only be achieved' through collaboration
- establishing and / or strengthening of relationships
- individual learning 'within such engagements' (Burchell & Cook, 2007:42)
- integration of and collective learning from multiple disciplines

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[2] 'the perceived right and capacity to participate' (Gray, 1985:921),

- prospects of informing and influencing policy and legislation developments (Gray & Stites, 2013).

'Mutual positive motivation' occurs when participation benefits exceed participation costs for stakeholders (Walton in Gray, 1985:921). If this perception is not present, incentives may be necessary to 'induce participation' (Gray 1985:921). If stakeholder interdependence on committed resources continues, coupled with the aspiration to shift the status quo of a problem domain, it may sufficiently motivate the establishment of a more formal governance structure. A formal structure post the close-out of the facilitation process in turn holds the potential benefits of lobbying 'for policy changes', 'influencing public opinion' and / or establishing broader national, regional or global networks (Gray, 1985:931).

2.1.4.5 Facilitation Environment

Facilitators have to carefully consider the physical environment in which groups meet as it influences in a critical way how a group is able to function (Phillips & Phillips, 1993). This is because the facilitation container consists of both the physical and metaphorical space and the physical space would establish the initial atmosphere and tone for both spaces (Barak, 2009). Aspects the facilitator would have to consider include the shape and size of the room, lighting and air conditioning and their control, seating arrangements (including the actual chairs) and optimising line of sight, visual aids requirements (projectors, flip charts etc.), refreshments and their frequency, and stereo systems (Phillips & Phillips, 1993; Barak, 2009). It is important that distractions be minimised and that there are clear sight lines at all times within the room that is used to encourage safety, openness and collaboration (Phillips & Phillips, 1993).

2.1.4.6 Process Design and Structure

Phillips and Phillips (1993:541) discuss the intangible limits and boundaries a facilitator has to construct to contain and focus the group without compromising 'creative exploration'. In designing the flow of the process, a facilitator would consider several aspects. They need to clarify the expectations and purpose of the group as well as the interconnections and interdependencies between stakeholders and how to surface them (Freeth & Annecke, 2016). The facilitator needs to identify tasks that do not break the flow of work or cause distraction in assessing how to sequence and

connect group activities and when to break into smaller groups and when plenary is necessary. They also need to recognise when to speed up dialogue and when to slow down to pause and reflect, as well as consider how to protect individuals and the group from inappropriate actions. A core characteristic of good process design is flexibility – recognising that the process is dynamic and malleable, and will need to be continuously adapted as it unfolds (Crous, 2011). All of these considerations aid a facilitator to manage both the complexity of group dynamics and the content.

It is not the role of the facilitator to contribute to the content of the dialogue but rather to provide guidance in terms of process and structure, specifically the process design (Phillips & Phillips, 1993). Within this ambit, it is also necessary to establish and manage realistic deliverable expectations if a set timeframe has been given within which to conduct the process (Bendell, 2000). The onus also rests on the facilitator to give clear guidance and manage expectations as to how long the process could possibly take as stakeholders cannot commit time and resources to the collaboration indefinitely (Bendell, 2000).

2.1.4.7 Computer Modelling Assistance

Philips and Philips (1993) propose that computer modelling can assist a facilitator when dealing with opinion and perspective. Creating models of higher-level perspectives, systems mapping or sensitivity analysis can all visually assist the group with better decision making without undue influence by the facilitator. It also assists the participants to 'see themselves as the source of their problems' (Senge et al., 2004:2). Modelling also has the potential to alleviate heated debates and disagreements as participants can consider various scenarios without commitment. However, it does not remove the responsibility of data gathering and capturing, judgment of outputs and the emotions attached to scenarios from the facilitation process (Phillips & Phillips, 1993).

2.1.4.8 Conduct Rules that Govern the Container

Establishing and maintaining safety within the container is a key priority of the facilitator. In order to achieve this, the facilitator requires the stakeholders to behave in accordance with pre-determined and agreed conduct rules. Such rules may include 'providing equal opportunity for participation', 'accepting order, justice', … 'respect and responsibility for helping each [participant] learn' (Mezirow, 1997:11).

These rules also help the facilitator to maintain equality of power and influence within the container.

2.1.4.9 Trust

Several authors report that successful dialogue should and has led to greater understanding for and improved trust amongst participants within the process (Bendell, 2000; van de Kerkhof, 2006; Burchell & Cook, 2008; van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2008; Dodds & Benson, 2013). Burchell and Cook (2008) argue that the establishment and nurturing of trust amongst participants engenders a willingness to share previously inaccessible information. Trust can be described as 'a silver thread or continuum which actually exists across the whole process, because if at any point in that process trust is lost then the outcomes and the impacts will be weakened' (Burchell & Cook, 2007:43).

Trust enables 'the process of interaction, information sharing and knowledge building' within the collaboration group (Burchell & Cook, 2007:43). It develops because of both the formal and informal channels stemming from the dialogue process. This enhances the functionality within the container for the individual to be honest about their own position and values as well as those of their organisation (Burchell & Cook, 2007). It also garners respect amongst stakeholders and consequently permits critiques of each other because there is a willingness to listen (Burchell & Cook, 2007). Trust of this nature also benefits the fulfilment of agreements and possibly the establishment of a new governance structure for the collaboration after conclusion of the dialogue process (van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2008).

2.1.4.10 Establish and Nurture Relationships

Gray (1985:921) argues that the greater the degree of recognition for pre-existing 'interdependence among stakeholders, the greater the likelihood of initiating collaboration'. This implies there must be existing relational energy, albeit weak, between some or all participating stakeholders. Good relationships develop because of the ability to recognise and comprehend the different perspectives and jargon pertaining to a problem (Burchell & Cook, 2008; van de Kerkhof, 2006). Gray (1985) suggests that the facilitator ensure stakeholders hold equal influence over the problem domain as it also influences the relational interconnectedness within the group.

2.1.5 Collaboration Process Framework

In this section, I reconcile the various practitioner guides and limited number of academic publications to produce a high-level overview of a collaboration process framework. Although the framework appears to be linear and static, the nature of complex-adaptive problem solving requires the process to be continuously dynamic and adaptable. McCann (1983:180) presents that the facilitation process is sometimes not one 'continuous, explicit and comprehensive event', but rather a series consisting of 'ambiguous and incremental' episodes. I therefore present this framework as phases, but recognise that there are no distinct temporal boundaries between them.

2.1.5.1 Initiating Phase

The collaboration process commences with what could either be called the 'initiating' (Crous, 2011; Brouwer, Woodhill, Hemmati, Verhoosel, & van Vugt, 2016), 'exploring and engaging' (Künkel et al., 2011), or 'problem setting' (McCann, 1983 and Gray, 1985) phase. There is agreement in the literature sources that the primary focus of this phase is to prepare for and comprehend the context of the collaboration process.

The need for a collaborative process can be inspired and initiated in a number of ways. Once this 'need' has been established and the convener has identified a potential facilitator for the process, the following activities are recommended (McCann, 1983; Gray, 1985; Crous, 2011; Künkel et al., 2011 Dodds & Benson, 2013; and Brouwer et al., 2016):

- Scoping the problem domain – the problem needs to be better comprehended so that the facilitation team are able to anticipate the time, resources and stakeholder commitments that will be required. The facilitation team will also attempt to establish preliminary expectations (Gray, 1985) whilst attempting to understand the potential contextual restrictions and boundaries of the problem domain (McCann, 1983). Understanding the context of the collaboration allows the team to identify better 'which structures and behaviour patterns are responsible for the present situation and might possibly prevent or promote the desired change' (Künkel et al., 2011:21; Brouwer et al., 2016). It is also important that when framing the problem and

identifying the stakeholders to participate a 'problem-centric' rather than 'firm-centric' approach be assumed at all times (Gray & Stites, 2013:64).

- Identifying and establishing rapport with the relevant stakeholders – it is necessary to extensively map the stakeholders who both influence and are impacted by the problem domain. Once identified, the facilitator would contact potential candidates within each of these stakeholder groupings that could represent their organisation or constituency. This supports *buy-in* and potential commitment whilst establishing rapport between the facilitation team and stakeholder. The importance of initial engagements with the stakeholders is not to be underestimated as this is when the facilitator begins to formulate the 'container'.

- Engaging with stakeholders – this activity allows the facilitation team to investigate and comprehend the different jargon and subcultures associated with each stakeholder. This is necessary for the facilitator to identify in advance communal jargon that all stakeholders would understand.

- Drawing up terms of agreement between the convener and facilitator (or facilitation team) – 'a clear definition of the mandate, authority and decision-making powers' of the multi-stakeholder collaboration would need to be determined (Brouwer et al., 2016:27). Although the scope of the problem to be addressed needs to be clarified, it is anticipated to evolve as the process progresses. Subject to this, the facilitator and convener are able to establish the requisite expertise for the facilitation team.

- Beginning to design the process within the ambit of time and resource constraints – facilitators may also draft and distribute a 'position paper' prepared from the initial interviews and engagements with the stakeholders, prior to the first engagement session.

'Contextual analysis, project planning, stakeholder identification and steering structures' are some of the tools available for the initiating phase (Crous, 2011:110). When dealing with a complex-adaptive problem, the initiating phase never truly ends – the facilitation team would continuously be adapting the process as new information is revealed (Künkel et al., 2011).

2.1.5.2 Building and Formalising Phase

The second phase is also known by various names, namely 'implementation' (Crous, 2011) 'building and formalising' (Künkel et al., 2011), 'adaptive planning' (Brouwer et al., 2016) and 'direction setting' (McCann, 1983 and Gray, 1985). I adopt the terms building and formalising to describe this phase when the stakeholders gather in person to learn from each other and to design change solutions together. The facilitator supports stakeholders to clarify their individual frames of references and intentions pertaining to the problem while attempting to identify communal purpose amongst themselves. The stakeholders participate in 'joint conceptualisation' of the desired future state of the problem by examining various scenarios, aligning these to the values and objectives they have agreed on (Gray, 1985:916). This desired future state's legitimacy is secured through the operationalisation of objectives utilising various actionable channels (McCann, 1985). Core characteristics of this phase include:

- The designed process will be facilitated by an experienced facilitator hosting workshops which enable meaningful engagement (Crous, 2011).
- Rules of conduct by participants and the facilitator within the process are to be agreed.
- An appointed experienced rapporteur (Dodds & Benson, 2013:4) will document and consolidate goals, discussions and agreed upon actions, with the latter to be programme managed.
- An efficient and effective communication system and procedures will be implemented.

The success of this phase however rests on 'three inter-related components', namely 'sense-making through meaningful dialogue and decision making, co-operative relationships that extend into the next phase' … 'and beyond', and 'facilitation that blends process, programme and structure into a seamless experience' (Crous, 2011:109). 'Tools that help with future exploration, strategy, decision making and relationship building' are beneficial to this phase (Crous, 2011:110).

2.1.5.3 Implementing and Evaluating Phase

The 'structuring-' (McCann, 1983 and Gray, 1985); 'sustaining-' (Crous, 2011); 'implementing and evaluating-' (Künkel et al., 2011) or 'collaborative action-' (Brouwer et al., 2016) phase seeks to experiment with and implement the key learnings from the previous phase. The intent of this phase is to assess the functional viability of proposed solutions; and potentially formalising and institutionalising these (McCann, 1985). Crous (2011) warns that this is a precarious phase which needs to be skilfully managed, given that the chief criticism of collaboration processes is their lack of implementation and follow through (Brouwer et al., 2016). It is essential to secure resources for this phase, together with the appointment of management structures and assignment of accountabilities. The type of organisation within which the activities will be conducted also needs to be debated and agreed.

Key actions by the group or nominated individuals within this phase include:

- Design and implement appropriate 'knowledge management systems' documenting experimental and prototype learnings (Crous, 2011:99).
- Document mutual decisions and commitment agreements by and for stakeholders.
- Draft a deliverables implementation programme and assign accountabilities to stakeholders from this.;
- Develop a communication strategy to disseminate key findings and knowledge into wider audiences, ensuring continued transparency to stakeholder constituencies.
- Construct a 'visible identity' (i.e. a brand) which reinforces the legitimacy of outcomes (McCann, 1983:181).
- Establish education mechanisms to up-skill and capacitate stakeholders and their constituencies as process and findings require.
- Design and formulate the new governance mechanism within which stakeholders will re-group. Long term governance structures and frameworks are needed to 'support and sustain' collaboration momentum in the co-creating and implementing solutions (McCann, 1983; Gray, 1985:916).

Although the outcomes will be monitored and evaluated against the programme established for this phase, governance and reflective monitoring procedures must be

implemented across all phases (Brouwer et al., 2016). It is important that the facilitator and participants not only monitor and critically reflect on the outcomes of the process against objectives, but also 'the expectations and quality of the process itself'. This is to ensure that a poorly conducted process does not result in failure to meet its objectives (Crous, 2011:50; Gray & Stites, 2013).

2.1.5.4 Conclusion

Gray (1985:932) concludes that 'precisely describing which levers to pull under which circumstance for successful collaboration' is not possible. The process(es) described only 'focus on the temporal salience of facilitating conditions' yet successful collaboration depends on the 'simultaneous interaction of several conditions at appropriate phases in the process' (Gray, 1985:932). It is thus important to understand what competencies a facilitator must develop in order to stimulate and facilitate this 'simultaneous interaction of several conditions' across the respective phases.

2.2. Question 2 – Risk Factors: Identifying risks to such multi-stakeholder collaboration processes

My second research question focuses on identifying risks to the facilitation process. I deemed it necessary to examine this as a facilitator will need to possess the necessary competencies to pre-empt and mitigate these as the process progresses. ISO 31000's risk management standards defines risk as 'the effect of uncertainty on objectives' (Praxiom.com, 2017). An *effect* can be interpreted as either a positive or a negative deviation from the objective namely a threat or an opportunity. *Uncertainty* can be understood as lack of or incomplete information and affect how risks can be optimised or mitigated. In this study, I refer to risk as a potentially negative threat. In their contextual assessment, a facilitation team must be able to identify all possible events and people that threaten the objectives of the collaboration process in order to design mitigation measures into the process. I assume that with experience, a facilitator would be increasingly alert to certain warning signs, pre-empting risks mid-process. Prior research has paid little attention to potential risks and challenges to the collaboration process, with the exception of Dodds and Benson (2013). In this section, I draw on my risk management experience to identify risks from the inverse of statements and conclusions made on the requirements for effective multi-stakeholder collaboration within the literature.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Selection

Failure to fairly and transparently identify stakeholders with a legitimate claim to the problem domain compromises the credibility of the collaboration process (McCann, 1983; Gray, 1985; Künkel et al., 2011; Dodds & Benson, 2013). Such a risk will result in inaccurately reflecting the complexity of and fully comprehending the problem domain. The process may also experience opposition in the design and implementation of solutions (Gray, 1985). Gray and Stites (2013:40) warn that selecting stakeholders with poor reputations may cause 'de-legitimation' of the process – this is especially relevant if stakeholders are deemed to be 'in bed with the enemy' or it is perceived that they have 'been co-opted' into the process.

Stakeholders who lack sufficient insight, expertise and competencies to meaningfully contribute to the analysis of the problem and development of solutions jeopardise their own legitimacy within the process and the process itself (Künkel et al., 2011). Negative stereotypical perceptions also inhibit the acceptance of certain stakeholders, creating an obstacle for the facilitator to overcome within the process (Gray, 1985).

2.2.2 Stakeholder Motivation

Non-business stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGO) may be reluctant to enter into a collaboration process because of poor previous engagements within business. Greenwashing, 'lip-service' or business publicising their dialogue engagements may be one of the several possible causes of this (Burchell & Cook, 2008:39). Failure by business to demonstrate a serious commitment to change may result in stakeholders declining the collaboration engagement.

Another deterrent for smaller organisations is unequal or asymmetrical learning within multi-stakeholder engagements (Burchell & Cook 2008). Past-experience may include being 'mined for information' but with lack of clarity as to how it was used or applied. Although the purpose of dialogue is to facilitate joint learning and knowledge co-creation, enhanced insight by stakeholders may not always translate to greater leniency by the various stakeholders towards each other (Burchell & Cook, 2008).

Failure to clarify whether or how participants' recommendations and contributions will be integrated may result in reluctance to partake in the process. This risk links to the risk of failure to implement outcomes too – should participants recognise that their contributions are not incorporated 'in a verifiable manner' they may withdraw mid-process (Künkel et al., 2011:48).

2.2.3 Stakeholder Relationships - Interconnectedness and Relational Energy

Failure to establish sufficient cohesion amongst the stakeholders may result in a lack of implementation momentum – participants will fail to introduce and implement agreed actions within their respective organisations. Trust is the cornerstone of relationship (Barak, 2009) and failure to establish adequate levels of trust and consequently positive relational energy results in a weak process. Both elements also contribute to how well stakeholders identify with the process (Künkel et al., 2011; Gray & Stites, 2013). Attempting to establish trust can also be a long onerous process when there is an extensive history of animosity between stakeholders (Gray & Stites, 2013).

If relationships, trust and respect have been tarnished, the ability to think innovatively and intelligently as a group becomes inhibited (Barak, 2009). These missing elements are linked to the absence of or a poorly constructed container. McCann (1983) concludes that collaboration processes collapse when relationships among participants are poorly managed and not because the purpose or direction was poorly established or lacked legitimacy.

2.2.4 Process – Movement and Opposition

When a stakeholder is unable to articulate their organisational or personal position there is a risk that there may be a lack of movement on position by the stakeholder. This may also be due to a lack of interest in the problem despite the stakeholder holding a position of influence. The lack of movement may lead to unanticipated stagnation within the process. (Künkel et al., 2011).

A greater risk, however, is that of the dominant stakeholder who repeatedly interjects, attempting to establish a different direction or promote a specific agenda. This causes imbalance within the container, with stakeholders potentially feeling bullied

into a specific direction over which they have little to no influence. The facilitator has to counter this by providing a platform that capacitates participants equally, enabling them to fairly articulate their respective positions. (Künkel et al., 2011)

Stakeholders who continuously oppose or contradict positions within the process undermine it and may cause rigidity within the dialogue. This threatens a facilitator's ability to keep stakeholders in a process that lacks ongoing progress. Such opposition, however, may be to merely highlight an alternative perspective or to provide critical reflection within the process. (Künkel et al., 2011). A combination of a lack of movement together with continuous opposition can pose a critical risk to the process (Künkel et al., 2011).

2.2.5 Diversity – Frames of References, Assumptions, Culture, and Discourse

Failure to cultivate an appreciation for differences in frames of references, ideas and opinions threatens the transformation of mental modes and achieving collaborative advantage (Isaacs, 1993b; Gunnlaugson, 2007; Crous, 2011; Gray & Stites, 2013). A lack of appreciation for differences also does not garner respect nor establish trust within the group nor does it 'promote the valid exchange of information and common ways of framing the problem' (Gray, 1985:925). Furthermore, passive observation by stakeholders is not conducive to collaborative results and tends to generate singular isolated efforts (Künkel et al., 2011).

Failure to recognise and consider the differences between the subcultures and how these influence mental modes and discourse within the process may result in communication failures, conflict and ill-informed decisions (Bohm et al., 1991; Gray & Stites, 2013; Freeth & Annecke, 2016). In addition, if the selected group is too small, it may 'lack the requisite diversity needed to reveal these tendencies' (Bohm et al, 1991:¶6-1).

A stakeholder's subculture may be restrictive and prevent the individual from participating fully in the process. This may be because the individual is unable to segregate themselves from the emotional attachment to their 'culturally learned categories of thought' (Schein, 1993:49). An individual's mental mode may be too closely bound to their identity, re-enforcing the valuing and protecting thereof (Schein, 1993). This may also inhibit their ability to create room for other stakeholder

subcultures, including their jargon, values, principles, perceptions and assumptions (Burchell & Cook, 2008). This can greatly curtail the dialogue progress.

Schein (1993:41) observes that cultural indoctrination may result in individuals withholding information should their position within the 'current social order' be threatened. An individual may prioritise maintaining the 'social value'[3] they 'attribute to themselves as they enter any interpersonal situation' over honest, genuine contribution. These cultural norms 'undermine valid communication efforts' and create the possibility of 'defensive routines' within collaboration processes.

Schein (1993:49) posits that subcultures further refine their 'psychological boundaries' by formulating a language unique to it. Bohm's notion of 'fragmentation of thought' is further amplified by subculture discourse which can create significant barriers to establishing group cohesion. Discourse defines and expresses 'membership and belonging', which in turn re-enforces or 'provides status and identity' to an individual or group. It is this powerful illusion that may motivate the respective individuals within the group to cling to their biases and consequently create communication barriers within the group. If discourse is not clarified, unknown confusion may exist within decisions taken and their implementation may be detrimentally influenced. (Schein, 1993:49).

2.2.6 Stakeholder – Geographic Location and Contextual Environment

Failure to comprehend and factor in the contextual environment in the design of the process may severely restrict the process and any implementation initiatives (Gray, 1985). 'Geographic dispersion increases the costs of face-to-face collaboration' and also increases the likelihood of cultural barriers (Gray, 1985:930). Events such as unanticipated conflict (for example, violence or territorial war) or parties external to the process will also obstruct the process and may deter execution of decisions.

2.2.7 Group Dynamics

Interplay between individuals and the group life, and the emotional dynamics of both, can meaningfully influence the process. Phillips & Phillips (1993:537) illustrates this through numerous scenarios, summarised as follows:

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[3] More commonly understood as 'saving or maintaining face'

Outspoken, well-articulated and knowledgeable antagonists within the group may openly question the facilitators' processes and methods. The person would typically warn the 'group of their folly and the waste of the time the group is undertaking'. Ironically, these individuals tend to become the most supportive of the conclusions reached at the end of the process. It is therefore better to leverage off the antagonist as opposed to trying to mute them, as they are able to far better influence the process than the facilitator. The authors propose that the antagonist may be 'leading and reflecting group opinion', expressing the sentiment of doubt felt by the group. Similarly, the facilitator must comprehend the role of the 'expert, the sceptic, the clown, the saviour, the prophet, the critic, the other, the protector, the warrior, the leader' and how these positively or negatively influence the group dynamic.

If a group is seemingly marching ahead in unison without raising challenges, it may signal to the facilitator that individuality within the group has been lost. Tension amongst the group and the individual is most often experienced through anxiety. Although the individual may feel the need to 'fit-in' and be accepted by the group, they may be sacrificing their individuality. Failure to acknowledge and process this anxiety may lead to it being diverted and surfaced in other ways, for example, personal projections, initiating fights or 'forming coalitions'. The loss of individuality within a group can result in the loss of morality and conscience within a group as these reside with individuals. Similarly, the group can assume either positive or negative 'herd mentality'[4] that can be advantageous or detrimental to the process. (Phillips & Phillips, 1993:537–538).

Phillips and Phillips (1993:538) conclude that 'although group cohesion is important, acknowledging and exploring individual divergences helps the group to maintain a creative tension in its work'.

2.2.8 Power Dynamics

Failure to establish sufficiently 'equal capability to influence' the problem domain, process and outcomes may lead to ineffective collaboration (Gray, 1985:926). Unequal power distribution undermines trust and inhibits both stronger and weaker stakeholders from advancing their perspectives in a clear and direct manner (Walton

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[4] The tendency for people's behaviour or beliefs to conform to those of the group to which they belong (Oxford Online Dictionary)

in Gray, 1985; Gray & Stites, 2013; Freeth & Annecke, 2016). It is also difficult to establish direction or objectives. Examples of circumstances that negatively influence power distribution include:

- Stakeholders reluctant to relinquishing power.
- Failure to foster recognition of interdependency amongst stakeholders within the problem domain continues to re-enforce dominant stakeholder's perceived power.
- Stakeholder legitimacy perceptions, specifically if entering the process from a lower power base (Gray, 1985).
- The manifestation of an impasse amongst participants due to power being offset amongst disputants (Gray, 1985).
- Uneven contribution of critical resources or disputes over their control (Gray, 1985; Burchell & Cook 2008).
- The facilitator manipulating the process may be an abuse of their position and power for example excluding certain stakeholders, not addressing certain concerns, or writing the report with partisan bias (Payne & Calton, 2002).

2.2.9 Stakeholder and Process Conflict

If the facilitator fails to navigate conflict well both the process and facilitator may lose credibility potentially resulting in early exit of stakeholders or termination of the process. Below are some causes of conflict between stakeholders and / or the facilitator:

- Stakeholder cultures and behaviours promoting consensus seeking to purposefully avoid conflict or confronting a difference in perspectives within the group. This could result in such differences and 'potential inconsistencies' remaining 'implicit' (van de Kerkhof, 2006: 287).
- Failure to address existing conflict between stakeholders prior to commencement of the process (Gray, 1985).
- Lack of suspension or presencing maturity may result in participants (over) reacting, 'disagreeing, elaborating' or 'questioning' (Schein, 1993:47) a particular point or their perception that they are misunderstood. This may trigger unwarranted discussion in a particular direction resulting in unproductive use of time.

- Attempting to use 'negotiation tactics' to calm a charged or high energy discussion can result in 'bypassing the most difficult issues and narrowing the field of exchange' (Isaacs, 1993b:32). This simultaneously negatively deflates the energy in the interactions amongst the group and decreases the intelligence of the group (Isaacs, 1993b).

2.2.10 Resource Commitment

Failure by the facilitation team to adequately scope the process and develop a thorough understanding of the resource (time, cost and expertise) commitment required can result in gross underestimation of each of these elements (Crous, 2011). The level of resource commitment these processes require cannot always be amassed by the various participating stakeholders (Dodds & Benson, 2013). This is especially prominent with small-medium enterprises, environmental and community agencies and NGOs. Funding constraints may also result because of external macro-economic deterioration (Crous, 2011). The facilitation team have to minimise the impact of the aforementioned resource commitment threats as they can risk the ability to execute the process design.

2.2.11 Process

The credibility and legitimacy of the facilitation process hinges on a number of factors, which if poorly executed may invalidate the process and the efforts invested in it.

2.2.11.1 Design

A chaotic or poorly arranged physical environment within which the process is set to take place can have a detrimental effect on the process as well as on group cohesion and the achievement of objectives. Specifically,

- Long, narrow rooms, with rectangular tables result in very little eye contact within the group.
- Fluorescent, buzzing or flickering lighting which cannot be controlled for brightness can overstimulate participants.

- Uncomfortable seating as well as poorly timed intervals can disrupt flow of work.
- Visual or presentation aids such as projectors, board space or flipcharts require 'clear sight lines from all participants' which can be impaired by the shape of the room or seating arrangements (Phillips & Phillips, 1993:540).

Similarly a poorly designed facilitation process that uses frameworks and methods that do not match the complexity of the problem may also result in a frustrated group (Payne & Calton, 2002). This is a reflection of insufficient understanding of the various facilitation tools and their application.

2.2.11.2 Time

A facilitator risks process and participant fatigue if sessions are too long, as this diminishes the quality of the contribution by participants (Bohm et al., 1991; Payne & Calton, 2002; Crous, 2011; Gray & Stites, 2013). Poor timeframe management by the facilitator can result in participants sabotaging successfully completed agenda items due to being disgruntled about the incomplete agenda items (Phillips & Phillips, 1993:545). Failure to consider the timeframe commitments of various stakeholders when designing the collaboration process may result in discontinuity in representation or representation change-outs mid-process (Bohm et al., 1991; Crous, 2011).

2.2.11.3 Consensus Seeking versus Collaboration

A facilitator's failure to fully comprehend their engagement terms may result in them staging a process for consensus seeking rather than true collaboration. Consensus seeking can be recognised by outcomes that assume stakeholders comprehend the problem domain as well as their and others contribution to, and position within the domain. Participants will opt to 'focus on the most tractable, and often least important problems' relying on agreement over imprecise or general principles rather than on concrete operational results. The objectives will often default to the lowest common denominator of all the participating interests' and not that which is to the greater common good. (van de Kerkhof, 2006:282).

Consensus seeking shifts the purpose of the process from achieving 'quality' decisions to settling for 'agreeable' decisions (van de Kerkhof, 2006:282). Isaacs

(1993b:26) frames consensus seeking as what stakeholders are merely willing to 'live with for now'. However, consensus seeking does not strive to surface the 'important issues or facts' nor the differences in perspectives and values. It is plausible that stakeholders are actually unaware of and do not comprehend the position nor the 'underlying assumptions' of the other participants nor their own (van de Kerkhof, 2006:282). Van de Kerkhof (2006) further warns that a consensus seeking process may expose itself to greater bias as stakeholders who may benefit more and are willing to enter into consensus are more likely to be selected to participate in the process as opposed to those stakeholders who want to achieve outcomes to the benefit of the greater good.

2.2.11.4 Outcomes

The success of the decisions and agreed upon actions of the collaboration group rely on the commitment by all organisations represented within the collaboration process to make the necessary organisational changes. Failure of each participating stakeholder to make such a commitment at the beginning of the process and for the group to not hold each stakeholder accountable to this, may result in the collapse of the agreed upon collaboration deliverables. This may require completely different, more complex and time-consuming work approaches for various stakeholders. Failure by stakeholders to let go of preconceived outcomes will also inhibit the effectiveness of the dialogue process in making progress towards collaborative outcomes. Unrealistic expectations of the collaboration partnership process and outcomes may also result in the process losing credibility and stakeholders withdrawing from it. (Burchell & Cook, 2008).

2.2.12 The Facilitator

The facilitator may be confronted by 'rebellion-of-sorts' within the group. The position, legitimacy and authority of the facilitator as well as the scope of the facilitator's participation within the process may be questioned (Schein, 1993; Gray, 1985). This may consequently influence the extent to which guidance is accepted by the group as the process progresses, negatively influencing group development.

The facilitator may encounter problems should they attempt to contribute to the content of the group. It is not possible to simultaneously 'reflect on' and 'think deeply' about process and content. The facilitator's terms of reference may not require them

to directly interpret the groups' work, but they also do not want to take on the position of a participant because of deliberating content with the group. The group may also feel the facilitator is interfering and encroaching on their expertise and skills. This may consequently harm the facilitator's integrity and it may be difficult for them to resume their independent, neutral position within the process. (Phillips & Phillips, 1993).

A facilitator's neutral or independent position is compromised should they fail to acknowledge and maintain awareness of their own emotions (fears, anxieties, joy, regrets etc.) that arise within them during the process. A 'self-aware, impartial observer' can better contribute to the process by acknowledging and comprehending their own emotions than a 'detached, scientific observer' (Phillips & Phillips, 1993:545). Polarisation within the group as well as a 'group [that] is asymmetrical, systemic and unconscious' may compromise the facilitator's neutrality (Freeth & Annecke, 2016:377).

Failure by the facilitator to recognise when the complexity of a process or the dynamic of a group exceeds their capability and capacities also presents a risk. This lack of self-knowledge can derail the development of group cohesion as well as the progress and outcomes of the process. An example of this is when the facilitator lacks the emotional capacity to hold and navigate the tensions or conflict within the group (Phillips & Phillips, 1993). An inexperienced facilitator may struggle to read and / or interpret the subtext or the metalogue of the dialogue. The group may be attempting to highlight a sensitive matter that it does not want to confront directly – this may be lost on the facilitator who will consequently fail to surface the matter in an appropriate manner (Phillips & Phillips, 1993).

2.3 Question 3 – Competencies: Identify core competencies required by multi-stakeholder collaboration facilitators

There appears to be little concrete evidence in the literature as to the mix and relative importance of the different skills needed for the successful performance of the facilitator role. Generally, it seems that a mixture of personal attributes and personal, interpersonal and group management skills contribute to the development of effective facilitation (Harvey et al., 2002:582).

Research to date fails to explicitly identify and discuss the competencies that a facilitator of multi-stakeholder collaborative processes addressing wicked problems would need to have developed. Harvey et al. (2002:582) however infer the following:

> Whilst there are core skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills that are believed to be a prerequisite requirement of any facilitator role, it appears that to be effective, facilitators require a tool kit of skills and personal attributes that they can use depending on the context and purpose. […] the expertise could be in having the flexibility to be able to recognize the requirements of an individual situation. This may mean drawing on a combination of skills and qualities in the course of any change process.

I have therefore made inferences and drawn conclusions from the literature review discussion to identify this 'tool kit'.

No single definition of the term competency that is widely accepted and the evolution of its meaning and application is subject to the field of the practitioners (Hoffman, 1999:275). In this study, I define competencies as 'behaviours that an individual needs to demonstrate' or 'the underlying attributes of a person' (Hoffman, 1999:276). In order to answer my research questions, it therefore becomes important to understand the 'content of learning that will lead to competent performance', namely to structure content for learning (Hoffman, 1999:277).

'Behaviours' or 'underlying attributes' implies that a competency consists of various components, namely (Hunt and Meech in Hoffman, 1999:278):

- 'Knowledge' – this is the facts, theories and principles an individual has gained from formal education, training and / or experience
- 'Skills' – or proficiencies, 'dexterity in mental or physical processes' that is developed through specialised training.
- Personal attributes – these can either be innate aptitudes or 'characteristics' that constitute an individual's 'make-up'. These are regarded as being either amassed through cumulative life experiences or being genetically developed (or possibly both).

The line between an innate aptitude and a skill can often be blurred but I do not unpack this in this study. Drawing on prior research, I highlight and briefly discuss the knowledge, skills, aptitudes or characteristics relevant to the facilitation process.

2.3.1 Greater Self-awareness

A facilitator must be able to move individuals across the various phases of learning – from 'affirming an existing point of view' to 'establishing new points of view' to 'transforming a point of view' culminating at 'transformation of habit of mind' (Mezirow, 1997:7). In order to achieve this, the facilitator will have to be skilled in creating 'ideal conditions of discourse' – an environment that capacitates the participants to 'become critically aware of their own and others' assumptions' (Mezirow, 1997:10) to 'reframe' problems and issues (Waddock, 2012:131). Being able to view various frames of references as an object to be held out and examined will help participants to re-imagine and redefine problems from a more inclusive perspective. A facilitator must also equip participants to partake more effectively in the group's discourse. Cranton and Ray (2003:88) argue that as humans are 'social creatures' they are 'most likely to discuss' the rational process of recognition that their 'views [are] no longer fit'. The purpose of such engagement is to identify new ideas and evidence to form new views (Cranton & Roy, 2003), specifically transformation of 'point of view' or 'habit of mind'. Discourse is thus central to meaning making – it validates what an individual comprehends and how they arrive at their best judgment (Mezirow, 1997). The facilitator is furthermore encouraged to meet participants where they are at – reframing discussion and questions to their 'current level of understanding' (Mezirow, 1997:10).

From my review of the literature, a facilitator cannot lead a group through the 'process' of suspension if they themselves do not have extensive experience thereof. I propose that a facilitator would need to have been guided through the process themselves, possess knowledge thereof and possibly have received formal training of how to conduct such a process. The purpose of suspension together with the subject-object principle is to stimulate the above learning transformation culminating in greater collective understanding and knowledge co-creation.

Several authors refer to this as a shift in thinking or consciousness. For instance, Wahl and Baxter (2008:78) suggest that as a person matures and 'existential problems' evolve so their 'older, lower order behavioural systems' progress to 'newer,

higher order systems'. I understand this as bringing about greater self-awareness within others. This evolution and progression, although a continuous process, first has to commence within facilitators. I infer that a facilitator cannot attempt to induce greater self-awareness in another human being without being self-aware themselves. They cannot hope to lead the metamorphoses and evolution of others if they do not possess more advanced maturity in each of these elements (suspension, subject-object and self-awareness) than the individuals to be facilitated. The facilitator's emotional maturity and capacity informs the level of complexity of the problem and the group they are able to hold and contain.

The building blocks of these facilitation elements are critical self-reflection and reflective judgment (Mezirow, 2003), collectively forming communicative learning of which discourse is the 'chief vehicle' (Mezirow, 1997; Gunnlaugson, 2007). A facilitator also needs to have mastered communicative learning to be able to equip participants to engage in these themselves. The facilitator must be able to reconcile discourse and the respective jargons used by the various stakeholders to formulate a 'universally' comprehended language for the process.

Similarly, a facilitator will be unable to either guide participants through the process of presencing or equip them with the skills to conduct the process themselves, if the facilitator has not reached a certain level of presencing maturity within themselves.

2.3.2 Holding and Container Building

Schein (1993) posits that the desired change and transformation resulting from the dialogue process does not commence until a psychologically safe space for the participants is fostered. The ability of a facilitator to establish and 'hold' the container (namely the psychological safety) is underpinned by their capacity to absorb and process 'the destabilizing effects of disorienting dilemmas that invariably surface' within the process (Mezirow in Gunnlaugson, 2007:141). A facilitator needs the internal capacity to both contain and hold anxiety, tension, frustration and paradoxes until the collaboration group can process it themselves. The facilitator also has to recognise when and how to extend compassion towards an individual or the group.

Simultaneously, the facilitator must endeavour to equip participants with the capacity to also hold and to contain. This is so the participants can assume collective responsibility for co-constructing, co-developing and co-maintaining this metaphorical

space and be able to continue with the process after the facilitator exits (Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2007; Barak, 2009).

Trust underpins the establishment of the container and the process facilitated therein (Burchell & Cook, 2008; van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2008). It enables the interaction and the openness in information sharing and knowledge co-creation within the container. It may also result in willingness by participants to receive legitimate critique and suggestions (Burchell & Cook, 2008). Yet, we know less about how a facilitator would establish and nurture trust. Trust is deemed a core element of relationship development between stakeholders and the security of trust amongst stakeholders (and the facilitator) resides in privileged information shared not being disclosed or repeated in public (van Huisjtee and Glasbergen, 2008; Dodds & Benson, 2013). I interpret this as demonstrating integrity – a character trait first exhibited by the facilitator and then mirrored by participants.

2.3.3 Design

A good process design requires investigative skills to better comprehend the complex, dynamic, interconnected facets off the problem domain. Many other design elements of the process rely on the quality of the understanding of the problem domain. These include being able to identify a facilitation framework most suited to confronting the problem being confronted (Schein, 1993); identifying the relevant stakeholders and how best to entice them to partake in the process; as well as determining the resource requirements for the process. The contextual understandings will also help to establish the motivation of participation by the various stakeholders and how best to leverage off this to establish common ground, trust and relationship amongst the stakeholders (Gray, 1985; Schein, 1993; Burchell & Cook, 2008).

To design the actual process, a facilitator must be able to establish a suitable group size in relation to the objectives and scope of the problem domain; and determine how best to navigate the consequential group dynamics (Bohm et al., 1991). The design must also incorporate flexibility to be able to adapt concurrently with the problem domain and stakeholder requirements – this translates to the facilitator having to be an adaptable person (Crous, 2011). Good design is also subject to a facilitator balancing project management skills (specifically, being able achieve a good quality process) with the limited resources and time available.

A facilitator must have knowledge and experience of how to optimally structure a room which allows for maximum vocal, audio and visual participation by all (Bohm et al., 1991) but also creates an inviting, safe atmosphere (Barack, 2009). I conclude that good design itself requires creativity. I also associate this with the ability of foresight – intuitively knowing when and how to adapt the process before new information or risks emerge and necessitate it.

2.3.4 Communication

A skilled facilitator acts as a bridge between the divisive discourse used representing the subcultures of stakeholders. The facilitator must be able to identify the disparities between the various discourses and establish clarity through a communal discourse comprehended by all participants (Schein, 1993; Gunnalugson, 2007). Such a communal discourse should better equip participants to engage with and participate in the collaboration process (Gunnlaugson, 2007). It should also better surface problems within the group or pertaining to the wicked problem.

This highlights the need for the facilitator to possess excellent linguistic knowledge and skills. Although the aim is for the facilitator to aid communal understanding, the facilitator must also possess the sensitivity to preserve cultural diversity and its valuable contribution to the collaboration (Schein, 1993). This difference in discourse should further enhance the awareness amongst participants of how language, frames of references and culture can create segregation.

Many facilitation frameworks promote active listening by the group (including the facilitator), in which 'one should learn to focus initially on what the other person is saying rather than on one's own intended response' (Schein, 1993:43). Schein (1993), however, advocates that the dialogue framework requires that the individual first comprehend their own responses and their underlying assumptions. Comprehending these responses and assumptions links to capacitating participants to be self-aware in order to investigate, decipher and comprehend the perceptions and assumptions which dictate their cognitive responses. This conscious-of-thought technique should ultimately help an individual and the group to think better (Schein, 1993). Eventually, the group will 'listen actively' (Schein, 1993:43) – the means to reaching this point just differs somewhat. A facilitator cannot equip an individual or group with this without having undergone this process themselves. Awareness of

thoughts and associated reactions will also better equip the facilitator to comprehend their own position within the group.

2.3.5 Capacitation

Equipping and capacitating participants was a recurring theme throughout the literature on dialogue and Transformative Adult Learning and Education. The facilitator must nurture a space of mutual learning and discovery amongst the participants where capacitation cumulatively results (Burchell & Cook, 2008; Schein, 1993; van Huisjtee & Glasbergen, 2007; Dodds & Benson, 2013). This cumulative act of capacitation by a facilitator is to 'cultivate a broader range of patterns of mind and consciousness to meet the increasingly complex demands' (Gunnlaugson, 2007:139) of 21st century life and problems. But, more importantly, the group must be sufficiently equipped to continue the process after the facilitator's exit.

A facilitator would also possess the ability (a developed skill or natural aptitude) to equip the dissenting voices to engage confidently more often. Similarly, the facilitator must demonstrate to the more dominant voices to listen and reflect more and to speak less (Bohm et al., 1991). It is vital that both the facilitator and the process equip participants with the capacity to reflect critically but to communicate empathetically. Communication includes both the capacity to listen actively as well as to clearly articulate perspectives and ideas (Crous, 2011).

Suspension, presencing, the subject-object principle, holding and containing, self-growth and greater self-awareness, active listening and engagement appear to be concepts that must be adequately demonstrated and nurtured by the facilitator. However, without participants willingly embracing the process and exhibiting tenacity when encountering uncertainty and ambiguity, facilitators are likely to fail in their endeavours (Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2007; Crous, 2011).

2.3.6 Other Skills, Knowledge, Aptitudes and Character Traits

Conflict management is an essential skill required by a facilitator given that conflict is a natural occurrence in any multi-stakeholder process (Crous, 2011). Successful transformation rests on conflict being surfaced, understood and dealt with accordingly. Conflict and its underlying tension are necessary and desirable to generating the tipping point for change (Crous, 2011). Conflict successfully navigated

improves communication amongst participants as it appears from the literature that the most common source of conflict is caused by miscommunication. Such miscommunication may either be because of the discourse referenced, tone or demeanour assumed or body language displayed, namely the subtext. The facilitator must possess the insight to interpret or translate the 'subtext' of the conversation and introduce its meaning into the conversation (Schein, 1993).

Simultaneously, a facilitator must possess the ability to manage and redistribute power within the process to establish equal participation and influence by all stakeholders. As previously discussed an 'equitable' collaboration process is desirable and a mandate the facilitator has to achieve (Crous, 2011). Establishing equal power within the container simultaneously minimises conflict whilst contributing to the fostering of trust, culminating in better relational connectedness amongst the participants.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Overarching Research Approach

A research paradigm reflects the philosophical worldview that shapes the lens through which a study is conducted. Each paradigm consists of three elements – ontology, epistemology and axiology; and three key paradigms can be identified: positivist-postpositivist, interpretivist-constructionist and transformative (Nieuwenhuis 2012; Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt, & Wagner, 2014; Creswell 2014).

Given my interest to identify the facilitation process of multi-stakeholder collaboration, the risks thereto and the competencies of a facilitator to facilitate such a process, I best resonated with an 'interpretivist-constructionist' paradigm. Constructivism 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are' continuously 'being produced' 'by social actors, individually and collectively, through social interaction' (Bryman et al., 2014:17), and views reality as both socially and individually constructed. Constructivism allows for the existence of multiple realities constructed from diverse frames of references, acknowledging these cannot be generalised into a single, common reality (Bryman et al., 2014). I considered this ontological position appropriate for studying multi-stakeholder collaboration – given how the diverse perspectives of reality within a group of stakeholders should influence the collective (and individual) perception of reality or the wicked problem to be confronted.

My epistemological stance, interpretivism, also assumes that reality is multiple and relative (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988), but that knowledge is subjective due to being socially constructed as opposed to objective due to being empirically determined. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) further infer that the researcher and their informants are 'interdependent and mutually interactive' and although the researcher does enter the field of research with some prior insight into the research context, they accept this is insufficient for developing a fixed research design due to the complexity, multiplicity and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) conclude that an interpretivist researcher strives to comprehend and interpret human behaviour (motives, meanings, reasoning etc.) as opposed to generalising and predicting cause and effect.

I adopted a qualitative research approach in order to comprehend the contextual environment of the research and explore the multiple perspectives of research participants through an inductive data analysis approach within a dynamic, adaptable research plan (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Considering the research gap associated with my chosen topic, it was my intention to generate theory or contribute to the body of theory as opposed to testing theory. I consequently chose grounded theory for my research design as its inductive nature is best suited to the logic of such theory generation. Grounded theory 'is concerned with the development of theory out of data and that the method is iterative, or recursive' (Bryman et al., 2014:344). In line with an interpretivist approach which views knowledge as developed in collaboration with informants, I was reliant on the experts interviewed for content as well as referrals to other relevant experts and applicable literature to build on the elementary knowledge foundation the research commenced from.

Charmaz (2006, 2008) advocates that a constructivist approach to grounded theory reinforces the emergent nature of the outcomes and process itself. It emphasises 'how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed … [taking] into account the research context and the researcher's position, perspective, priorities and interactions' (Charmaz, 2006:10). I acknowledge my positionality (specifically my axiology) and confirm that I was embedded in my research process (Charmaz, 2008:160). Grounded theorists stress 'the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge out of their data' (Bryman et al., 2014:43) which results through an iterative oscillating process between collecting data and testing emerging theories (Bryman et al., 2014). This notion of allowing inherent patterns to emerge from data thus strengthened the inductive approach I pursued.

3.2 Data Collection

My primary research data was collected through cascading semi-structured interviews with deemed experts in the field of multi-stakeholder collaboration facilitation until the process was saturated. I relied on the experts interviewed for further referrals to other 'deemed experts' as well as to direct me to relevant literature of key concepts and themes discussed. My research questions were structured as a conceptual framework which provided guidance to both the questions posed in my interviews as well as identifying relevant literature.

3.2.1 Primary Data

I first conducted a series of interviews with facilitators and conveners that had experience of multi-stakeholder forums in various contexts, summarised in Table 1 below. These interviews predominately sought to answer my first three research questions. As I progressed with the interview process, my questions evolved as I was better able to anticipate the clarity I would require. A qualitative study necessitates that I introduce validation measures throughout the research design thus to limit my own bias from influencing the rigor of the study, I purposefully questioned interviewees about their perspectives and the discourse they were using to ensure that I built reflexivity into the data that I would be drawing on in my analysis.

Next, I held a focus group with selected facilitators from the study to review and refine my preliminary findings, included in Table 1 below. I was specifically seeking to validate and clarify the conclusions made about my first and second research questions but to also further expand on my understanding of my third research question findings.

I concluded by presenting these findings to coaches (who both facilitate and provide business- and life- coaching) for comment and further exploration, summarised in Table 1 below. In this series of interviews, I primarily focused on asking questions that would expand on the findings to my third and fourth research questions.

Throughout the interview process I recorded notes as well as documented reflections about the interviewee responses and themselves immediately after the conclusion of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed and each person interviewed received a transcript of their interview to review and provide feedback on, if necessary and / or relevant.

I deemed the process saturated once the facilitators referrals to other facilitators became circular.

Table 1: *A summary of the experts interviewed*

Interviewee	'Job' Description	Interview Length	Transcript Length
Facilitator 1	Academic Convener- and participant- of multi-stakeholder forums	53 min	19 pages
Facilitator 2	Independent facilitator	96 min	24 pages
Facilitator 3	Academic and independent facilitator	129 min	37 pages
Facilitator 4	Retired facilitator and facilitation trainer	94 min	35 pages
Facilitator 5	Convener and facilitator within a listed company	63 min	26 pages
Facilitator 6	Independent facilitator and coach	107 min	43 pages
Facilitator 7	Independent facilitator	82 min	31 pages
Facilitator 8	Convener- and participant- of multi-stakeholder forums within a listed company	56 min	18 pages
Facilitator 9	Managing partner in facilitation and training consultancy	71 min	23 pages
Facilitator 10	Independent facilitator and academic	101 min	40 pages
Facilitator 11	Partner within a strategic facilitation consultancy	98 min	30 pages
Facilitator 12	Independent facilitator, coach and trainer	106 min	38 pages
Coach 1	Trainer and facilitator within a strategy development consultancy	74 min	45 pages
Coach 2	Owner of coaching and facilitation consultancy; academic; qualified psychologist	78 min	30 pages
Coach 3	Independent coach and facilitator	93 min	28 pages
Focus Group	n/a	136 min	72 pages

3.2.2 Secondary data

A literature review is a synthesis of a comprehensive overview of a domain of scholarship and scholars adopt inductive reasoning when working through 'a sample of texts … in order to come to a proper understanding' thereof (Mouton, 2001:180). I employed a literature review to establish context and background to my research topic; clarify how key concepts are understood and referenced within my research context; present core arguments within the consulted literature; and highlight the gaps within the literature (Mouton, 2001). The latter also justified my study and how it intends to contribute to addressing the identified gap.

I selected a traditional review for my research to critically examine existing theories and hypotheses and summarise large volumes of literature whilst identifying gaps in the literature and future research opportunities (Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan, 2008). Constructing a literature review, especially one anchored in a grounded theory methodology is a continuous, interconnected and cyclical process – searching, reading and writing continuously 'feed into each other' (Ridley, 2012:78). I found that maintaining a focus on my research questions was essential during this reiterative process to avoid getting lost in the literature.

My literature review was constructed from secondary data that was guided by themes and concepts discussed in the interviews, and included:

- Academic journal articles
- Discourse analysis reports produced by academics
- Commissioned guidelines written by academics who are practitioners too
- Guidelines written by practitioners
- Experienced facilitators commentary
- Books written by practitioners
- Conference notes

I attempted to limit my reliance on practitioner literature when I was unable to verify the research rigor applied in the writing thereof. However, I believe that the knowledge gap I identified and sought to investigate stems from a lack of knowledge transfer between practitioner and academic communities. Van de Ven (2007) argues that the continued under-valued knowledge and experiences generated by practitioners results in missed opportunities to expand on our understanding and ability to address wicked problems. This theory-practice gap led to the development of engaged scholarship within management literature which van de Ven and Johnson (2006:803) define as 'a collaborative form of enquiry in which academics and practitioners leverage their different perspectives and competencies to coproduce knowledge about a complex problem or phenomenon that exists under conditions of uncertainty found in the world'.

Although I limited my reliance on practitioner literature in writing my literature review, I must acknowledge the vital role of practitioners in informing, testing and validating my research findings. In this grounded study, practitioners were my primary

reference source in generating new or rather affirming old knowledge relevant to my research context.

3.3 Data Analysis

My research approach was informed by principles of constructivists' grounded theory methodology. This allowed for a more flexible and dynamic application of the grounded theory methodology. A rigid application of grounded theory principles could potentially suppress emergent theory and Charmaz (2008:168) encourages scholars to learn 'to tolerate ambiguity [as it] permits the researcher to become more receptive to creating emergent categories and strategies'. I made use of the constant comparison (i.e. the ongoing collection and analysis of data) and theoretical sampling (i.e., the deliberate selection of data) of grounded theory principles in analysing my data (Suddaby, 2006). This iterative exercise was carried out by coding and sorting my data utilising Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis and research software.

To code the interview transcripts of the 12 facilitators interviewed in this study, I first used the conceptual framework provided by my research questions together with my sense of the themes and patterns I had recurrently seen in my interviews. This however provided too many constructs and I re-coded the interview data guided by the 'Gioia methodology' (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). I refined the recurring themes established in my first round of coding to identify my '2nd order themes' and then reduced the detailed elements from my first round of coding to identify the core '1st order concepts' (Gioia et al., 2013:21). Table 2 below illustrate the 'Gioia methodology' process I applied when I coded my transcripts.

The coding of the focus group transcripts together with the transcripts of the coaches primarily focused on the aggregate dimensions, second order themes and first order concepts associated with my third and fourth research question (namely competencies and the development thereof). I also coded key literature that I identified as relevant to the aggregate dimensions that corresponded with my research questions.

Table 2: *A coding sample*

Supporting data providing illustrative instances	First-order concepts	Second-order theme	Aggregated dimension
'For me designing a conversation, a process for a conversation, is a very creative process. Increasingly I find my colleagues saying things to me like oh [*name*] won't you bring some of your creative magic to this. I think oh that is interesting, I hadn't previously thought that it is.' (Coach 1) 'If there's… there's a skill maybe before design in terms of a membership contract, contracting with the stakeholders in terms of not having a set agenda but making them an agenda or design emerge as the information comes in. Because one can go in with an idea of what a design will look like but one needs an adaptive ability and design as well as you go on if you're prepared to change some of the things…' (Coach 2) 'But the reason why I say that and I think what you have just said is triggering that for me again to be in the design phase is one thing, to be on the floor and then to be confronted in your mind with concepts, constructs, technicalities that doesn't fit the mind space […] But if your mind gets cluttered with stuff that you do not really understand because of the technicalities at stake […] Then it makes you of less of a service to what needs to be developed […] So therefore I don't need to be an expert on the topic […] That's in the facilitation but if I can associate at least to a certain extent so that I can stay focussed on what I need to do which is being married to process, process, process all the way through because I'm not there to serve any other purpose as to help to achieve an outcome that is valuable for the group' (Interviewee 3, Focus Group)	Creativity Flexibility / Adaptability Generalist and not a Specialist	Design Definition: Design is continuously dynamic, creative negotiation of the end-to-end collaborative facilitation process. It must enable the establishment of a comfortable interactive space for different types of personalities to be accommodated in the process and allowing for people to become focused and conscious.	Competencies Definition: A competency consists of various components, namely knowledge, skills and personal attributes

Throughout the coding, I utilised the note-making functionality within the Atlas.ti software to document thoughts, trends and ideas I noticed. I felt that saturation was reached when I began to identify the same key concepts repeated across my data, after which I began the writing process. Using the Gioia Methodology allowed for easier writing of my findings chapter as the emerging core themes corresponded with each of my research questions had already been defined.

3.4 Research Ethics

My research protocol was approved by Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee Human Research (Humanities) and I undertook my research in accordance with the faculty's ethics policy. No perceived risks to my research participants were identified in my ethics application.

My interviewee consent form provided an overview of my research and the objectives thereof and their contributions thereto; provided options for their preferred degree of anonymity; requested permission to record the interview; and pledged secure handling of interviewee recordings and transcripts. Any further clarification requested regarding my research and / or the consent form was provided prior to the form being signed and the interviews commencing. All interviewees consented to no anonymity and granted me permission to record the interviews. I have, however, opted to not directly reference any of the interviewees.

I undertook the necessary precautionary measures to safeguard interviewees' privacy and personal details. I enlisted the services of Top Transcriptions to convert my interview recordings to text. My recordings were shared directly with them and a privacy agreement was signed by all parties. I endeavoured to further ensure secure storage and confidentiality of my recordings and transcriptions.

3.5. Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

A major limitation to my study was experienced for those interviews I undertook over Skype and not face to face (four of a total of fifteen interviews). It was difficult to interject when interviewees *went off on a tangent* that was not relevant to my research. I observed in my face-to-face interviews that we would respond to each other's body language cues which made it easier to interrupt and pose clarifying questions or steer the conversation in a more relevant direction. Most of my

interviewees were extremely generous with the time they allocated to our interviews, which allowed for rich descriptive conversation. However, I found when interviewees were unable to be lenient with their time allocated to the interview the conversation was not as fruitful. Both of these limitations may also reflect my interview skills. I was often too apprehensive to interrupt interviewees when their lengthy answers indicated that they incorrectly interpreted my questions.

Had I conducted the study over two years, it would have granted me time to observe a multi-stakeholder process. I would have been able to further validate whether the process is reflective of the core process components, risks and competencies I identified in my findings. I assume it would have ensured more substantive findings and conclusions.

3.6 Research Strategy

In order to engender trustworthiness in my data, I sought to achieve credibility through the iterative application of grounded theory principles. I intentionally included reflexivity in my protocol by continuously clarifying discourse used by interviewees as well as reflecting back my interpretation of, and conclusions made from, the discussion to my interviewees to ensure clarity and validity. I also presented my findings to a focus group to be reflected on and scrutinised. I believe the interview findings database is transferable to other 'contexts and milieu' (p.45) and is not specific to the South African facilitation context. I achieved dependability by safe-keeping 'complete records … of all phases of my research process' (p.45). Again, through reflexive practice I sought confirmation by limiting the influence of my 'personal values or theoretical inclinations' (p.45) on the research conclusions made. (Bryman et al., 2014: 44–45).

Chapter 4 – Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline my findings from my grounded study guided by my four research questions. I present my findings by first establishing common definitions for the key terms explored in this study. I next provide an overview of the core components of the process of facilitating a multi-stakeholder process, illuminating what I define as primary and secondary processes. I also briefly examine the major risks to the process. I conclude by identifying and discussing competencies required of a facilitator to undertake this process and summarise with preliminary findings on how these competencies can be developed.

4.2 Defining the facilitated process of multi-stakeholder collaboration

I begin this chapter by defining key concepts in this study, drawing on the language and framing used by the facilitators I studied, as the foundation of my research findings. While it was easier to provide a synthesised definition for some of the terms, others I found to be less uniform and therefore better summarised by both a definition and a rich description of attributes attached to it.

4.2.1 Facilitation

Within the context of this research and drawing on the dominant themes identified by the facilitators in this study, I define facilitation as:

> Creating a space that enables an effortless or easy process attempting to collectively move a group of people or a system towards a mutually agreed upon purpose.

Within this definition, key characteristics of facilitation consistently identified by the facilitators included:

- 'Creating a space' – implying both a physical and an intangible space.
- 'Effortless or easy' – is a direct reference to the root word of facilitation, *facile*.

- 'Process' and 'collectively move' – the group has to be collectively moved throughout the process, failure to do so will result in an unsuccessful collaboration effort.
- 'Mutually agreed upon purpose or objective' – it is essential that the group collectively identify and agree upon the purpose and objective(s) of the collaboration within the initial phases, failure to do so will sabotage the collaboration from the outset.

These recurring themes appear throughout the interview data and will be weaved into the discussions of this chapter.

4.2.2 Multi-stakeholder

Facilitators in this study understood the term multi-stakeholders to encompass:

> The maximum mix (max-mix)[5] of individuals or organisations that have a vested interest in a problem or organisation that is common to all that require representation within the facilitated process.

A stakeholder could be identified at each intersection of 'division or difference' pertaining to the problem or organisation, which would justify the need for diverse representation within the mix (Facilitator 12). Furthermore, each of the identified stakeholders approaches the communal interest from both a different perspective and mandate – it is this which contributes to the diversity associated with the term.

The facilitators illustrated that the stakeholders to be included in such a process would often be drawn from across the entire value chain (namely suppliers, employees, customers and service providers) of a business. They would also invite stakeholders relevant to the context of the business, including but not limited to other industries, communities, the government and environmental agencies.

4.2.3 Wicked Problem

The consensus amongst facilitators and the definition I assume for this section of the research is that a wicked problem is:

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[5] Max-mix is a colloquial facilitator's term which was referenced by several facilitators interviewed. It implies gathering the greatest diversity the process permits and context demands.

A dynamic, complex-adaptive problem.

A list of wicked problem attributes can be drafted from the facilitators' expansive descriptions:

- The presence of 'high uncertainty ..., low agreement' (Facilitator 6) and 'intractability' (Facilitator 7).
- It consists of 'many and diverse' 'interrelated' (Facilitator 1) 'variables' (Facilitator 10) that can be depicted by 'positive and negative feedback loops' (Facilitator 1) namely an interconnected system.
- Its 'cause is distant in time [and] … space' (Facilitator 4) and its 'legacy' (Facilitator 11) 'manifests over time' (Facilitator 5).
- It is 'emergent' (Facilitator 1), implying that it is 'adaptive' (Facilitator 4) and consequently it can create new problems as it evolves.
- 'Many different stakeholders' (Facilitator 4) are impacted by the problem and as such it cannot be resolved by only the 'intervention of one organisation' (Facilitator 9).
- It has no 'obvious solution' (Facilitator 4) and cannot be solved by means of 'linear' (Facilitator 1; Facilitator 3) analysis.
- It requires a very 'deliberative and inclusionary emergent response' (Facilitator 1) of 'multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-creation' attempting to 'dissolve' (Facilitator 3) the problem.
- To move forward in attempting to address the problem, it demands that all stakeholders 'comprehend each other's perspective to the problem' (Facilitator 12).

The characteristics in and of themselves explain why such a problem cannot be addressed in isolation by a single organisation but rather needs a collaborative approach by multiple organisations.

4.2.4 Collaboration

A succinct précis of the interviewees' responses limits the definition of collaboration to:

Working together across organisations and interests towards mutually agreed upon objectives (an extension of the translation of the Latin word *collaboration*).

However, my research context necessitates greater clarity of the term and its application. One facilitator[6] in this study provided a self-constructed formula for collaboration:

$$\text{Collaboration} = \frac{\text{Contribution X Connectedness X Contracting}}{\text{Ideal Context}}$$

The factors of the equation can be interpreted as follows:

- Contribution: Collaboration solicits the commitment of 'complementing resources and capabilities' (Facilitator 1) by participating parties in an 'authentic way' (Facilitator 12).
- Connectedness: Relatedness that extends beyond self-awareness and reflection but that is rather 'deeply entrenched' (Facilitator 12) resulting in 'reflecting together so as to be able to generate knowledge' (Facilitator 6) and analyses simultaneously; a 'reciprocity or generosity that engenders trust' (Facilitator 12).
- Contracting: 'Clarity of expectation' (Facilitator 12) pertaining to accountabilities and responsibilities amongst participating parties within the 'joint commitment' (Facilitator 3).
- Ideal Context: 'Democratic, just and equitable space' (Facilitator 3) 'conducive to collaboration' (Facilitator 12), 'co-creation' [and] 'collective agreement' (Facilitator 3).

Successful collaboration, as was illustrated in the literature review (Huxham 2003, Huxham & Vaugen, 2013) and as should be the result of the equation, should amass to a sum greater than its parts.

Referencing the Japanese concept of Ba, one facilitator presented collaboration as the development of 'a group consciousness where the interests of the group are paramount versus the interests of the individual'. 'Even the concept of time now shifts

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[6] Alison du Toit

from individuals to the group' … 'it also involves a level of co-belonging if you like and co-creation' (Facilitator 6). A very novel ambition, but as suggested by another facilitator, not many societies possess the level of maturity to generate such collaboration (Facilitator 10).

4.2.5 Facilitator versus Convener

There was mutual consensus in this study that a facilitator is someone with the competency to conduct the process referred to within the definition of facilitation above. My findings show that the burden of emphasis is on the ability of the facilitator to make a very complex process 'effortless or easy' (Facilitator 5). Furthermore, it is deemed necessary that the facilitator be 'independent' (Facilitator 5) of, or 'neutral' to, the group or system identified in the definition 'so as to secure a safe and secure conversation space' (Facilitator 3). Both aspects were continuously emphasised by the facilitators interviewed in this study.

Narrowly defined, a convener is:

> An individual or organisation that creates a platform for people to gather for a specific reason.

However, within the context of this research, where the reason for gathering would be the identified wicked problem, I extend the definition to distinguish a convener as one who:

- Recognises the need and assumes the responsibility to gather parties affected by the problem OR is mandated by another to do so (Facilitator 2; Facilitator 9).
- 'Co-ordinates' (Facilitator 6) the 'logistics' (Facilitator 10; Facilitator 12) of the gathering – a 'transactional role' (Facilitator 12).
- Holds a position of 'trust' (Facilitator 10), 'legitimacy and influence' (Facilitator 9) as well as that of needed 'connections, power, [and] resources' (Facilitator 4) within the problem-context and as such is able to convene the group.
- Recedes from their role of agency within the process (Facilitator 11).

A facilitator should also be a convener within the process, but many facilitators in this study responded that the main convener should not also be the facilitator for fear of bias and undue influence within the process.

4.3. Process

'I call it the primary process and the secondary process' (Facilitator 12).

'… so you have a conscious process and a subconscious process' (Facilitator 10).

'… you have a technical process' and 'then you have a whole another process' – 'a social process' that is 'relational building', 'building social capital' (Facilitator 11).

These reflections confirm what other facilitators alluded to throughout the study: namely, that the facilitation process can be divided into two processes – the technical, conscious primary process and the relational, sub-conscious secondary process. Facilitators did not clearly distinguish between the two, but rather inferred the processes are intertwined and, because of this, it may be construed that there is overlap between the two descriptions which follow.

4.3.1 Primary Process

In accordance with the nearly unanimous facilitators' responses, I draw on Scharmer's Theory U model (Scharmer & Senge, 2009) as a framework to answer my first research question.[7] I observed that this framework provided the foundation or golden thread of the facilitation process for most facilitators, and that they would weave in other frameworks, models, and techniques as was applicable and necessary.

4.3.1.1 Co-initiating

This phase focuses on the elements of process preparation. The facilitators persistently drew attention to the importance and amount of preparation work

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[7] What are the core components which could form part of successfully facilitated multi-stakeholder collaboration processes addressing wicked problems confronting business?

required by the facilitation team (the convener(s), the facilitator(s) and any assistants). Under-experienced conveners and facilitators *often underestimate this* and a poorly designed process might ensue (Facilitator 5).

The onus rests on the facilitator to 'clarify' 'the scope' (Facilitator 7) of the assignment before agreeing to it. They must be 'comfortable' (Facilitator 11) that they are the 'right person' (Facilitator 11) for the assignment and that it falls within the ambit of their abilities.

Should the facilitator agree to the assignment, they would strive to create 'a partnership space' (Facilitator 12) with the convener to 'initiate [the process] together' (Facilitator 12). An important element of this 'space' is for the facilitator to 'agree on the terms of reference' (Facilitator 11) for facilitating the process with the convener. Such terms may include but are not limited to:

- Establish and agree: objectives of the process (Facilitator 3); the purpose and role of the facilitator from the scope of work identified (Facilitator 7); to what extent 'the emergence of new issues' (Facilitator 3) would be allowed and explored as well as raising and discussing 'tough issues' with the convener and vice versa (Facilitator 4).
- The flexibility to 'revisit and renew' (Facilitator 4) the terms of reference subject to new discoveries.
- To 'treat [the convener] equally' (Facilitator 7) with all other stakeholders.
- The convenor's commitment to listen (Facilitator 4).
- Agreeing on the convenor's level of active or present participation in the process (Facilitator 3).
- Agreement to 'withdraw' from the process if there is a lack of 'acceptance of the facilitator' by 'any one of the parties' (Facilitator 7).
- Identifying and establishing the feedback mechanisms (including debriefing) of the facilitator to the convener (Facilitator 3) with the appropriate discretion and confidence.
- Outlining a governance framework for the process (Facilitator 2).
- Identify the 'kind of space', 'tools' and 'supporting instruments' needed in the design of the process (Facilitator 3).

Once this space is agreed and a partnership has been established, others who may assist with the convening, design and facilitation of the process may be identified and included in the facilitation team. Co-initiating by the team requires the 'exploration and establishment of the playing field' (Facilitator 7) – conducting research on the contextual dynamics of the problem domain and the stakeholders thereof.

It also requires that they assess whether they want to achieve 'scale' specifically to allow a greater number of stakeholders to participate in the process or do they want to achieve 'depth of understanding' focusing on a 'smaller group of carefully selected participants'? The former allows for a 'better understanding of the problem but [may result in] less agreement' on the purpose and outcomes of the collaboration whereas the latter may achieve greater momentum in both purpose and outcomes but the focus may be too narrow. (Facilitator 3).

Once clarified, the team would next consider 'who do we want in the room?' – undertaking a 'stakeholder mapping … exercise' (Facilitator 9). The stakeholders invited must 'represent the whole' to be able to sufficiently 'challenge the prevailing views' pertaining to the problem (Facilitator 5).

The purpose of extensively researching the context is for the facilitation team to gather enough information to create and replicate a 'micro cosmos' (Facilitator 1; Facilitator 4) of the system from which the wicked problem stems.

Next, the facilitator intentionally begins to build the container, extending a participation invitation to the identified stakeholders (Facilitator 12). The invitation from the facilitator deliberately begins to nurture a relational connection with the stakeholder by enticing the interest of the party to the problem (Facilitator 3) but also by demonstrating trust, confidentiality and safety (Facilitator 12). The objective is also to secure the commitment of resources, expertise and time by the stakeholders to the collaboration process. The stakeholders chosen to represent their organisations must preferably have 'legitimacy' [within their] 'constituency', … 'be trusted and respected' and be motivated by this 'empowering agency' (Facilitator 11). This translates as the representative having been empowered by their constituency with the 'space and resources to make a contribution to [the] process' – they have 'the ability to influence the context as an individual and collectively' (Facilitator 11).

If possible, I found that the facilitator will engage in a 'process of discreet dialogue' (Facilitator 7) or 'dialogue interviews' (Facilitator 1) with the identified stakeholders. The purpose of this is to conduct 'an assessment of reality' (Facilitator 6) or 'background research' (Facilitator 10) to 'frame' (Facilitator 9) the context of the problem and identify overlap of common intent to enable the team to better design the facilitation process.

If the facilitator enters a process that is already underway, they would still attempt to 'flesh out what has been presented in terms of an agenda' 'with the convener' (Facilitator 3) – I conclude that implies going through a similar exercise as outlined above.

There is a blurred boundary where co-initiating ends and co-sensing begins. Although the co-initiating phase primarily consists of the facilitation team's preparation for the process, it may include the initial convening session of the process. The facilitator may require that the 'ice breaker' (Coach 1) exercise between the stakeholders at their first meeting 'require[s] them to declare something about themselves … [creating an] element of vulnerability, without them realising they are doing it' (Coach 1). It may also be the opportune time to introduce the 'ground rules' (Facilitator 7 & Facilitator 11) for the particular facilitation methodology chosen (Facilitator 11). The intention of this is to obtain consensus about the chosen methodology and whether 'more rules' (Facilitator 11) should be added by 'contracting around the ground rules' for the collaboration group (Facilitator 7).

4.3.1.2 Co-sensing

The first step to change is the recognition and acceptance of diverging perspectives (Facilitator 6).

The intent of co-sensing is to uncover the current reality (namely the context) of the problem from the multiple perspectives in the room. Key to this is to recognise that the individual can embody their individual and their organisation's unique perspective(s) simultaneously. A facilitator would purposefully orchestrate a journey navigating these multiple perspectives. The different techniques that could be used include, but are not limited to:

- story framing (Facilitator 6)

- systems mapping (Facilitator 4; Facilitator 11)
- learning journeys providing a visual interaction (Facilitator 1)
- inviting experts to speak on related topics (Facilitator 1, Facilitator 5)
- transformative scenario processes (Facilitator 1)

The facilitator would empower stakeholders 'to express themselves' (Facilitator 7), while ensuring that the other participants listen. This is a delicate and vulnerable phase of the process where 'people might lose faith in the process' (Facilitator 7). Importantly, listening in this instance goes beyond what is normally understood and is elaborated on under the competencies section.

An actual visual representation of the system as the navigation unfolds, allows the 'system to see itself'. For example, a systems map, graphic recording or storytelling board could be a visual précis of the system. This is a 'major principle' that enables the stakeholders to physically see: 'where I play my part in [the wicked problem and] 'where we're stuck [until I am] willing to actually … let go of my mental model of truth'. (Facilitator 4).

I found that experienced facilitators then stop and allow 'time for reflection … instead of jumping into solutions' (Facilitator 4). This allows stakeholders to assess for themselves:

- Where do I form part of the system?
- What surprised me?
- 'Where's the duplication?
- Where do I see a gap?
- Where are we stuck in new ways that I have never seen before?
- [Am I] doing things that I don't even need to do and it is causing problems for [other] organisations'. (Facilitator 4).

This introspective critical reflection or 'reflexive process' (Facilitator 11) together with the careful framing of the problem's 'story' enables stakeholders to acknowledge and confront their own 'cognitive dissonance' (Facilitator 6). They may begin to recognise themselves in other's stories and cognitively reposition themselves to be able to collaborate. 'Unlocking these' mental models creates room and 'energy' for expansion (Facilitator 6). This phase enables the stakeholders to make a mental shift

'from a position based view of each [stakeholder] to an interest based view of each [stakeholder]' (Facilitator 11). This illustrates that respect for and appreciation of other human beings and their interests can be cultivated within an individual.

I summarise co-sensing as the uncovering of a more inclusive comprehension of the truth which better equips the group to clarify the purpose and objectives of the collaboration.

4.3.1.3 Presencing

'Presencing' is a reflexive phase which enables stakeholders to reflect on their position within the system, ideally culminating in a mental shift within the stakeholders. Facilitator 12 explains it as the shift from being 'human doings' – ticking 'the deliverables, … tasks [off] … the checklist' to 'human beings' who have a 'body, mind [and] heart' thereby allowing your entire being to be present in the system. Facilitator 12 asserts that the 'doing' will come later in the process.

Presencing also allows for stakeholders to remind one another why this endeavour matters and to ask the difficult questions of themselves and within the group, such as:

- 'What really works about this process?
- What needs to change?
- What do we gain if we change?
- What do we need to let go of?
- What do we need to embrace?' (Facilitator 4).

It is to be expected that this mental shift can cause great anxiety within a participant as the basis of their perspective on reality is *now* being challenged. It is essential that the facilitator creates ease, safety and comfort for the participant during such times of 'ambiguity, complexity and not knowing' (Facilitator 12). In addition, this phase requires willingness and commitment on the part of the stakeholder to persevere through this ambiguity and complexity.

4.3.1.4 Co-creating

'Sometimes things need to break in order to be rebuilt' (Coach 1)

The facilitation process can either fall apart at the bottom of the U, during the presencing phase, or if the facilitator helped to process the ambiguity and complexity anxiety, the stakeholders may be invigorated by the prospects of something new and better. If the latter, the co-creating phase provides the platform to 'workshop' (Facilitator 1) solution prototypes. The facilitator would guide this phase by carefully posing questions to prompt the group, but avoiding purposefully directing the outcome.

Depending on whose interests lie where, it is possible to splinter off into smaller groups and workshop ideas and suggestions (Facilitator 1). This phase grants the leeway to plan action steps, test working theories and explore their potential unintended consequences. Stakeholders are also able to use this tangible evidence to garner further support with their respective constituencies.

Prototyping implies 'we don't have the perfect solution' [but] 'we are going to try adding this to the process', [taking] 'this away from the process [or] 'we're going to start meeting in a new configuration' … 'and see what happens' (Facilitator 4). It also suggests that prototyping is a 'reiterative' (Facilitator 4) 'adjust and adapt' (Facilitator 11) process as the group would design, test and analyse the results then redesign, retest, reanalyse until the process is saturated and a suitable solution(s) 'emerge' (Facilitator 12).

Prototyping failure is valued as it eliminates avenues to pursue (Facilitator 12). It is also important to recognise that the prototyping is 'not trying to impose this magnificent solution that is the one size fits all' (Facilitator 12), but rather to carry 'the uniqueness of the differences in the system'. Importantly, a facilitator in this study differentiated between 'prototyping' and 'piloting' – the former is attempting to learn something, the latter is trying to prove something (Facilitator 4).

4.3.1.5 Co-evolving

This phase requires that the stakeholders create the necessary infrastructures for integrating prototype learnings into the wicked problem's associated 'system' so as to

evolve it. In order to prevent the collective efforts from falling apart the facilitator needs to erect appropriate governance structures to implement and execute any agreed upon plans. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Identifying a multi-stakeholder group that would meet at regular intervals. These individuals may also be responsible for the implementation of the prototype within their intersection of the system. 'The shared accountability … keeps an honest check' on everyone selected (Facilitator 6).
- The prototype(s) may require up-skilling of the team or generating suitable competencies and capacities within the team.
- Identify key 'monitoring and evaluation' criteria to assess how successful the co-evolution is (Facilitator 11).

My findings suggest that it would be beneficial to the selected stakeholder group to have a dedicated institutional or physical space that focuses on the specific innovation agenda at hand. The co-evolving phase requires the participants to establish their own 'container' with the physical space contributing as much as the metaphorical space to creating a 'safe space'.

To conclude, Facilitator 3 eloquently summarised the primary process as:

[An] 'essential imperative [is] the possibility [of the process] to continue [beyond co-evolving, fostered by] the way in which [the facilitator] facilitates the conversation itself'. [The facilitator must equip the] 'group of people [to be] in a position afterwards to go and repeat [this experience] amongst themselves or in various [other] spaces'.

4.3.2 Secondary Process

The facilitators were unable to provide a clear definition or rich description of the secondary process. The recurring theme highlighted the need for sufficient change or transformation within an individual; relational connectedness and trust amongst the collaboration group; and belief in the revelations and outcomes of the process and proposed solutions. These variables are all necessary to generate enough momentum to sustain the individuals in executing the proposed solutions after they

have returned to their respective organisations or constituencies. This is what I consider the secondary process.

The facilitators interchangeably referenced the notion of building a 'container' and 'holding' space. These constructs imply the creation and continued nurturing of a metaphorical safe space which allows for the above variables to develop. As with facilitation, 'container building' and 'holding' are to be recognised as both processes and skills that the facilitator has to enable and embody when facilitating multi-stakeholder processes. As concluded in 4.3.1.5 the art resides in the facilitator being able to establish and nurture the aforementioned variables within an individual whilst working with the collective (namely the entire forum) (Facilitator 6).

Coach 2 was the only interviewee who referenced and explained the psychoanalytic history of the two constructs and how these have been extrapolated to facilitation and coaching. Therefore, I will not reference the mother-infant psychology discussed in the literature review but rather explore the facilitators' and coaches' own interpretation of the constructs.

4.3.2.1 To Build a Container and / or Hold Space

Building the container requires establishing 'rapid rapport' (Facilitator 2) with the stakeholders to attempt to enrol and entice them to partake in the process. This process begins by inviting the identified stakeholders to participate in the collaboration process (Facilitator 2; Facilitator 12). One facilitator emphasised that the foundations are established through the nuances and subtleties – tone of voice, expression of interest, conversation engaged in – of the 'first phone call' (Facilitator 2). 'I am building personal relationships from the word go, because I want them to feel they are safe, this is an interesting space, I'm with my peers and I'm keen to share' (Facilitator 2).

Next the 'discreet' (Facilitator 7) 'dialogue interviews' (Facilitator 1) conducted by the facilitation team not only provide insight into the stakeholders' technical perspectives on the problem but could also provide a glimpse into their value systems and emotional state of wellbeing. This could assist the facilitator in identifying the 'intent' (Facilitator 8) and 'motivation' of the stakeholder in enrolling and coming 'on board' (Facilitator 1) so as to either re-create or evolve the motivation as the process progresses. It also helps the facilitator establish whether both the representative and

organisation have sufficient commitment or willingness to complete the process. It is important that the facilitator 'meet [participants] where they are' in the container and the interviews allow them to ascertain this (Facilitator 6). The facilitator may draw on these insights throughout the process.

4.3.2.2 Holding Space

The notion of 'holding space' translates as the facilitator crafting 'a metaphoric space' (Facilitator 12) for stakeholders to enter into where they feel safe, secure, respected and equal. The physical layout of the room also contributes to the intangible space to be held. The structure of the room (Facilitator 5) needs to be inviting and alluring – inducing engagement and collaboration (Facilitator 6). Both the metaphoric and physical 'spaces' must be inviting – encouraging the development of trust and relational energy.

The intention of the facilitator's initial engagements with each of the stakeholders is to subconsciously foster the understanding and reassurance that the facilitator:

- Is 'not wedded' to a particular stakeholder (including the convener) or 'solution' specifically that the facilitator should be as much on one stakeholder's side as they are on another's and that the facilitator's purpose is 'to provide the right space for [the stakeholders] to find the solutions themselves' (Facilitator 11).
- Will act with the necessary prescribed integrity and confidentiality, where appropriate and / or needed (Facilitator 3).

Establishing trust generates 'a sense of being' and 'a sense of safety' (Facilitator 12) lessening the anxiety of entering the unknown within the collaboration space.

Trust also needs to be engendered between the participants themselves. The facilitator commences this process by negotiating 'ground rules' or a 'minimal contract' (Facilitator 6) with the stakeholders of how they will conduct themselves within the collaboration space. The facilitators' treatment of the stakeholders, needs to 'mirror' (Facilitator 11) or 'demonstrate' 'practically' how to implement these 'rules' in their conduct towards each other – in essence 'coaching' (Facilitator 6) the stakeholders how to respect and treat each other as equals. For example, the facilitator would:

- give their fullest 'attention'
- would not 'interrupt' speaking
- treat all as 'equal'
- 'appreciate' what participants 'know' and 'have to say' 'from a place of curiosity' (Facilitator 12).

The ground rules also reassure participants that 'the facilitator will keep them safe'; 'if there is a bully in the room, that they will be protected'; 'that equity [will] constantly be restored' and 'if somebody is out of line, that with great respect [the facilitator] will call them out' (Coach 1).

Trust and consequently the established 'safety' of the container release the 'tension' enabling participants to 'fully invest their best selves' (Facilitator 1) within 'a space to think well' (Facilitator 12). Fundamentally, stakeholders should establish a level of comfort within the container that enables them to 'engage with difference in a' … 'curious and meaningful' … 'way' (Facilitator 12) – granting them the freedom 'to do stuff that they wouldn't necessarily do or say' (Facilitator 1).

The paradox that the facilitator must hold is that both the primary and the secondary processes are 'deliberately designed' to cause a 'disturbance' (Facilitator 5) within the wicked problem's system as well as within the participants themselves. The facilitator must, however, simultaneously nurture a feeling of safety and security within the participants despite this disturbance.

The co-sensing undertaken in the primary process 'subconsciously' has a 'calming effect' on the participants neurologically – the process is 'basically bathing the adrenals' (Facilitator 6) 'so as not to have [the participants] cortisol and adrenaline pumping all the time' (Facilitator 12). This soothes any anxiety allowing for more rational, logic 'generative' (Facilitator 12) and 'productive conversations – people are able to listen more [and] they're able to actually deal with what is uncomfortable about the issue' (Facilitator 6). Failure to do this and plunging straight into efforts to 'resolve the problem' (Facilitator 6) can 'be totally destructive' (Facilitator 12).

Holding space is also 'about finding points to be able to make people feel' [a] 'connectedness' [amongst them] 'that enables collaboration towards the benefit of the

overall system' (Facilitator 12). As a facilitator you are 'constantly looking for intervention points that deepen authenticity and create engagement' amongst the participants (Facilitator 12) – this 'relation energy' (Facilitator 3) must be kindled and nurtured throughout the process by the facilitator who is ultimately responsible for 'the social capital … amongst the group' (Facilitator 11). The facilitator must instil 'mutual acceptance' within the group that there is 'actually something' 'between us that makes it worthwhile to be together' (Facilitator 3) – 'that the participants have each other's 'best interest at heart' (Facilitator 12) – and cultivate 'willingness to be open to learn together' (Facilitator 3). The pre-requisites listed of the co-evolving phase are in essence the stakeholder group formulating a new container, if the facilitator has adequately equipped them to do so (Facilitator 3). The 'authentic human interconnectedness' (Facilitator 3) established amongst the group of stakeholders will sustain the 'momentum' (Facilitator 1) for this phase – for the group and for the individuals when they re-enter their respective, potentially hostile, organisations.

The facilitators and coaches interviewed merely allude to the change process within an individual that contributes to this 'momentum'. I would build a case that both the primary and secondary processes encourage participants to 'recognise' and 'appreciate' the legitimacy of each other's perspectives. These processes must continuously 'increase awareness' and 'interest', whilst providing assurance to the participants 'that they need not be threatened by the views being expressed' (Facilitator 11). This may 'make them feel uncomfortable' (Facilitator 11) and may be a painful experience as 'it starts to develop … a different muscle' (Facilitator 6) specifically stimulating new thought patterns and increasing consciousness. But if the facilitator is able to demonstrate that there is a 'process for collecting the views, analysing the views and feeding them back into the group' to work with, it should appease the anxiety and discomfort (Facilitator 11). The overarching objective of the process is to challenge, expand upon or transform the assumptions upon which the participants' frames of reference and values are based (Facilitator 3, Facilitator 6 and Facilitator 12). This may take 'the whole process' for some participants as they are instinctively 'holding on so tightly to what they' deem to be the truth (Facilitator 9). I discuss container building and the various 'types of holding' skills further under competencies (section 4.5).

4.4. Risks

For the purposes of my research findings, I have chosen to identify and discuss 'threats' to the facilitation process that a facilitator needs to pre-empt and mitigate or pro-actively manage as these arise.

4.4.1 Process

A notable risk from a process perspective, what was described as 'a facilitator's nightmare' (Facilitator 3), – is being brought into a process where 'a genuine attempt' (Facilitator 6) had been made to address the problem, but had failed 'to recognise the complexity of it and the need for specialist capabilities' (Facilitator 7). A facilitator's 'late entry' (Facilitator 6) into the process can be very tricky to navigate especially if an agenda has been pre-designed (Facilitator 3), power dynamics have manifested and stakeholder groups are either over or under represented (Facilitator 6). Furthermore, the interview data suggests that in such a scenario insufficient, if any, time would have been spent exploring the context of the problem but the group would rather have delved 'straight into trying to resolve' (Facilitator 6) it.

The development of 'structural traps' within the process limit its outcomes as whatever direction the facilitator pursues leads to a 'damned' outcome (Facilitator 4). An immature facilitator who allows 'everything to emerge and every voice to be heard' (Coach 2), and an imbalance between the surfacing of new 'issues' and establishing the objectives of the process (Facilitator 3) to emerge is not conducive to good process flow either. Process is also hampered if the physical layout of the room does not invite engagement or contribute to listening, collaboration and generation of 'something beneficial' (Facilitator 6). This is linked to the failure to create a space where participants are 'able to express themselves' (Facilitator 7). Process design that is not suited to the problem and context may reflect the inexperience of a facilitator (Facilitator 5) and may result in a poorly 'contained' process (Facilitator 1).

4.4.2 Time

The duration of such large-scale collaboration processes is frequently, grossly underestimated. Facilitator 1 shared that there is a 'lack of appreciation' for the 'length and the effort' … 'these [collaboration processes] take'. Facilitators may also fail to recognise that 'different stakeholders and different role players and different

sectors' [have] 'different time frames of decision making' (Facilitator 1) and these paradigms may influence the earnestness with which they participate in the process. An easier but still relevant obstacle to overcome is the gathering of stakeholders 'in one place' as it may not be as easy and 'quick' as anticipated should factors such as geographical location be considered (Facilitator 7). Furthermore, the objectives and ''timeframe of the process may not be compatible' and consequently collaboration efforts may be abandoned (Facilitator 11).

4.4.3 Facilitator

The facilitator in person also poses various risks to the process which must be pre-empted and mitigated. These risks include but are not limited to those in the following discussion.

Conscious or subconscious manipulation of the process by the facilitator is a risk to the process and group. The facilitator posing questions that are deemed more an 'inquisition' than a 'conversation' may erect barriers within the container (Facilitator 3). Failure by the facilitator to recognise when the complexity, the context (Facilitator 7), the technicalities of the problem or the strength of the group (Facilitator 5) exceeds their ability to 'hold' the process is also a risk (Coach 2).

The facilitator may be unable to be neutral or impartial to the process and / or participants given the nature of the problem (Facilitator 3; Facilitator 6 and Coach 2). Similarly, there may not be the requisite independence in the process should the convener pay for the facilitator's services (Facilitator 10). The facilitator may project onto, became 'entangled' (Facilitator 3) in or be taken 'captive' (Facilitator 3) by the process. An extension of this is that, when the facilitator is both a convener and a participant, the 'vested interest' (Facilitator 1) can be both 'confusing and disturbing' (Facilitator 5) for the other stakeholders.

Failure to recognise that there has been both a breakdown in trust in the group and that it requires the facilitator to hand over to another facilitator, also risks the 'going-concern' of the collaboration (Facilitator 7).

4.4.4 Convener

The relationship between the facilitator and convener can also be compromised and needs to be carefully managed. Some of the risks here include:

A convener who is able to dictate the objectives of the process results in a facilitator becoming an agent rather than a facilitator. A 'self-evident kind of righteousness' can exist 'within the convener' who 'calls [the process] quits too early'. This results in termination of the facilitator's services as the 'process' no longer wants to 'spend money' on an 'unnecessary investment' as they deem they 'know exactly what to do' and how to 'continue on their own going forward'. The convener should not be present in the process when they are 'implicated in any way to the problem' and their presence consequently 'generates distrust' or 'threatens certain voices' from being heard. This compromises the facilitator's independence too. (Facilitator 3).

4.4.5 Diversity in Perspectives

A facilitator requires the ability to reconcile the divergent positions and values of the participating stakeholders. The facilitation is doomed should stakeholders not develop the 'necessary sensitivity' to understand each other's 'different angles, representing different stories and different motivations' (Facilitator 3). A skilled facilitator must be cognisant of how these 'different dimensions' 'create different challenges' (Facilitator 1) for themselves and the potential for conflict due to these contrasting perspectives (Facilitator 6). One facilitator argues that a facilitator does not 'always have' 'to do something' and can 'allow space' for disagreement with both themselves and participants as it may be 'what' the process needs (Facilitator 5). I would, however, suggest that this requires careful discernment that only comes with experience. A facilitator cannot 'manufacture' an 'alignment of interests' (Facilitator 11). A person's instinctive 'response is to align yourself to what you agree with or your own experience' (Facilitator 9) and failure of the facilitator to 'unlock' the different mental models or modes of the stakeholders will prematurely terminate efforts to collaborate.

4.4.6 Commitment and Motivation

Obtaining commitment from stakeholders, both as individuals and organisations is an obstacle the convener and / or the facilitator need to overcome. 'Routinely' the

convener, facilitator and participants grossly 'under appreciate' the various logistical 'efforts' required to participate in collaborative processes (Facilitator 1). The convener and / or facilitator need to 'engage' (Facilitator 5) the 'interests' (Facilitator 2) of stakeholders by providing 'reassurance' that participating would be 'genuinely useful' for them and thereby 'convincing' (Facilitator 2) them to commit the required time, expertise and resources to the process's cause. Facilitator 11 concludes that if any of these are 'insufficient' or lacking, a fragile or beleaguered process will ensue.

An important factor to be conscious of is the 'amount of uncertainty and ambiguity' that prevails in the initial phases of such collaborative processes – when the facilitator is *wading through the mud* with the stakeholders to *clearer water*. The same facilitator's experience is that 'participants can tolerate a certain amount of' uncertainty and ambiguity if there is sufficient motivation and trust within the process. In the absence of either or both the interest and commitment of the stakeholder may dissipate. This may be due to the stakeholder struggling to muster continued support from the organisation / party it represents, especially if inadequate progress towards the agreed objective has been made (Facilitator 2).

Often the convener and / or facilitator can entice the stakeholders to continue with the process as these individuals may be isolated with the agenda they are driving (Facilitator 1) within their respective organisations. A reason to remain committed is the ability 'to learn' and 'a way to connect with others' (Facilitator 1) that identify with the purpose of the collaboration.

4.4.7 Conflict and Power Struggles

There are a number of conflict or power struggle scenarios that the facilitator has to be able to navigate. Some of those discussed below are attempts to manipulate and impose on the process in various ways. Others include perceptions that grievances, conflicts or the concerns of particular constituencies are not being heard or recognised.

Participants will often attempt to 'manipulate', 'outwit' (Facilitator 7) or 'impose power on' the process which could both 'disrupt' and 'trigger conflict (Facilitator 11) within the process. A facilitator has to have the ability to pre-empt and prevent or mitigate this before it can disrupt the process (Facilitator 11). Some participants partake solely with 'ulterior motives' – to 'hold power' and 'grow [their] own organisation', again the

facilitator has to recognise it and handle it 'strongly and confidently' (Facilitator 2). 'Corruption' (Facilitator 11), bribery, 'intimidation' all result in the suppression of voices within the process (Facilitator 6). Pre-existing 'grievances and conflict' must be recognised and need to be dealt with by a 'fair', 'legitimate process' either prior to or in parallel with the collaboration process (Facilitator 1). This may consequently (re-)establish the necessary trust and 'respect' required to be able to 'resolve conflict or deal with bottle necks' within the collaboration process (Facilitator 11). A facilitator also needs to 'watch hierarchy' (Facilitator 5) and manage the 'underlying power' (Facilitator 8) at play so as not to allow them to 'scupper the quality of work' (Facilitator 5) within the process. Specialists external to the process may be brought in mid-process to provide expert advice and may often 'misbehave' imposing on and disrupting the process (Facilitator 5). Lastly, sometimes there are gender, race and youth dynamics present that also require 'management' (Facilitator 5).

4.5 Competencies

As set out in the literature review a competency consists of a collection of knowledge, skills, aptitudes and character traits. I next discuss the competencies I was able to identify from my interviews together with what I deem constitutes the core knowledge, skills, aptitudes and character traits associated with these competencies.

4.5.1 Design

Design is the continuous 'creative negotiation' (Facilitator 2) of the end-to-end collaborative facilitation process – this negotiation is in flux throughout the process. Design of such a process must 'build' 'a comfortable interactive space for different types of personalities' (Facilitator 3) to be accommodated in the process – an 'environment where people really land and settle in a space' to 'become conscious and focused' (Facilitator 1). The 'whole reason' of being in this space is 'to move out of [the] everyday way of thinking' 'to access the side [of a person] that is often ignored or unexplored' (Facilitator 1) – to 'develop a little bit of a different [cognitive] muscle' (Facilitator 6). Throughout the process design must re-enforce the 'respect', 'trust' and 'legitimacy' (Facilitator 11) as well as create equal 'capacity' to participate from the 'practical' such as transport, accommodation, meals and so forth, to the 'knowledge' (Facilitator 7) for all participants. Design must also acknowledge and accommodate the needs and objectives of the different timeframes with which the different stakeholders participate, as previously discussed. The design of the process

must stimulate the participants' 'most rigorous and honest and unafraid' reciprocated engagement (Coach 3).

My findings highlight how a facilitator needs to possess an array of skills, aptitudes and character traits as well as an expansive body of knowledge which would collectively constitute design competency. This would consist of but not be limited to:

4.5.1.1 Research and Data Synthesis Skills

Throughout the process the facilitator collects, assimilates and analyses multiple data streams and their relevance to the collaborative efforts. More importantly a facilitator must know where to search for contextual data that will help to establish greater depth and clarity in understanding of the problem domain.

4.5.1.2 Generalist and not a Specialist

Design and process both require that the facilitator be a 'generalist and not a specialist' (Facilitator 7). The facilitator must have sufficient knowledge of the 'concepts, constructs and technicalities' of the wicked problem's context to 'at least' be able 'to associate' 'to a certain extent'. This provides the facilitator with the capacity to remain focused on being 'married to process, process, process all the way through' and not be distracted by unfamiliar concepts and jargon (Facilitator 3).

4.5.1.3 Facilitation Tools, Methodologies and Frameworks Knowledge and Skills

My interview data indicates that facilitators will identify a framework that is relevant to the purpose of the problem domain as a basis and interweave various other tools, methodologies and frameworks as the process unfolds and demands it. Some of these identified through the interviews include, but are not limited to:

- Theory U
- Transformative Scenario Planning
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Time to think
- Dialogue interviews
- Change Formulation

- Gap analysis
- Learning journeys
- Ladder of inference
- Container building

4.5.1.4 Creativity

Linked to what I have termed the 'toolbox of facilitation methodologies and frameworks' is the innate ability or developed skill of creativity. 'Designing a conversation, a process, is a very creative process' (Coach 1). The definition of design itself can be interpreted to indicate creativity. The plethora of stakeholder diversity, the systems within which wicked problems are anchored require that the chosen facilitation 'tools' and process be 'woven together as a tapestry that works' (Coach 1). Each process is a 'blank canvas' that a facilitator 'comes to afresh' (Coach 1) – starting over using their available 'tools', experience and intuition.

4.5.1.5 Flexibility

Creativity is not possible without the innate character trait, natural aptitude or developed skill of flexibility – the facilitator 'can't be hell-bent on [the process] being a certain way' (Coach 1). 'Constant adaption' [is] 'the cornerstone of design' (Facilitator 7). 'One can go in with an idea of what design will look like, but one needs an adaptive ability and design as well' (Coach 2). Flexibility is the 'capacity to see what is arising' – [having] 'multi-perspective stimuli' (Coach 2). A facilitator is not able to fully anticipate what could emerge within the process and needs to be willing to let go of the design and allow the participants to shape it. This may ensure 'trust is maintained' (Facilitator 5) and that the facilitator is not attempting to manipulate the participants and the outcome.

4.5.1.6 Strategic Foresight

An extension of 'multi-perspective stimuli' is the skill of strategic foresight (Facilitator 11). The facilitator must be able to envision the end-to-end process in their mind's eye, with the knowledge that design change is inevitable. Process design within the context of wicked problems is 'multi-directional' (Facilitator 11) – it must design for the 'external' 'environment' system within which the problem resides, the 'interior of the individual' and 'the collective' (Coach 2). Systems thinking and / or complexity

theory are suitable knowledge frameworks from which to develop this skill or improve an existing aptitude.

4.5.1.7 Polarity

Polarity needs to be both constructed within the design of the process and in essence be held by the facilitator (Coach 2). An example of this within design competency is that process should allow as much 'diversity' as is permitted forcing participants 'out of their comfort zones' (Facilitator 12). This is an effort to stimulate rupture and 'disturbance' (Facilitator 5) within the individual and the system within which the wicked problem is nested. However, the design also has to continuously build and reinforce the process of a container – providing safety, security, mutual respect, equality and trust within a metaphorical space for all participants. Carrying such polarity throughout the process necessitates great facilitator self-awareness.

4.5.1.8 Nurturing Relationships

Design compels the facilitator to embrace the 'importance of growing and nurturing' 'deep authentic relationships' (Facilitator 12) while requiring that 'constructive use [be made] of tensions' (Facilitator 1) within the process (namely polarity). 'Although [the participants] come together in an intellectual space' the facilitator must 'move [them] towards an emotionally related interconnected space' (Facilitator 3). My research is not focused on debating the nuances of whether 'nurturing' is an innate character trait or ability or rather a skill that is developed through practice. Nurturing is, however, essential to ensuring relationships are forged that underpin the ongoing progression of process design. Such relationships begin between the facilitator and participants, and design of the process cannot commence if there is not sufficient insight into and trust between the two.

4.5.1.9 Energy Flow Rhythm

'Design also needs to have the rhythm that keeps the energy' (Coach 3). A facilitator must be sensitively attuned to the energy flow of the process 'understanding [how to] heighten energy', when it slows or how to slow it down, but 'never letting it dissipate completely' (Coach 3) – attentively observing even the need for body-breaks (Facilitator 7). Coupled with the skill of designing energy flow, is the skill of designing for '*dynamism*'– the ability to swiftly move the focus from the 'individual', 'to the

group', 'to the large thing' (Facilitator 6). Furthermore, this dynamic concertina-like movement between the individual and group is causing subliminal change without participants' awareness.

4.5.1.10 Curiosity

The character trait of *deep curiosity* is the foundation upon which good design and process is built – 'we would not be doing this work [of facilitation] if we were not deeply curious' (Facilitator 3). Curiosity within design originates from an interest in learning about and comprehending the system and the people in it, and observing how this collaborative process could potentially alter both. It is driven by an equal appreciation for and compassion (Facilitator 11; Coach 2) towards the perspectives of all participants, suspending judgement (Facilitator 11; Facilitator 12) during this process.

4.5.1.11 Crafting Generative Questions

The '*art of crafting questions*' (Coach 2) leverages off energy, dynamism and curiosity. A facilitator will begin to formulate questions together with the convener in the initial design (co-initiating) phase once all applicable data has been gathered. One facilitator emphasises that questions are the 'the most import tool in the [facilitator's] toolbox' in that they have the potential to:

- unlock conversations
- move a conversation forward, if well positioned
- invite the dissonant voice into the conversation.
- translate opinions
- be immensely more empowering than an answer (Facilitator 3)

4.5.2 Container Building and Holding

I explored the origin and theory of 'containing' or 'container building' and 'holding' in detail in the literature review. Most of the facilitators interviewed received training from the same instructor on the 'theory' of establishing a container and the need for the various 'holding' procedures or requirements. However, upon asking for literature pertaining to the topics, only one interviewee referenced the link between the facilitation application and mother-infant psychology. I explain the constructs of

holding and container building from the facilitators and coaches understanding and how they practically apply the skill within a facilitation process.

4.5.2.1 Hold Space – Container Building

A facilitator has to possess the capacity and skill to simultaneously generate and maintain all elements that constitute a container. A container is a physical and 'metaphorical space' (Facilitator 12) where people can 'settle' to become 'conscious' of and 'focused' (Facilitator 1) on the wicked problem. It enables participants 'to commit and to work together' towards 'solving', 'resolving' or 'dissolving' (Facilitator 3) it. The building blocks of this 'space' consist of numerous factors, including:

- holding content
- holding process
- holding tension
- holding trust
- processing anxiety
- being fully present
- being neutral, independent or objective
- establishment, growing and nurturing of relationships (as previously discussed)

These factors together with establishing ground rules collectively contribute to creating a safe space which empowers participants to be vulnerable. Each of these is next explored in detail.

4.5.2.2 Hold Content

To hold content indicates the skill or aptitude of a facilitator to process the multiple streams of technical information shared by the various stakeholders throughout the process. A facilitator must have the capacity to absorb, filter, process and feed back the information received in a systematic manner. The facilitator must be 'comfortable with emergence' – 'seeing the connections' within the data 'and making those connections visible to participants' (Facilitator 12). This is essential in helping participants uncover the 'truth' of the wicked problem, within the predefined 'criteria of truth' (Facilitator 10). This skill builds on the knowledge gathered of the context, technicalities and jargon of the problem necessitated within design competency so as

not to 'lose the audience' (Facilitator 5) by getting 'lost in the technical' (Facilitator 9). One of the coaches argues that a facilitator 'need's a certain amount of cognitive capacity to manage [such] complexity' (Coach 2). Furthermore, that the facilitator's complexity capacity in processing multi-directional or multi-faceted data information must match or exceed that of the problem's complexity. A fair amount of 'distress and panic at complexity' is to be anticipated amongst the participants and a facilitator thus requires a 'very high threshold thereof,' comprehending that it is 'part of the process' (Facilitator 2).

4.5.2.3 Process Anxiety

We name anxiety as terrible rather than [acknowledging] that it's alerting [us] to aspects in [our] environment, [our] internal environment, [our] external environment that are not making sense. (Coach 2).

Anxiety stems from the unknown in our internal or external environment that we do not have 'a map' or 'solution' for in terms of how to process it (Coach 2). When 'the metabolisation … process' has not been 'facilitated for us' [in other words the map or solution is cognitively absent], we have to cultivate it' (Coach 2). For this reason, a facilitator requires 'emotional availability' as they have to absorb and metabolise the individual and / or collective anxiety experienced in the group and then give it back in a format that participants have a capacity for to further process themselves (Coach 2). It also requires 'discernment' by the facilitator when the participants 'may not have the emotional complexity [capacity] or cognitive complexity [capacity]' to process something (Coach 2). An example of this is when the facilitation process enters into uncertainty and ambiguity (Facilitator 2).

A facilitator also requires the skill of object-subject distinction. In order to develop the ability to look at a matter 'as an object', a person needs to have first done their own work on the matter consuming them such as having spoken to someone 'about it' and 'had feedback' 'on it'; 'been given a map'; 'done [their] own work of sitting with and being too frightened of it' – all of these collectively enable a person to 'hold it out as an object' 'to do something with it' (Coach 2). This skill requires 'good healthy robust work' – a lot of training and practice as emphasised by Coach 2. But it is this skill that enables a facilitator to not become 'emotionally attached' within the process (Facilitator 6).

4.5.2.4 Hold Tension

A facilitator must have the 'ability to hold tension' and 'recognise that [although] you are in it, you are not' part of the tension or its cause (Facilitator 7). Supporting this sentiment another facilitator explained that the 'capacity to hold tension' rests in a facilitator's 'skill at being calm, aware and attentive', specifically 'building a strong capacity to stay calm' 'instead of being reactive' (Facilitator 4). Building such a capacity comes from directing 'attention to your own inner dimension, your own inner leadership, your own self-understanding and your ability to not react to it' (Facilitator 4). A facilitator also 'needs a calm personality', as panicking can incite panic within participants – ultimately the facilitator is the 'emotional core' of the group (Facilitator 10). Expanding on this 'self-awareness', Facilitator 10 further believes that 'calmness comes in confidence of the process' which is a result of the facilitator letting 'go of judging [themselves]' in terms of process', knowing that they are 'doing the best' they can and 'the process will do the rest'.

A common misperception is that 'a problem exists because there is tension and that solving' the problem resolves or dissolves the tension – as if it is a linear equation (Facilitator 10). A second misperception is that tension equates to conflict, violence or other negative associations. But rather tension could be understood as 'an artist approaching a blank canvas – there are tensions that exist before what is in the mind is translated onto the canvas' – otherwise understood as the 'creative process'. A lack of tension or frustration indicates people have either abandoned the process mentally or are no longer invested in it. 'Tension is necessary for a system and [a facilitator] does not have to resolve' it, rather facilitators should strive to make constructive use of it. (Facilitator 10).

4.5.2.5 Hold Process

The complexity of both the content and process can cause great distress and a facilitator requires a 'high threshold' or 'tolerance' to hold or carry such distress (Facilitator 2). Such distress requires calmness which, as stated, stems from a facilitator's confidence in their process. Again, the facilitator's emotional state will inevitably be mirrored by the participants in the process. The phases of co-sensing and co-evolving within the Theory U process can cause great discomfort, but the facilitator must demonstrate that 'there's a [fair and legitimate] process for collecting the views, analysing the views and feeding them back into the group' (Facilitator 11).

A facilitator requires 'strength' to hold the process, but also the skill or aptitude to recognise 'options in a problem or in a conversation' beyond the immediate. This links back to skills of strategic foresight and flexibility needed within the design competency too.

One coach's experience of the holding process is 'being absolutely present to what is arising in every moment' and 'to what is surfacing and possibly could surface'. There is an element of 'emergent possibility' and a facilitator requires 'foresight and a sense of discernment for when [it is necessary] to take action or when [to] let go' – 'your senses are on high alert because you are observing everything' (Coach 2).

A facilitator 'can never suspend' themselves, but they must 'realise that' 'this is about [the facilitator] being present here'. It is 'not about the programme' or 'the agenda' – it is about 'people and what they need and want to accomplish together' (Facilitator 3). A facilitator can only make 'conscious decisions about how [they] want to be helpful' (Facilitator 3). It is 'engaging with the various stakeholders in a way that they feel heard', 'seen' and 'validated' (Facilitator 12). Being present necessitates 'keeping the focus', not becoming 'involved in arguments' so that facilitators 'don't defend themselves' – not even their process, they 'rather explain that what [they are] asking for now' the group have 'already made room for' (Facilitator 3).

4.5.2.6 Attentively Present

Being fully present amongst participants and within the room allows a facilitator the opportunity to 'read' (Facilitator 2) the 'atmosphere' (Facilitator 3; Facilitator 7) in the room – an essential facilitation skill.

This skill requires the developed sensitivity of numerous senses. A facilitator must be able to sense or feel as the energy or emotion changes within individuals and the collective as it will be tangible in the 'atmosphere' (Facilitator 7). This includes but is not limited to rising conflict, tension, 'apprehension', 'pain' or uncertainty' (Facilitator 11). A facilitator must observe and recognise physical body, attitude and voice tone or tempo changes (Facilitator 7). They must also develop the ability of listening for or to the 'subtext' (Facilitator 3) or 'gaps' – that which is not said (Facilitator 3) as well as recognising the dominant and / or dissonant, quiet voices in the room.

My findings suggest that it is essential that the facilitator be able to continuously 'see' how all of the above 'plays itself out' during the process and to 'then use that information almost in real time to encourage' a shift in these dynamics or for the facilitator to intervene when appropriate (Facilitator 7). This sensory experience is a vital 'thermometer' (Facilitator 7), especially when what is being said by the group contradicts, when all other senses indicate that the opposite sentiment is present in the container.

4.5.2.7 Hold Trust

The trust of the group and individual participants is earned through being 'reliable' (Facilitator 2), acting with 'integrity' (Facilitator 2; Facilitator 11) and keeping the participants' confidence (Facilitator 3).

- Reliability means 'doing what you say you are going to do' (Facilitator 5) and being, sending or arranging what you as the facilitator have committed to (Facilitator 2). Facilitator 5 also believes reliability is continuously 'checking backwards and forwards' 'are we still on track' as to what was agreed. If not, integrity and by virtue thereof trust, is maintained by the willingness of the facilitator to 'adapt to the [requirements of the] audience' (Facilitator 5).
- To act with integrity implies 'never trying to fudge it if you've made a mistake' nor to 'bullshit' the group (Facilitator 2). A facilitator must not lie about mistakes, but rather be fully 'transparent', taking 'accountability' for them (Facilitator 11). A facilitator's integrity is also demonstrated through 'everyone [being] treated fairly' throughout the process as well as not being 'wedded to a solution' (Facilitator 11).
- For a facilitator to hold the confidence of the group or an individual, they would strive not to disclose information shared in privilege (Facilitator 3).

A facilitator must 'be the most honest voice in the whole system' so as to ensure that the 'system' 'joins' the facilitator 'at that level of honesty – always striving to 'move to a place of truthfulness when things get difficult' will enable the group to 'eventually follow' suit (Facilitator 2). It is not the purpose of my research to determine whether the discussed elements are innate human character traits or abilities or rather developed skills. The argument stands – reliability, integrity (including transparency and accountability) and maintaining confidence may lead to individuals and / or

groups trusting the facilitator and consequently to their willingness 'to explore difficult problems' (Facilitator 5).

4.5.2.8 Neutral, Objective, Independent

These words were used interchangeably throughout the interviews to reiterate that the facilitator may not be 'vested' (Facilitator 1) in, or must be 'totally independent' (Facilitator 8) of, the process so as not to influence the outcomes. One facilitator however questions the 'assumption' 'that a [facilitator] can be objective'? And argues that 'there is no doubt that [the facilitator has] an interest in the outcome too and typically if [they] are earning a living as a facilitator [they] want a successful outcome which [consequently] compromises [them] in terms of facilitation' (Facilitator 10). The facilitator does however caution that a facilitator must be 'aware of [their] own bias and try and be balanced' (Facilitator 10).

Facilitator 7 references the terms differently, distinguishing 'between neutrality and objectivity' and their 'being pertinent to the role of the facilitator'. Neutral is understood to imply that a facilitator 'shares a concern about the problem' at hand and that a facilitator can 'never be neutral' as the facilitator will 'always have a view on the world'. In contrast, 'objective means working with all the parties as equals and treating them equally with the same degree of care and attributing the same significance to all parties in the process'. I draw the conclusion that Facilitator 7's 'neutral' and Facilitator 10's 'objective' imply the same thing.

Facilitator 11 agrees that a facilitator will 'never be truly independent' whilst Facilitator 3 states that a facilitator 'can never suspend [them]selves'. Nevertheless, it is imperative that 'nobody in the room should be able to associate [the facilitator] with anybody else's private interest in terms of the outcome' (Facilitator 3). It is essential that a facilitator 'get rid of all [potential] entrapments' and ensure that they do 'not become entangled in anything else but what's happening on the floor amongst the people' whilst also facilitating 'the interface between the convener's expectations and the dynamics on the floor' (Facilitator 3).

The skill for the facilitator then is to identify their position on the problem before the facilitation commences so as not to project their opinion onto the participants whilst also ensuring that they remove any associated entrapments.

4.5.3 Intentional Communication

'There's an issue around people's ability to engage with difference in a way that's curious and meaningful. We don't have to agree, that's not the point of having conversation, but you need to be curious'. (Facilitator 12).

'The role of the facilitator is not to own the conversation – it's to create the environment and to maintain that environment for that conversation'. 'Ultimately the conversation is between the parties in the room not between the parties and the facilitator' (Facilitator 7). A facilitator must possess the skill or innate aptitude to 'facilitate conversations' (Facilitator 4) – this is not merely about the actual dialogue that takes place, but more importantly about the questions that are asked and the level of attentive listening that takes place. A facilitator must construct an environment that equips the participants to engage (both speak and listen) with each other in the most meaningful manner possible.

4.5.3.1 Facilitating Dialogue

The foundation of facilitation, as previously established, is creating a space that enables an effortless or easy process attempting to collectively move a group of people or a system towards a mutually agreed upon purpose or objective.

Facilitating dialogue involves the facilitator intentionally 'constructing generative conversation' (Coach 2) amongst the stakeholders that collectively moves them forward towards the mutually agreed upon purpose or objective. The skills or aptitudes required for the facilitator to set this in motion are generative questions and measured positive re-enforcing articulation.

a) Generative questions

Expanding on the skill already described under the design competency, questions are a facilitator's entry point into the conversation, and their articulation and formulation are of great significance. The facilitator would begin to formulate these questions with the convener when sufficient information on the problem and the participants' context, identities and motivations has been gathered (Facilitator 3). 'Constructing' 'generative questions' can be understood to mean questions that are 'open-ended and challenging with multiple answers and lines of inquiry' (Facilitator

12). Typically, these would build on prior relevant 'knowledge and understanding', 'experience and interests'. The intention is to 'open up areas of exploration and investigation' for the individual and the group – ensuring this enables focused thinking without excluding or eliminating possibilities. The ultimate purpose is to stimulate integrated learning across diverse fields and disciplines (Freestone, 2012). I conclude that to be able to 'construct' questions of such a diverse and intense nature would require the intentional development of a skill.

b) Articulation

'I always speak in a way that makes people feel appreciated … even if I have to call them out on something I will always use language that I will never let someone lose face in a facilitation space' (Coach 1). A facilitator has to be more 'measured' and 'calculated' (Coach 2) about the words chosen, constantly evaluating their choice of words, and how they will be understood and received by the audience (Facilitator 7). Many of the facilitators felt that it is necessary to use diction that re-enforces positivity and appreciation and to help participants to reframe their statements to that effect. Coach 3's sentiment, however, was that 'people live inside their own language – it's what makes sense to them' and that a facilitator must respect the language chosen by participants.

4.5.3.2 Active Listening

In order to 'meet people where they are at' a facilitator 'needs to first attentively listen' (Facilitator 6). I have termed this 'active listening' (Facilitator 7; Coach 3), as it is a conscious and intentional act that occurs at various levels – the content, your own bias and internal responses as a facilitator and the subtext – 'without saying a word' (Coach 3).

a.) Listening for content

A facilitator continuously has to evaluate what is being said in terms of where the conversation is at, the implications of what is being said and the direction in which it is steering the conversation (Facilitator 3). The facilitator would then attempt to synthesise the conversation using as much of the participants' own words as possible (Facilitator 3, Facilitator 7). This also grants the facilitator the opportunity to remind the stakeholders of 'all the views on the table' but also to ensure that a

stakeholder who is not being sufficiently heard is in essence represented again (Facilitator 7). The structural trap here is to ensure that if the facilitator provides an opinion by summarising the 'different points of view' it is an 'opinion and not a position' – that is the facilitator is not 'partisan' (Facilitator 7).

b.) Listening for bias and projection

> *'What you have to be, is aware of your own bias and try and be balanced'*
> *(Facilitator 10).*

Coach 2 explains that when training coaches they practice the skill of merely sitting and listening to people without intervening. During this time the student-coach would not focus on the content but rather focus on noticing 'everything that is rising in them.' This 'self-reflection' and 'self-observation' helps the 'student-coach' (or apprentice facilitators) to recognise the 'un-thought known things' – 'things that we know but have not actually formulated into our thinking and our capacity to articulate them' (Coach 2).

Differently framed, it also aids in recognising the sensation of anxiety which is merely alerting us to new aspects within our internal or external environment. For both of these, a person needs to formulate an internal map or framework to be able to internally process and respond to various scenarios (Coach 2). This skill and self-knowledge helps a facilitator to recognise when they might potentially project their own bias onto the process or the participants i.e. not to 'colonise someone else's mind' and impose 'your own thinking onto them' (Coach 2).

c.) Listening to the subtext

A facilitator has to listen, recognise and present the 'subtext' (Facilitator 7) to the group. This is an element of being attentively present and consequently responding pro-actively to the subtext within the container, as discussed previously. A facilitator would listen and observe 'the atmosphere, the gaps, emotions, energy, especially hurt and pain' (Facilitator 3), and body language, posture, attitude and tone (Facilitator 7).

They would engage with what they are sensing as the facilitator. This could be where the group is at presently, 'what are they talking about and what are they not talking

about', and why are they not talking about what I, the facilitator, thought would 'be of interest to them'' (Facilitator 3).

Nancy Kline's *Time to Think* (Kline, 1999) framework was referenced by most of the facilitators and all the coaches as the framework that has taught them the best to actively listen and 'to bring equity into the facilitation space, so everybody is heard' (Coach 1). The framework introduces principles that recognise the need for participants to 'listen well' to enable the speaker 'to do their best thinking' (Coach 1). I discuss this further under the competency of capacitation and empowerment in section 4.5.5.

4.5.4 Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a vital competency within the facilitation processes being researched. A facilitator's failing to have worked through their 'shit' and entering the facilitation 'room' with their 'stuff', risks these getting 'in the way (Facilitator 12) and the facilitator consequently projecting it and their 'persona onto the group' (Facilitator 3).

Self-awareness was described as the 'extent to which [you] understand (Coach 1) and 'know who you are' (Facilitator 10). This could present itself in comprehending 'what my hotspots are, what my triggers are, what my strengths and my weaknesses are, what energises me, what de-energises me and knowing what to do with that?' (Facilitator 12).

Self-awareness within a facilitator or participant could enable the following within the process:

- 'A high degree of empathy
- Confidence in terms of having the courage of [your] convictions' (Facilitator 7).
- 'The honesty to realise when something is beyond yourself namely recognising the limitations of your own capacity' (Facilitator 4).
- 'To recognise that you have your own place [within a defined context] that is not threatened by somebody else having their own place [or position within

that defined context]' Facilitator 10. And consequently examining each other's positions.

- The ability to 'distinguish or discern' … 'what is yours and what is someone else's' (Coach 1) perspective or position within the defined context.
- 'To recognise their [the facilitator's] position within the container' (Facilitator 2).
- Constant recalibration of self (Facilitator 12).

One coach frames 'conscious of self' as recognising that self is 'an internal construct' which 'we utilise to be in relationships, to grow, to soothe ourselves, or to find communion and agency in the world' (Coach 2). It is also to know or clarify a person's purpose.

'The success of an intervention is dependent on the interior condition of the intervener' (Coach 2 referencing Otto Scharmer) – this aptly summarises how such self-work capacitates a facilitator and presents itself within the process. This implies that 'it's the quality and the depth of work that the [facilitator] has done [that enables the facilitator] to be able to rise to the complexity, the difficulties [and] the struggles'. The capacity to hold complexity increases with an individual's emotional maturity – these two are, however, not mutually exclusive as an individual's awareness of complexity may increase, but their ability to hold it may not. Increased emotional awareness also better positions a facilitator to hold the 'polarities' explained earlier. It is hoped that 'the more work' an individual has done, 'the more mature in wisdom' they are and the 'less lean of ego' – this, however, cannot be guaranteed. (Coach 2).

4.5.4.1 Critical reflection

> *'The truth is a bully we all pretend to like' (Facilitator 12 referencing Gregory David Roberts, author of Shantaram).*

'Critical reflection' (Facilitator 6) is an additional skill that facilitators require and is important in so far as it allows for deeper personal examination. It is 'making [yourself] open to being challenged' and allowing for your 'assumptions' (Facilitator 11) to be tested, examined, probed by someone. In essence, a person is making themselves 'vulnerable to criticism' (Facilitator 11) – opening themselves up to trusted colleagues to question their inner condition and confront their struggles and

turmoil. This is especially significant if occurrences at home compromise a facilitator's ability to facilitate or be present in the process (Facilitator 11). A person consequently has to develop a capacity for processing criticism or feedback, because 'the truth is hard' (Facilitator 12). The ability to receive and 'take on board' feedback reflects 'maturity' – 'the more defensive the more immature' a person is (Coach 2).

Many of the facilitators agreed that such self-reflection can be or needs to be guided by a 'qualified' person. This is especially relevant when a person has gone 'through a traumatic process' and requires someone to 'unpack it with' (Facilitator 10) them namely to 'be 'facilitated through a process' of reflection (Coach 1). Ultimately such guided critical reflection needs to equip the individual to further 'sustain' the process themselves (Coach 1). The development of self-awareness and critical reflection needs to be invoked by 'willingness or intentionality' (Facilitator 12) and courageous 'curiosity' (Facilitator 2) on the part of the individual to truly want to examine themselves (Facilitator 12).

4.5.4.2 Presence

A sufficiently self-aware individual will have the capacity to 'rest' in 'quiet confidence' (Coach 2). In essence 'to rest' implies a person who exudes or permeates presence of sorts. This presence – not to be confused with being present – a facilitator must exude was referred to throughout the interviews, it includes:

- strong capacity to be or remain calm (Facilitator 4)
- exhibiting a non-anxious demeanour (Facilitator 6)
- 'exuding' integrity (Facilitator 6)
- 'feeling safe' within yourself (Facilitator 2)
- 'openness and genuineness' (Coach 2)
- 'quiet confidence' – especially significant in demonstrating strength in being vulnerable (Coach 2)

Facilitators re-enforced that whatever the presence is that the facilitator radiates will (eventually) be mirrored or adopted by the audience and the contribution of this ability (skill, innate aptitude or character trait) within the process should not be undervalued. Coach 2 concludes that creating a 'safe space' [is] 'very dependent on

the atmosphere that the facilitator has and brings with them' and it establishes the 'baseline' [of] 'what it looks like to be somewhere safe'.

4.5.4.3 (Self) Compassion

> *'Waking up this morning I smile. Twenty-four brand new hours are before me. I vow to live each moment fully and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion' (Coach 3 referencing Thich Nhat Hahn)*

Empathy and compassion were referenced interchangeably by the participants in this study. Compassion-to-self is an extension of self-awareness but, as agreed by one coach, the first step towards this is acceptance of self and that which self-awareness surfaces – 'it has got to find roots within you, before you can extend it to someone else' (Coach 1). Coach 1 further generalises that humans are not 'naturally compassionate towards' themselves and, for that reason, I present that extending compassion or empathy is a learnt skill.

Facilitator 11 reflected that in their experience, the more 'curious' a facilitator is, the more they would 'appreciate and understand, the more empathy' they may exhibit for different groups, suspending or withholding judgment. Facilitator 12 presents compassion as an extension of the development and expression of gratitude – being able to recognise and appreciate (in particular to value) the 'qualities of those around' is the first step towards being compassionate to others. Empathy heightens a person's listening ability as there is a 'willingness [or] a desire' to listen to others (Facilitator 7). Coach 1 concludes that the 'best facilitators are people who have deep compassion for others'. An extension of compassion is a facilitator's ability to suspend judgment of all stakeholders within the container (Facilitator 12; Coach 1; Coach 2).

4.5.4.4 Greater Awareness

Examining the personal lives and background of the facilitators and coaches I interviewed, I discovered that many of these individuals where well-travelled and well-read, exhibiting a continuous willingness and desire to learn and expand their knowledge. They are also deeply curious 'creatures' – expressing a genuine curiosity about life and other cultures, appearing to frequently engage in and with a diversity of sorts.

My conclusion from this is that an important element of self-awareness is to have 'greater awareness', namely awareness beyond your immediate self. Coach 2 refers to it as 'the outward path' whereas the self-awareness journey is the 'inward path' – 'going into the travelling inside and the physical, the lands of the internal space' (Coach 2). I conclude that this skill and knowledge enables a facilitator to more easily connect and engage with the diversity present in the facilitation process (Facilitator 6).

This 'greater awareness' could have been nurtured from a young age, self-inspired or be necessitated by the nature of the individual's work (Facilitator 11). Facilitator 11 believes that this needs to be pro-actively nurtured when people 'get older' as they 'become more conservative and' 'hardened to certain world views' – 'constrained' having to pro-actively guard against it.

I conclude that a few of the facilitators inferred that a facilitator cannot go through this type of collaborative facilitation process without being changed themselves. A facilitator is 'constantly aware of [their] role and behaviour in the process', 'building' [the continuous rigour of] 'self-reflection into [the] discipline' (Facilitator 10), consistently re-calibrating themselves (Facilitator 12).

4.5.5 Capacitation or Empowerment

I identified that a facilitator has to possess the ability to capacitate (Facilitator 3) or empower (Facilitator 2) the participants sufficiently throughout the process so that it equips them to continue the collaboration process themselves, beyond the facilitator exiting. This point was stated on several occasions in this study. Capacitation is for this purpose, and also serves the purpose of the secondary process – the inner-transformation of the participants.

Capacitation is the ability to apply the theory a person has been taught thereby developing a capacity or skill of sort (Coach 2). Within the context of facilitation, the facilitator would help the participants to reflect on and comprehend what is emerging or arising within them when applying the taught knowledge. The skill, for the facilitator, in guiding such reflection is to 'not impose [their] interpretation of that thing', but rather to bring attention to that which is unnoticed, asking the participant 'what do [they] make of [it]?' (Coach 2)

My findings suggest that a facilitator will strive to nurture listening, self-awareness and relational inter-connectedness as core capacities in participants.

4.5.5.1 Participant Listening

The skill of active listening is necessary to invoke critical reflection within a participant. Facilitator 4 explains the four levels of listening fostered within Theory U:

- Level 1– a person merely repeats what is heard so as to confirm what they believe and know.
- Level 2 – a person 'wants to discover something new and fresh' and is willing to have what they know disconfirmed or disproven so as to acknowledge the gaps in their beliefs and knowledge.
- Level 3 – a person steps 'into the shoes' of another to experience and be able to commiserate with the other.
- Level 4 – a person comprehends the need for change internally to invoke change externally, letting go of 'old things' to take on 'new dimensions of' themselves.

Using *Time to Think* (Kline, 1999) exercises, such as rounds or listening pairs, a facilitator would aspire to gradually transition participants from level 1 to 4. I summarise these as:

- Rounds – the facilitator poses a question to be answered by the group, moving from one participant to the next in a clockwise or anticlockwise direction, with each participant being allocated an equal amount of time to answer the question.
- Listening pairs – participants would be divided into pairs to answer either a question posed by the facilitator or the question that the participant themselves is currently wrestling with. Each participant would be allocated five uninterrupted minutes to respond to the question, but the emphasis of the exercise is for the listening partner to listen as attentively as possible. The listening participant will not ask clarifying questions, or offer advice or counselling. When the five minutes are complete, the partners will switch position and the other will answer the question (Coach 1 and Coach 3).

Time to Think theory implies that the quality of 'interest, respect and attention [when listening] is very much a driver of the quality' of a person's thinking. The process can be orchestrated so that listening pairs are followed by rounds to assess what a participant's 'freshest thinking [is] based on the pair involvement'. This also enables the facilitator to continuously monitor whether the manner of listening and stakeholders' perspectives are starting to evolve and consequently personal transformation is commencing. (Coach 3).

Many of the facilitators have witnessed that attentive listening can result in critical reflection of self, namely enabling a participant to become self-aware.

4.5.5.2 Participant Self-awareness

> *'If you are going to bring about change, personal change has got to precede it' (Facilitator 6).*

A facilitator hopes that greater self-awareness stimulates participants to question the assumptions upon which their perspectives are built. The complexity and ambiguity of the system that participants are confronting can cause them great anxiety, especially in the initial phases of this confrontation when the system lacks 'identity' and a 'boundary' (Facilitator 10). As the facilitated process unfolds and more information is gathered the system's identity (or rather its' 'personality' (Facilitator 10)) and boundary begin to be exposed. Facilitator 10 reasons that anxiety settles because of this emerging information. Participants are able to 'recognise' that their 'own place' within the system 'is not threatened' because of the existence of another's 'place'.

Facilitator 6 supports this reasoning. 'As the story board begins' to be translated 'internally', it 'helps [them] to understand what their assumptions are'. Although the question is posed to the collective, the individual is then able to recognise their position in response to 'what is your responsibility for creating this mess, this wicked thing?' This 'recognition' of the 'truth' grants the facilitator the opportunity to prompt the participants 'to [then] probe deeper'. (Facilitator 6).

If the process does not unfold smoothly, a facilitator in this study shared how they would walk participants through the 'ladder of inference' tool to help participants unpack their respective assumptions (Facilitator 4).

Assumptions cannot be challenged or changed if members do not actively listen and, consequently, begin to focus inwardly. Coach 1 will continuously interweave various ways of highlighting self-awareness throughout the facilitation process. These help the participants to reflect on themselves – who they are and where they are at; to become aware of and recognise their own 'blind spots'; to recognise how they influence the group, the facilitation space and the system; and to play games that help to recognise how they respond in or to various scenarios.

The purpose of these interventions is to help the participants 'to connect with themselves' (Coach 1). This is necessary for the participants to subconsciously begin to process and change their assumptions and ultimately their perspectives, but also to be able to extend compassion both towards themselves and others.

4.5.5.3 Participant Relational Energy and Trust

As I have outlined in earlier sections, the 'experience in the container' is to 'build capacity for changed behaviours beyond the container' (Facilitator 3). This is so that when stakeholders confront complexity, they will 'continue with what they learnt, with what they agreed on, with the skills they have built' (Facilitator 3). Trust together with 'the relational energy' (Facilitator 3) or 'deep authentic' 'interconnectedness' (Facilitator 12) amongst the participants translates into the momentum needed to carry the process forward.

4.5.6 Other Skills, Knowledge, Aptitudes and Character Traits

The facilitators identified numerous relevant skills, knowledge, character traits and aptitudes but many of these were not sufficiently substantiated or do not explicitly tie into a core competency, but rather underpin or support the entire process. As such, I did not explore them further in the discussion of my findings.

4.5.6.1 Conflict Management or Mediation

It is important to distinguish between conflict and tension. Conflict or disputes can result because of 'emotional' or 'material grievances', 'diversions of opinions and interests' (Facilitator 1) or 'power dynamics' (Facilitator 2). Negative tension can be a result of 'diversions of opinions and interests' or frustration due to lack of tangible progress. A facilitator will have to pro-actively pre-empt or manage conflict (Facilitator 11) and 'make constructive use' thereof (Facilitator 1).

Almost all of the facilitators and coaches interviewed had completed either mediation or conflict management training. Other core skills and / or character traits associated with this include 'a large capacity for holding distress, anger and rage' (Facilitator 2), remaining 'calm', '… collected and friendly' (Facilitator 1); having the ability to 'handle it strongly and confidently and … [not] pussy footing around people who are actually … very disruptive' (Facilitator 2); and having the 'strength and authority' [within the process to] 'call people out' … 'without offending them' (Facilitator 7).

4.5.6.2 Systems thinking and / or complexity theory

Given that the nature of wicked problems is complex-adaptive, many facilitators agreed that an understanding of systems and their properties and / or complexity theory is essential. This knowledge may assist with the multi-dimensional design of the facilitation process as well as progressing towards moving the system from disequilibrium towards an 'anti-fragile' state (Taleb, 2012).

Both Coach 1 and Coach 2 propose that a person's ability to 'grapple with' and hold complexity grows as a person matures. Facilitator 5 concludes that some individuals may have an intuitive understanding of systems but others require formal training. Coach 1 supports this opinion, but believes formal training is beneficial regardless, as it enables a person to anchor the ability in a framework. Others agreed that the skill of systems modelling is very beneficial in the co-sensing phase as it enables the facilitation team to map the system as it unfolds thus enabling the group to visualise the system.

4.5.6.3 Other skills and knowledge identified

Other skills fleetingly mentioned in the interviews speak to management skills more broadly. These are only listed here, and not discussed in detail as specifically relevant and unique to this research enquiry:

- time management
- project management
- governance knowledge and management
- administration skills
- process and systems aptitude
- good writing skills
- humanitarian character trait
- psychometric analysis and application knowledge

4.6. Development of Competencies

This was not the primary focus of my research, but there were three prominent overarching themes within the interview data pertaining to the development of competencies that I will briefly discuss.

4.6.1 Gaining Knowledge Oneself and Formal Training

Many of the facilitators and coaches expressed they continuously attended formal training courses that would broaden or deepen their knowledge and skills set. They also did a great deal of self-study, reading either very widely to gain greater awareness or very narrowly to master a specific field of interest. A few facilitators would embark on the latter first and then undergo training to anchor or supplement their reading as they deemed necessary.

This self-development and formal training is in essence also applicable to growing self-awareness. Facilitators and coaches confirmed having received formal counselling or guidance for certain periods coupled with undertaking intentional self-exploration either simultaneously or at staggered intervals.

4.6.2 Gaining Experience

All facilitators and coaches agreed that the best competency development occurs in the 'thick-of-it'. Many shared stories of being 'thrown in at the deep end' and that these were the times when they learnt the most. This however does not override my previous conclusion of a facilitator needing to decline an opportunity because they know the assignment exceeds their capacity and / or capabilities. Most also encouraged me to seek opportunities to observe facilitators at work as there is just as much learning therein.

4.6.3 Development of Aptitudes and Character Traits

I explored the premise of an individual's innate abilities with the coaches. Their intuition stemming from years of experience supported the notion that an individual does exhibit natural aptitudes which through intentional or unintentional discipline can be further developed – comparable to the likes of natural musical or sporting talent. However, they were uncertain as to whether character traits are linked to genealogy or are rather a result of a person's conditioning when growing up. Regardless, it is also possible to develop or strengthen these intentionally. Character traits can also be learnt later in life; however, it cannot be guaranteed that a learnt 'character trait' will withstand pressures in all circumstances. For example, having learnt to remain calm and collected, it cannot be guaranteed that an individual will be able to do so under all circumstances and they may default to their instinctive behaviour. Again, experience will strengthen the development and application of these aptitudes and character traits.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The goal of my study was to identify competencies of a facilitator of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes confronting wicked problems. Through a grounded study, I identified five core competencies and the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and characteristics that would constitute these. In this section, I discuss my conclusions to my four research questions as well as my study's implications for academia and practice.

5.2 Contextual Understanding

I began my interviewing process by establishing how facilitators defined key concepts within my research context, namely facilitation, collaboration, multi-stakeholder and wicked problem. I then reviewed these concepts in the literature. I intentionally did not first establish an elaborate understanding of my research context within academic literature for fear of consequently influencing my interviewees' responses or interpreting their answers with bias.

Partial agreement and contrasts existed between the practitioner and academic definitions for key terms I identified as relevant to the study. These included the terms:

a. Facilitation – despite the term not being frequently referenced in academic literature, the definition I was able to extract does largely correspond with my findings definition. Throughout my interviews facilitators placed significant emphasis on the 'space' that facilitators needed to create within which to facilitate. In contrast, the literature definition does not specifically include the 'space' but both dialogue-centred literature and practitioner literature does also discuss the importance of the physical and metaphorical space within which dialogue or facilitation is set to take place.

b. Multi-stakeholder – there is primarily consensus between the understanding of multi-stakeholder in the literature and my findings. The importance of diversity within stakeholder selection is emphasised by Gray (1985) under my stakeholder identification discussion and is not explicitly referenced in the

literature definition. This diversity beneficially contributes to better comprehending the problem domain and my interview findings support this premise.

c. Collaboration – I propose that most facilitators operate with a relatively narrow definition of collaboration which straddles consensus seeking, as explained by van de Kerkhof (2006) under Risk Factors in the literature review. However, Facilitator 12's 'collaboration equation' together with the few other facilitators who provided richer descriptions corresponded well to the expansive academic literature understanding of collaboration. With this statement, I am specifically referencing achieving Huxham's 'collaborative advantage' – amassing a sum greater than its parts – and focusing on achieving outcomes for the greater good and not merely objectives representative of the organisations present in the collaboration process.

It was evident to me that almost none of my interviewees were familiar with the extensive academic research that has been conducted on collaboration over the last three decades. The purpose of this study was not to understand why academic discourse is not reaching practitioners, but this conclusion does further emphasise the gap acknowledged in the call for more engaged scholarship (van de Ven, 2007).

d. Wicked problem – although I did not find a like-for-like word correlation between the literature and findings definition, I found that the underlying sentiment does correspond. Interestingly, several of the practitioner-facilitators were unfamiliar with the term wicked problem despite it having been in use since the 1970s. However, when I presented the term complex-adaptive problem to these practitioner-facilitators the characteristics described matched those of a wicked problem.

My conclusion is that my interviewees' comprehension of the key concepts in my research context predominantly aligns with the context established within the literature. Consequently, I am able to compare my findings to the conclusions made in my literature review.

Two concepts that are constantly referenced in my thesis that I deem require additional clarification are:

a. Problem Solution – Despite continuously referencing that the outcomes of the collaboration process are solutions to the wicked problem, by its sheer nature a wicked problem can never be solved, resolved or dissolved. The system within which the problem is nested merely allows for a transition from the disequilibrium to a new, hopefully better equilibrium.

b. Frames of references – the academic term and what it constitutes is explained in my literature review; however my interviewees interchangeably reference perspectives, positions, opinions and mental modes. For the context of my research these terms are to be understood as per Mezirow's (1997, 2003) definition of frames of references.

5.3 Identifying Core Components of a Multi-stakeholder Collaboration Process

My first research question sought to establish the core components of a multi-stakeholder collaboration process. Establishing these components assisted me in deriving the parallel competencies needed to facilitate such a process.

Facilitators reference Theory U as their framework of preference from which to design a suitable process. Consequently, I modelled my findings according to the core components of the Theory U process, namely co-initiating, co-sensing, presencing, co-creating, and co-evolving.

Furthermore, facilitators in this study propose that a dual process is needed to address a wicked problem because a systems-solution needs to be devised. In order to garner sufficient relational energy to maintain the momentum necessary to implement the agreed upon solutions, stakeholders have to confront the underlying assumptions that their frames of references are built on. Systemic change is required to shift the disequilibrium of a wicked problem and this is not possible if stakeholders do not fundamentally alter their interaction with the system and have conviction of the need for radical behavioural change.

A 'holding space' or a 'container' was a prominent point of discussion for facilitators designing collaborative processes to address wicked problems. It is a physical and metaphorically safe space where participants are able to confront their interaction with the system within which the wicked problem is nested. The confrontation allows participants to first identify their frames of references and the building blocks thereof,

then to examine and comprehend these and lastly to challenge these to evolve. The success of the outcomes implementation appears to be subject to the following being present: conviction of the need for change in behaviours stemming from ill-informed frames of references; relational connectedness amongst the stakeholders; and participants who are equipped to continue the process in their own capacity. Collectively, these three provide the momentum necessary to sustain implemented solutions – the absence of any will result in implementation failure.

Although academic literature centred on Theory U is limited, I extended my literature search beyond affirming Theory U as the process of choice. Practitioner facilitation process literature predominantly focuses on the core components of a facilitation process and, while my academic literature search delivered limited facilitation-orientated publications, there is an abundance of dialogue-centred literature that I found valuable to draw on.

In answering my first research question, I identified core components of a multi-stakeholder collaboration process. The synthesis process framework I developed from various literature sources correlates well with aspects of the core components of Theory U. There are many similarities between the activities of each of the various phases and I propose that:

- The initiating phase resembles the co-initiating phase
- The building and formalising phase is similar to the co-sensing and presencing phases; and
- The implementing and evaluating phase is akin to the co-creation and co-evolution phases.

This leads me to conclude that Theory U does relatively accurately represent the core components that would constitute a multi-stakeholder collaboration process.

Extending my conclusions to my first research question, I propose that the dual processes I identified are of vital importance to the multi-stakeholder collaboration process. My findings allude to there being overlap between the primary and secondary process. The suspension-presencing literature demonstrates that these two processes are so closely intertwined that they can be assumed to be one process. Both of the concepts look inward (i.e. observing the thought processes and

underlying assumptions of the individual and group) and outward (i.e. the wicked problem and the system within which it is anchored) concurrently (Bohm et al., 1991; Isaacs, 1993a; Isaacs, 1993b; Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2007 etc.)

Most of the dialogue literature focusses on suspension and consequently concentrated on the secondary process of my findings – specifically how to slow down thought sufficiently to identify and observe the underlying assumptions upon which reactions are established and the accompanying emotions. Prior research infers that greater self-awareness is generated through the act of suspension and that it opens up the individual to be more receptive to external influences (namely to listen and observe the frames of references of others) (Bohm et al., 1991; Isaacs, 1993a; Isaacs, 1993b; Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2007). This process engenders knowledge co-creation and unparalleled creativity to be cultivated within the group, both essential to addressing wicked problems.

Gunnlaugson (2006; 2007) extends Theory U and generative dialogue's principle of presencing to dialogue and suspension. Suspension allows for examining the past and present, and understanding how the wicked problem came to be. I present that presencing is necessary to design innovative solutions to address the wicked problem. Presencing as explained by Gunnlaugson (2007:140-141) is learning from that which is emerging – observing ideas and beliefs; "pre-sensing emerging meaning and knowledge". I also propose that it is suspension which leads to the co-creation of knowledge as participants collectively better understand how the problem came to be, but it is presencing which accesses the unparalleled creativity, needed to 'dissolve' the problem (Bohm et al., 1991; Isaacs, 1993a; Isaacs, 1993b; Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2007 etc.).

Unpacking suspension, presencing, containing and holding further, I present the following key conclusions:

a. Presencing – There is a marked difference between the explanation of presencing within my literature and my findings. I did not specifically prompt my interviewees to elaborate on their understanding thereof and my prior knowledge was also limited. I found that presencing has the potential to strengthen or destroy 'the social capital' (Facilitator 11) or 'relational energy' (Faciltiator 3) established amongst the stakeholders during the process. Prior research discusses the anxiety and pain that can emerge whilst submerged in

presencing (Bohm et al. 1991; Isaacs, 1993b; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Freeth & Annecke, 2016), but this is also affirmed by the sentiment that the process of presencing can lead participants to feel as if they 'are free falling' (Coach 1) without knowing when it will end. If a facilitator does not have the emotional capacity to hold the complexity and ambiguity (namely to process these emotions on behalf of the participants) then the trust, interest, commitment and motivation amongst the stakeholders could disintegrate. My understanding of the presencing experience is that if navigated well, it will be an unparalleled experience for participants however unlikely they are to want to endure it again.

b. Suspension precedes presencing – My findings support Gunnlaugson's (2007) and reason that a person is unable to sense the 'emerging future' if they are unable to first become still enough to observe and comprehend the origin of their present thoughts. I propose that Theory U and generative dialogue's presencing is established on the foundational skill of Bohmian dialogue's suspension. It is therefore an important skill a facilitator must master themselves before imparting it to the participants during the co-initiating and co-sensing phases of the process.

c. Prior research and my findings reiteratively highlight the need for a safe physical and metaphorical space – interchangeably referred to as a holding space or container (Schein, 1993; Gunnlaugson, 2006 & 2007; Crous, 2011). Within my findings, a container and a holding space are assumed to be the same, however prior research presents these as two distinguishable psychology constructs (Parry, 2010). A trained psychologist interviewed in this study was the only interviewee to distinguish between the two, referencing mother-infant psychology as the origins thereof. I could not find any literature exposing how these constructs had been transposed onto or adopted by facilitation. These constructs play a pivotal role in understanding what is actually meant by a safe space, together with the emotional availability and capacity that is needed of a facilitator. Facilitators would benefit from a better understanding of the origins of the constructs of holding and containing.

d. Transformative adult education – I propose that similar to how Gunnlaugson (2006; 2007) transposed Bohmian dialogue and Theory U principles onto

transformative adult education scholarship, transformative adult education discourse can be transposed onto facilitation. This scholarship is centred on perspective transformation and consists of three dimensions, namely psychological (changes in understanding of the self), behavioural (changes in lifestyle) and convictional (revision of belief systems) (Clark & Wilson, 1991). Facilitators of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes could benefit from studying these aspects of transformative adult education scholarship. The understanding of these elements may influence facilitators' design approach to the secondary process as well as how they are better able to capacitate participants with suspension and presencing skills.

5.4 Risk Factors to the Facilitation Process

My second research question sought to identify the risks to the process. Within my context a risk is anything that deters, prevents or detracts from achieving an objective – in this instance, the objective is to address the wicked problem. Risks to the process, the stakeholders and the facilitator as well as risks caused by the process, the stakeholders and the facilitator all impair the potential to achieve the objectives of the collaboration.

In table 2, below, I present a summary and comparison of the risks identified in my literature review and findings. The table of risks illustrate that although there was correlation between my literature study and my findings, the context and people will always dictate the risks, consequently a facilitator will continuously be confronted with new risks to mitigate. The study thus aimed to identify competencies that would help a facilitator to mitigate a broad number of potential scenarios. With sufficient exposure and experience, a facilitator will intuitively begin to pre-empt risks by recognising warning signs and control failures.

Table 2: *Summary of Risk Factors Identified*

Risk Factor	Literature Review	Findings
Process		
Time		
Duration of the process	X	X
Different stakeholder timeframes	X	X
A facilitator entering a pre-existing process		X

Insufficient time allocated to scoping problem domain		X
Development of 'structural traps'		X
Poor layout of facilitation room	X	X
Process design and facilitation framework does not align with problem domain		X
Seeking consensus and not collaboration	X	
Lack of movement – and / or opposition – by stakeholders	X	
Underestimated resource requirements	X	
Poor expectation management by the convener and facilitator	X	
Stakeholders		
Geographic location – logistical complications	X	X
Trust and / or Relationships - deterioration or lack thereof	X	X
Diversity – Inability to reconcile perspectives / cultures / discourse	X	X
Stakeholder selection		
Process lacks transparency and credibility	X	
Lacks diversity / poor representation of problem domain	X	
Lack insight or expertise to meaningfully contribute	X	
Lack of stakeholder acceptance due to stereotyping	X	
Commitment and Motivation		
Lack of – or wavering – motivation to remain committed		X
Persistent ambiguity and uncertainty		X
Representative is isolated within their organisation		X
Failure to demonstrate serious commitment to change	X	
Asymmetrical learning, stakeholders used for data gathering	X	
Uncertainty about how stakeholder contributions are to be incorporated	X	
Conflict and Power Struggles		
Stakeholder manipulation of the process and / or facilitator		X
Ulterior motives of participating stakeholder		X
Pre-existing conflict or grievances	X	X
Underlying establishment of hierarchy		X
External influences on process / group / facilitator		X
Gender, race, youth dynamics		X
Stakeholders reluctant to relinquish power	X	
Lack of stakeholder suspension and / or presencing maturity	X	
Resources commitments causing conflict or power struggles	X	
Facilitator		
Manipulation of process or group	X	X
Complexity / technical orientation / strength of group exceed facilitator's competencies	X	X
Unable to be neutral or impartial to problem / process / group	X	X
Contribution to content	X	
Legitimacy and authority questioned	X	
Facilitator lacks competency and insight to navigate conflict	X	
Convener		

Dictates process objectives		X
Ends the process too early		X
Implicated and presence creates distrust		X

5.5 Core Competencies for Facilitating Multi-stakeholder Collaboration

The key objective of my research was to identify the core facilitation competencies in response to an identified gap in our understanding of how to address wicked problems. I identified five core competencies, namely design, holding and containing, intentional communication, self-awareness, and capacitation, together with the knowledge, skills, aptitudes or character traits that cumulatively strengthen these competencies. Prior research does not explicitly identify competencies of a facilitator but, by making inferences from conclusions and arguments presented in the literature review, I was able to identify similar competencies to those within my findings. It proved more difficult to clearly identify the knowledge skills, aptitudes and character traits which constitute these competencies.

Design requires that a facilitator be creative and flexible; possess research and synthesis skills; have mastered the application of multiple facilitation tools, methodologies and frameworks; have strategic foresight of how a process and human responses may unfold; be able to design and hold polarity within a process; be able to craft generative questions; and have a deep curiosity to learn from and about others.

Container building and holding requires that a facilitator be able to craft a safe, trusting space for participants. The facilitator must possess the maturity and capacity to hold content, process, and tension that matches or exceeds the requirements of the wicked problem being addressed. Furthermore, the facilitator must be sufficiently self-aware, comprehending their position within the group, process and towards the problem to remain neutral or independent to each of these. Lastly, the facilitator must possess the skill or aptitude to remain attentively present throughout the process.

Intentional communication requires that a facilitator be able to facilitate dialogue through posing generative questions that will unlock informative, value-adding conversation, while being measured about what and how they articulate themselves within the container. A facilitator is also required to attentively listen to content, bias and the subtext of the conversation – keeping their own bias in check, but surfacing

subtext when appropriate and necessary. Such attentive listening to self is akin to suspension first and then presencing.

Self-awareness necessitates possession of the simultaneous abilities of critical self-reflection and (self)-compassion. A facilitator requires extensive self-knowledge so they are able to identify and comprehend their own position within a particular setting. The aforementioned knowledge and skills enable the facilitator to suspend judgment of and to embrace others whilst also increasing their own capacity to process the anxiety of others and return it to them in a more palatable form. Furthermore, a facilitator is unable to guide a process of suspension and presencing if they themselves have not mastered these skills. A mature, conscious facilitator will exude a presence of quiet confidence amidst others, establishing the allure of safety and trust. A facilitator will also have a continuous curiosity to learn more, whether through reading or self-study, engaging with diversity or travelling – the outer journey is as important as the inner-journey.

Lastly a facilitator is required to capacitate the group of participants through their facilitation process. Active listening is essential to enabling suspension and presencing within an individual – this is listening to themselves first and then to others. Through the process of suspension and presencing the facilitator aims to invoke greater self-awareness within the participants. Lastly, establishing trust and relational energy or interconnectedness amongst the participants are essential elements of empowering them to establish a new container post the exit of the facilitator.

Many of the participants in this study reflected that their interview was the first time they had been pressed to reflect on their practice and what competencies they have purposefully or unintentionally developed. This leads me to conclude that although they will resonate well with my findings and the descriptions thereof, my naming conventions for these competencies may be jarring to them as it is the first time many of them have been formally identified and named.

5.6 Training and Development of Competencies

Just as there is little evidence to indicate the relative importance of the different skills and attributes needed for effective facilitation, there is also little clarity about how facilitation skills are developed and refined … it

appears that most facilitators develop their skills and styles of working through an experiential process. These experiential processes can be either informal (for example, a process of trial and error), or more formal and structured (for example, through models of critical companionship or external-internal facilitation). There is also some evidence that facilitators move from a more direct support role towards a more enabling one as their skills and confidence develop (Harvey et al., 2002:582).

The above quote is the full extent of discussion I encountered within the reviewed academic and practitioner literature to answer my fourth research question. It does, however, support my interview findings and the repeated sentiment of my interviewees that the best learning comes through observation and being 'thrown into the deep end' of a process. Maturity in the competencies identified and similarly the intuition needed for flexible design as well as pre-empting risks only develop through extensive exposure to, and experience in, various types of facilitation forums. Numerous interviewees also reiterated that the complexity of the problem dictates the level of emotional and intelligence maturity of the appointed facilitator – again, necessitating the need for continued varied exposure and experience.

Throughout my thesis I sought to demonstrate that this particular type of facilitation is a life-long learning journey. Consequently no one institution could adequately capacitate an aspiring facilitator with all the necessary competencies at one time - many of the skills, knowledge, aptitudes and character traits of the competencies require a significant investment in time, exposure, experience and due diligence on the part of the facilitator to develop. Furthermore my research, attempted to provide a guideline as opposed to a static, mandatory list of competencies. I believe both intuition and innovation on the individual's part is required to develop these skills.

An insurgence of collaboration process facilitators is needed to assist in confronting the influx of wicked problems and until formal institutional training is available the onus rests on aspiring facilitators to undertake as much self-development (training courses and self-study) as is available to them. There is however, also a burden that resides on existing facilitators to provide 'training' opportunities to and establish mentoring programmes for aspiring facilitators as identified above by Harvey et al. (2002). Many interviewees also hinted at the need for establishing a facilitators' forum to share experiences and potentially provide training in new techniques.

5.7 Research Contributions

Figure 4 represents a summary of my findings. I present that the facilitation process consists of a primary process with the objective to design solutions and agree outcomes to shift the disequilibrium within the system of the wicked problem. The primary process also facilitates the secondary process, which serves as a magnifying glass for individuals to examine their own and others' frames of references and to challenge the underlying assumptions upon which these are based. The outcomes of the secondary process are to establish the necessary conviction of changed assumptions, trust and relational energy between participants of the group. These elements provide and sustain the momentum essential for the successful implementation of the outcomes of the primary process.
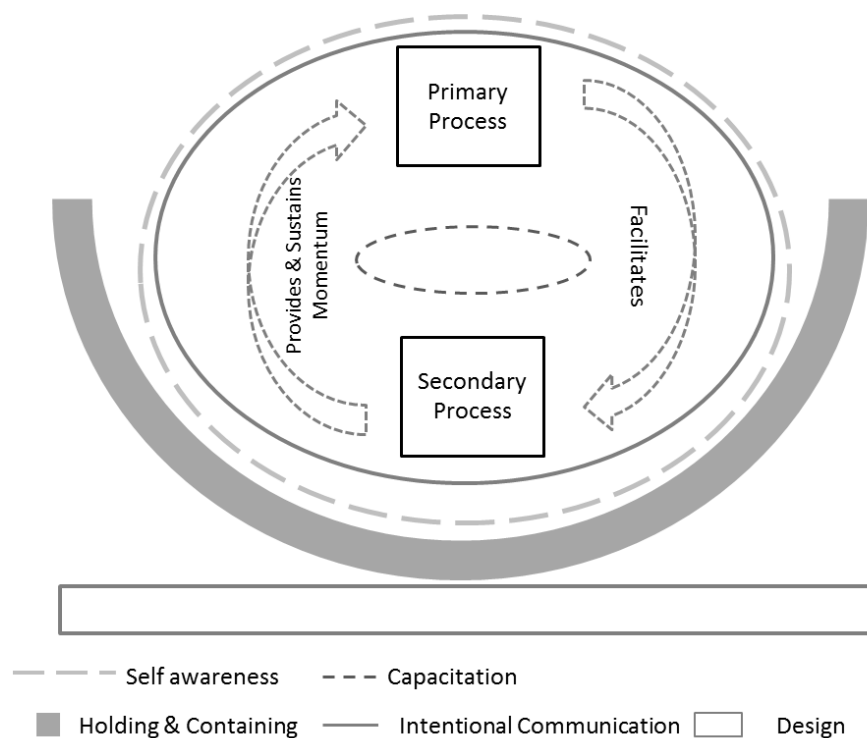

Figure 4: *A multi-stakeholder collaboration process – a summary of my research findings*

Through the primary and secondary processes, the facilitator is continuously *capacitating* the participants with the necessary personal growth, skills and knowledge to continue the process themselves once the facilitator has exited. All of the aforementioned relies on:

- Conscious and intentional *communication*, first by the facilitator and then mirrored by the participants.
- Continuous *self-awareness*, this is essential for the facilitator to remain independent of the process but is also an important contributor to the personal growth that the secondary process necessitates.
- The establishment of a strong, secure and safe *container* by the facilitator. The primary, but especially the secondary process unlocks a great deal of uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety. The container provides a *holding* environment for the facilitator to help the participants process and navigate the emotional turmoil thereby ensuring that trust, relational energy and conviction of their new assumptions is secured.

All of the above rests on creative, flexible process *design* that has been carefully crafted and planned based on thorough contextual research. Each of the emphasised words represents core facilitators' competencies which consist of underlying knowledge areas, skills, aptitudes and characteristics.

My research further emphasises the gap between academia and practice in terms of facilitation within the South African context. There are several discourses that practitioners would benefit from if studied or referenced. Some of these include Winnicott and Bion's mother-infant psychology (Castelloe, 2010; Parry, 2010) collaboration (Gray, 1985; Mattessich & Monsey,1992; Huxham, 2003; Gray & Stites, 2013; Huxham & Vangen, 2013), dialogue (Bohm et al., 1991; Isaacs, 1993a; Isaacs, 1993b, Schein, 1993) and transformative adult education (Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow, 2003; Gunnlaugson, 2006; and Gunnlaugson, 2007) Similarly, academia should collaborate with practitioners to further study collaboration facilitation processes and to develop training programmes with sufficient academic rigor – these could contribute vitally in helping inter-organisational efforts to address wicked problems.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Future research directions

I am able to suggest several other directions for future research from my findings and gaps identified in my literature review. To affirm and expand on my findings, I propose that my study be repeated to include more interviews with practitioners, but to also include the observations of numerous multi-stakeholder collaborative processes to better substantiate the findings. The observation of processes will extend the duration of the study as these processes can span several months to years.

Each of the competencies identified in and of themselves warrants further study to investigate the finer nuances thereof and how to translate this into training curriculum, where possible. Other related future studies for consideration include the mother-infant psychology of containing and holding and transposing this onto facilitation; utilising transformative adult education theory together with suspension and presencing theory to bring about transformation in individuals' frame of references; understanding the conscious and subconscious process of capacitating others through the facilitation process; and establishing personal and procedural flexibility through design.

The components of the secondary process discussed also warrant further investigation. Specifically, observing whether the tri-factor identified (namely, the conviction with which evolved frames of references are held; the relational connectedness amongst stakeholders; and the equipping of participants to continue the process in their own capacity) does provide the necessary momentum to sustain the solution implementation process?

Although extensive research has been conducted on the potential governance mechanisms of multi-stakeholder partnerships the structures, policies and procedures applied remain too bureaucratic and rigid for the purposes of collaboration, slowing down the implementation of solutions. The sustained success of collaboration and the outcomes thereof is dependent on innovative new governance mechanisms that are agile and quick to adapt as solution developments unfold as opposed to slow, bureaucratic processes that result in missed

opportunities. This implies changing the 'rules-of-the game' – policy, legislation and procedures changes may be needed together with the institutions and organisations that house these. Subject to the extent of transformation required, an entirely new type of legal entity may need to be established or it may necessitate entirely new forms of collaboration co-ordination. I elaborate on Peterson's (in Dentoni & Ross, 2013:6) 'experimentation in action' and propose that transposing experimentation governance theory onto the co-creating and co-evolution phases of the process is a suitable possibility to be further researched. Experimentation governance provides the necessary flexibility required from prototyping solutions to scaling these, as well as the necessary monitoring and evaluation rigour required by the various stakeholders.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, my study reviewed several layers of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes attempting to address wicked problems. Through interviews with practitioners and undertaking a study of existing literature I was able to identify core components of a multi-stakeholder collaboration facilitation process. My findings include that a facilitator's design consists of an intertwined primary and secondary process that aims to address the systemic, fragmented thought processes that have caused wicked problems, but that also strives to develop innovative cross-sectoral solutions to these wicked problems. I also conclude that Theory U's five-phased framework is best suited to facilitating such processes.

I sought to identify risks to such a facilitation process, but settle that the process itself, the stakeholders and the facilitators themselves continuously contribute to generating risks that may jeopardise the outcomes of the collaboration process. Each problem domain consists of a new contextual environment and set of stakeholders and as such it is not possible to identify an exhaustive list of risks. I infer that facilitators must rather develop the competencies that will best equip them to pre-empt and mitigate a broad spectrum of risks, but also that with experience facilitators develop an intuitive radar that is able to anticipate the potential development of risks and address these before they unfold.

Through my interviews with experienced facilitators and substantiated by my literature study I was able to identify and contribute five core facilitator competencies to meet the recognised knowledge gap. The competencies include design, container

building and holding, intentional communication, self-awareness, and capacitation. I was also able to identify and discuss a preliminary list of knowledge, skills, aptitudes and character traits that constitute each of these competencies. Lastly, I very briefly explored the notion of how these competencies could be developed through intentional self-development, formal training and gaining experience.

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