INTRODUCTION

1. ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sexual abuse of children is a reality and it can happen to any child irrespective of class, culture, race, religion or gender. One of the biggest challenges in the social field is the increasing number of foster children who have been sexually abused before they were put in foster care and who has emotional and severe behaviour problems (Hoyle, 2000:1). All sexual abuse is in one way or another damaging, and the trauma continues even if the abuse has been terminated. Lodwick and Meyer (2006:1) states “Sexual abuse is a profoundly disruptive, disorienting and destructive experience; the long-term aftermath can last a lifetime.” When sexually abused children are placed in foster care, this trauma and the aftermath is carried into the foster care situation (Starr et al. 1999:193). Spies (2006:45) is of the opinion that in order for professionals to effectively support the sexually abused child during the healing process, they should have knowledge of the process and negative effects of sexual abuse on the child. Hoyle (2000:1) is of the opinion that it is surprising that considering the scope of severe sexual acting out of foster children, so relatively little is written to guide the foster parents or professionals in how to treat these children. Researcher is of the opinion that foster parents should be empowered to be able to cope with this behaviour of children, through obtaining knowledge, but to also improve their own self confidence and in general psychosocial functioning, as the foster placement forms an integral part of the healing process of the foster child.

While practicing, researcher became aware of the fact that several foster care placements on the caseload of social workers, under her supervision, failed. The common denominator in most of these cases was that of sexual abuse or alleged sexual abuse as contributor to the children being found in need of care and protection (sec 150 of the Children’s Act, Act 38 of 2005) and placed in foster care by the Children’s Court (SA. 2008a; SA. 2008b). Apart from the trauma of the sexual abuse, the separation from primary attachment figures (Fahlberg, 1994:141) can be a devastating experience for these children. Should the foster placement break down, separation from meaningful relationships can contribute to or result in
an acute sense of loss (Fahlberg, 1994:141; Guishard-Pine, et al., 2007:141) because they are faced with repeated separations and losses. “The foster family members may also experience many of the same grief issues as the children do.” (Fahlberg, 1994:141; Guishard-Pine, et al., 2007:141).

The breaking down of foster placements can have many negative consequences for everyone involved. Researcher initiated an investigation regarding the specific reasons for the failure of foster care placements in general and focussing on the Nelspruit and White River area in order to find possible solutions for it. During this process consultations took place with experts in the field of either sexual abuse or foster care or both (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2008; Erasmus, 2010; Grobler, 2008; Sihlali, 2009). The aim was to on an informal basis without a pre-planned formal schedule, inform them about the planned research and to acquire information regarding a need for such research, if similar programmes exist, what their views are on the content of such a programme, how it should be presented. Consultations with two adults who were sexually abused as children were also conducted in the information gathering phase to gain insight into the impact of sexual abuse on a child (Anon, 2008; Anon, 2009). Informal interviews were conducted with the survivors to establish their experience and the impact of the abuse on their lives. As part of the investigation, local and international literature resources (as indicated in the bibliography of this report) were also consulted. During this investigation researcher became aware of the challenges due to certain typical perceptions and behavioural patterns that a sexually abused child can bring to a foster care situation and the exceptional demands it places on foster parents. (Earl-Taylor & Thomas, 2003:1; Paine & Hansen, 2002:272; Potgieter, 2000:33).

Investigation into the reasons for these breakdowns revealed interesting but helpful information. Puddy and Jackson (2003:989) cites Pardech who found that foster placement failure was related to the foster parent’s lack of training, resulting in an inability to manage the child’s behavioural problems and, subsequently, the removal of the child. The lack of adequate training for foster parents results in placement breakdown and also damage to the self-esteem and self-confidence of foster parents. In contrast to this, Fees as cited by Puddy and Jackson (2003:989) training
has been indicated as a critical factor in the success of foster care. Well-trained foster parents resulted in increased stability in placements, improved parenting attitudes and skills, reduced problem behaviour in foster children, better relationships between foster parents and foster children (Puddy & Jackson, 2003: 989).

It is thus of utmost importance that the foster parents have knowledge of and understand the impact of sexual abuse on a child in order to optimally address the behaviour, emotions and thoughts of the foster children. This knowledge and insight on the side of the foster parent might then contribute towards prevention of the breakdown of foster placements as it can enable foster parents to cope better with, and handle challenging behaviour of the child, more effectively.

Experts consulted by the researcher (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2008; Erasmus, 2010; Sihlali, 2009) are of the opinion that foster parents on their caseloads lack specific knowledge and skills regarding the sexually abused foster child, due to insufficient training. They mentioned that it could be a definite contributing factor in the failure of the foster placements on their caseloads. The reasons for this were listed as (1.) Lack of an available programme to use for training. (2.) Lack of time by social workers to develop such a programme due to high caseloads. (3.) Lack of time to implement an extensive programme. They expressed the request that such a programme be developed based on needs expressed by foster parents as well as social workers. They also recommended that it be a short intensive and condensed programme to impart as much knowledge initially to equip new foster parents of sexually abused children with basic knowledge, preferably presented over a weekend. It could then be followed up by “in-service training groups” on a monthly or quarterly basis based on the ongoing needs of the foster parents and/or social workers. Their request for a programme of short duration was motivated by time and financial constraints on the side of the organisations, social workers and foster parents. The initial vision was also for a simultaneous programme to be run for the foster children of these foster parents. Researcher decided to investigate further regarding the availability of such a programme. However, none that was
scientifically researched specifically for the South African context could be found (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2008; Petzer, 2010; Sihlali, 2010).

The final conclusion was formed that in order for foster parents to effectively foster children who have been sexually abused, foster parents have to be empowered to understand the dynamics of sexual abuse and the impact thereof on children. But only understanding the impact might not enable foster parents to cope better with a child who has been sexually abused. It should be more encompassing, including improvement of the psychosocial functioning of the foster parent to make the empowerment more long-lasting. Such empowerment should also be focussing on the psychosocial functioning needs of the foster parents as identified by themselves (Delport, 2010; Delport, 2007:216).

This statement is broadly fitting into the framework of research done by Puddy and Jackson (2003:990) when they state that although past research has demonstrated that foster parent training can be effective in improving placement stability, till 2003 few studies have effectively evaluated how foster parent training actually enhances parenting skills. They (Puddy and Jackson, 2003:990) are further of the opinion that “since effective parenting skills are associated with improved outcome for many childhood disruptive behaviours and because foster children are at risk for psychopathology, evaluation of foster parent’s parenting skills is a necessary requirement for successful foster parent training.” Puddy and Jackson cite research done by Guerney (1977), Penn (1978), Brown (1980), Guerney and Wolfgang (1981), Hampson and colleagues (1983), and Chamberlain and colleagues (1992) “as the only studies being documented where parenting skills and attitudes were used as an outcome measure for foster parent training.”

Although this study does not use parenting skills as a measure to evaluate the effectiveness of the empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children, it is based on the assumption that parenting skills are also closely related to the psychosocial functioning of the foster parent and that both are important in order to address the challenging behaviour of the sexually abused foster child. This discourse is underscored by Pearce and Pezzot-Pearce (2001:19) when they describe the impact of the lack of knowledge and skills of foster parents by stating:
“these substandard and even harmful child management strategies are associated with an escalation of the child’s negative behaviour and heightened feelings of inadequacy in the foster parents and, in some cases, a breakdown of the placement”. The focus of this research is on the enhanced psychosocial functioning of the foster parent, by taking part in a basic empowerment programme as a contributor to effectiveness of parenting sexually abused child.

Flowing from the above the following problem statement can be formulated: **There is a need for a scientifically developed and implemented social work programme to empower foster parents of sexually abused children to improve their psychosocial functioning and their knowledge of the sexual abused foster child.**

2. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Flowing from the problem statement the following overarching research question can be formulated:

What effect would a social work empowerment programme have on the psychosocial functioning, knowledge and skills of foster parents of sexually abused children?

According to Creswell (in Alpaslan, 2010:9) when doing qualitative research, “the researcher should ask one or two overarching questions and no more than five to seven sub-questions”. In order to endeavour to answer the abovementioned question, it can be broken down in the following questions:

- What are the dynamics and implications of sexual abused children in foster care placements? **(Article 1)**
- What are the empowerment needs of foster parents to understand the sexually abused child’s behaviour? **(Article 2)**
- How would a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children be developed and implemented? **(Article 3)**
What effect would a social work empowerment programme have on the psychosocial functioning of foster parents in understanding the dynamics of sexual abuse and the impact of sexual abuse on the child. (Article 4)

3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

A theoretical statement is described by De Vos and Strydom (2011:34) “as the description of a relationship expressed in a theory. Before it can be accepted as a valid theory or part of a valid theory, it needs to be tested against reality”.

The following central theoretical statement was developed for this study:

A social work empowerment programme will improve the psychosocial functioning, knowledge and skills of foster parents of sexually abused children.

4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

4.1. AIM

Alpaslan (2012:10) states that “…there should be a direct (and coherent, or consistent) link between the research topic, the research question, and the research goal”.

The link in his research is the empowerment of foster parents in order for their knowledge regarding the sexual abuse of foster children to improve with the outcome of their psychosocial functioning to improve as result thereof. There are also other elements that would come into play for their own self-worth increases and the possibility of a foster placement breakdown decreases, this again ends up in emotionally stable foster children and many more debatable variations.

The aim of this research is: To develop, implement and evaluate a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children to improve their psychosocial functioning and their knowledge and skills regarding the dynamics of sexual abuse.
4.2 OBJECTIVES

According to Fouchè and De Vos (in De Vos et al. 2011:94) and Alpaslan (2010:11), the concept refers to “the more concrete, measurable and more speedily attainable conception of the end towards which the effort or ambition is directed. The one (goal, purpose or aim) is the “dream”, the other (objectives), is the steps one has to take, one by one, realistically at grassroots level, within a certain time-span, in order to attain the dream”. The objectives have to relate to the goal in a direct way. The objectives for this study can be formulated as follows:

- To establish through a literature review, the dynamics and implication of sexual abused child in foster care placements. (Article 1)
- To determine the empowerment needs of foster parents of sexually abused children to understand the sexually abused child’s behaviour. (Article 2)
- To develop and implement a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children based on a literature review and an empirical investigation. (Article 3)
- To determine the effect that a social work empowerment programme will have on the psychosocial functioning, of foster parents with sexually abused children and their knowledge of the sexually abused foster child. (Article 4)

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A variety of literature searches were conducted. Bryman (2008:86) is of the opinion that a systematic literature review is a prerequisite for a successful research project. Various textbooks on a multi-professional level, including psychology, neuropsychology, education, forensic social work, clinical social work, legal professions, medical professions and occupational therapy were consulted. Most of the data was from America and Europe. A comprehensive internet search was done in order to be updated on the latest research done in this specific context. Various databases were consulted including EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, Lexis Nexis. Literature available at the Ferdinand Postma library North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) and UNISA were consulted as well as Questia website.
Through these resources, information on national as well as international developments were obtained.

5.2 EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

This research aimed at the development, implementation and evaluation of a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children. The needs of foster parents who have sexually abused children in their care were established in the first part of the empirical investigation and in the second part, a social work empowerment programme was developed, based on the needs established in the previous empirical investigation. This programme was then implemented and evaluated in the second part of the empirical investigation. Researcher decided to utilise the intervention model as initially developed by Rothman and Thomas (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:476; Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33). By utilising this model, the researcher is enabled to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in intervention research. Therefore it is done within the framework of Creswell’s mixed-methods approach, and specifically the two phase approach (Creswell, 2009:203). McMillan (2011:289) describes such a mixed-method study where qualitative data is gathered first, followed by a quantitative phase, as an exploratory, descriptive design. The purpose of this kind of study is to use the initial, qualitative phase to identify information including themes, ideas, perspectives, and beliefs that can be used to design the following larger scale quantitative part of the study. In this study qualitative data (the needs assessment of the foster parents of sexually abused children) was collected through a focus group discussion with the foster parents of sexually abused children. This data was utilised to develop an intervention programme (a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children). This programme was implemented and evaluated by gathering qualitative data (self-developed questionnaire (ADDENDUMS C1, C6, C7, C8) and observation) that formed a small component of the evaluation. The largest component of the data gathered during the second phase was quantitative (gathered through standardised instruments CMSI, IPA and GCS ADDENDUMS C2, C3, C4, C5).
McMillan (2011:289) further identifies a **triangulation design**. In this design both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at about the same time. According to De Vos (2002a:341) the most common type of triangulation is when multiple measures are taken of the same phenomena to verify all the aspects thereof. In this study the triangulation design and data gathering was utilised in the second phase where qualitative data was gathered by unstructured observation and questionnaires as well as quantitatively through standardised instruments (CMSI, IPA, GCS). The purpose for triangulation of measures as executed in this study was to increase the reliability of observation. This study includes both the exploratory design and the triangulation design.

Intervention research is defined by De Vos and Strydom (2011:475) as “…studies carried out for the purpose of conceiving, creating and testing innovative human services approaches to preventing or ameliorating problems or to maintain quality of life.” Taking this description into consideration, intervention research seems to be the most appropriate method to be utilized in this study in order to develop and implement a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children.

### 5.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Research procedures are the specific steps followed in the process to execute the research and gather data. The intervention research model (D&D) of Rothman and Thomas was utilised for this study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:476; Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33). It was chosen because of the clearly delineated process and specified steps that give clear directions to the researcher. It also seemed to be the most effective scientifically based model for the study that the researcher wanted to conduct.

The six major phases of intervention research that were followed (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:476; Rothman & Thomas, 1994:29) are:

- Problem analysis and project planning
- Information gathering and synthesis
- Design
- Early development and pilot testing
- Evaluation and advanced development
- Dissemination

The phases are discussed separately in order to indicate the procedures followed to conduct the research within the two phase model of Cresswell (2009:204). Although the steps do not necessarily follow each other in a linear way (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:476; Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33) it is summarised and discussed in table 1 to indicate the procedures and process followed in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>STRATEGY/METHOD</th>
<th>DESIGN</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>DATA GATHERING METHODS</th>
<th>RESEARCH APPROACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 1</td>
<td>▪ Problem analysis and project planning ▪ Information gathering and synthesis</td>
<td>▪ Focus group discussion</td>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>5 foster parents with sexually abused children (4 female and 1 male)</td>
<td>Focus group questions ▪ Semi-structured self-developed questionnaire.</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Pre-test ▪ Single system design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 2</td>
<td>▪ Design ▪ Early development and pilot testing ▪ Evaluation and advanced development</td>
<td>▪ Pre-test ▪ Single system design</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>7 foster parents with sexually abused children (5 female and 2 male)</td>
<td>Standardised measuring instruments: ▪ Personal Multi-Screening inventory (PMSI), ▪ Generalised contentment scale (GCS) ▪ Index of parental attitudes (IPA)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Intervention ▪ Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOW UP</td>
<td>▪ Determine sustainability of data obtained</td>
<td>▪ Follow up</td>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>7 foster parents with sexually abused children (5 female and 2 male)</td>
<td>▪ Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>▪ Post-test ▪ Single system design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.1 PHASE ONE: PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND PROJECT PLANNING

In social work practice, foster placement often breaks down and foster children have to be removed to other placements which traumatised them again (Fahlberg, 1994:141; Guishard-Pine, et al., 2007:141). Upon further investigation it may become evident that the foster children have been sexually abused or allegedly sexually abused before placement in foster care. Researcher deliberated with experts (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2008; Erasmus, 2009; Grobler, 2009; Petzer, 2010; Sihlali, 2009) and social workers employed by Child Welfare South Africa and Christelike Maatskaplike Raad in Mpumalanga. The aim was to on an informal basis without a pre-planned formal schedule, inform them about the planned research and to acquire information regarding a need for such research, if similar programmes exist, what their views are on the content of such a programme, how it should be presented. Social workers verbalised that they would be able to train foster parents, but they do not have a programme and do not feel equipped enough to develop such a programme themselves. Researcher decided to investigate further to find such a programme that could be implemented. However, none that was scientifically researched could be found specifically for the South African context. The decision was then taken to develop, implement and evaluate such a programme to empower foster parents of sexually abused children. After this decision was taken the series of steps included in the intervention model, were executed during this phase.

- **Identifying and involving clients**

  Clients identified for this study were foster parents of sexually abused children. These clients were identified by the social workers of Child Welfare South Africa, White River and Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit, from their caseloads. The reason why these organisations were approached for the research was because they were eager to participate in the research and they were the largest organisations providing foster care services in the Lowveld of Mpumalanga and especially Nelspruit and White River, and thus easily accessible to researcher. During this part of the research it became clear that both these organisations do not have a large number of foster parents who
have sexually abused children in their care, on their case loads. All the clients who fulfilled the criteria were approached to participate. As there was a dire need for the development of such a programme focussed on the needs of the foster parents in the mentioned areas, it was decided to still go ahead with the research as planned as it would definitely contribute to improve the social work practice in these areas. After deliberations with the social workers and office managers of these organisations it was decided that suitable clients of Child Welfare South Africa: White River will be approached to form part of the discussion group.

Criteria for the participants were as follows:

- Screened foster parents.
- Have a foster child who has been sexually abused or allegedly sexually abused in their care, placed by order of the Children's Court.
- Male or female.
- Single, married or in a permanent life partnership.

For the first qualitative and exploration phase of the empirical study, Child Welfare South Africa: White River recruited all eight foster parents with sexually abused children in their care, on their caseloads, who were prepared to take part in the study. Three of the prospective participants cancelled before the focus group took place and stated that they do not want to take part in the research any more. Reasons mentioned were amongst others, transport and work demands.

The second part of the empirical study (implementation and evaluation of the intervention programme) took place about a year after the first part (focus group discussion to explore needs of the participants regarding foster care). By this time three of the participants involved during the first part, did not have foster children in their care any longer. The foster placements broke down and the children were removed to other alternative placements. Due to this lack of sufficient qualifying participants in Child Welfare South Africa: White River,
Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit was approached to also assist in identifying and recruiting suitable participants for the second part of the research.

For the second phase of the empirical study, Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit, identified and recruited all ten foster parents with sexually abused children in their care, on their caseloads, who were prepared to take part in the study. It was decided to involve these clients in the second part of the empirical research. The criteria were as follows:

- Screened foster parents.
- Have a foster child who has been sexually abused or allegedly sexually abused in their care, placed by order of the Children's Court.
- Male or female.
- Single, married or in a permanent life partnership.

Eventually only seven (N=7) participants (four female and three male) took part in the second part of the empirical study (implementation and evaluation of intervention programme).

- **Gaining entry and cooperation from settings**

As researcher was acquainted with the social workers in the Nelspruit and White River area, it was easy to gain entry into the settings and have their cooperation. They were actually part of the investigation of the initial concern when the issue of breakdown of foster placements came to the attention of the researcher. The intention to develop and implement an empowerment programme based on the needs of foster parents of sexually abused children was discussed with office managers and social workers of Child Welfare South Africa: White River, Child Welfare South Africa: Nelspruit and Christelike Maatskaplike Raad in Nelspruit. They scrutinised their case loads for possible participants for the research project who would then form the population of this research. They also contacted these clients and discussed their possible participation in such a research project before their details were
provided to the researcher. This was done by the social workers themselves in order to adhere to the confidentiality principle and because they already have a professional relationship with their clients. The clients were positive and enthusiastic and eager to participate because they verbalised that they are in need of more empowerment and training to improve their relationship with the foster children by dealing with situations more effectively. After their initial permission was obtained by the social workers, their identifying details were given to the researcher. The social workers assisted the researcher in contacting the participants and scheduled suitable times for the participants to meet with the researcher to be briefed and to finalise arrangements.

- **Identifying concerns of the population**

According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:478) the intervention researcher should be careful not to project external views onto the problem, but must attempt to understand the subject of research from the population’s view. Rothman and Thomas (1994:63) are of the opinion that intervention research always starts off with “…a sense of diffuse worries and inchoate signs and stress”. It is thus the task of the researcher to transform these vague issues into clearly conceptualised concerns.

Initially social workers from Child Welfare South Africa: White River and Nelspruit complained about the breakdown of foster placements, in particular where previously sexually abused children were placed. During discussions with five foster parents, five social workers in the area, and two adult sexual abuse survivors who were in foster care as children, concerns were raised that foster parents of sexually abused children do not feel equipped enough to deal effectively with sexually abused children in their foster care, and that there is a need to obtain more knowledge and understanding. A Focus group discussion was held with five (N=5) foster parents to establish and clarify their feelings, experiences, challenges and needs. Data obtained during these discussions were transcribed, analysed and utilised to develop, implement and evaluate an empowerment programme during the second phase of the empirical research. Participants during the implementation and evaluation
phase of the empowerment programme consisted of seven (N=7) foster parents.

- **Analysing concerns or identified problems**
  After the concerns of the population were established it was analysed. It seemed that foster placements of sexually abused children often fail due to a lack of understanding of their behaviour and feelings by the foster parents. This results in the foster parents feeling helpless in dealing with the various challenging situations and behaviour of the children. The foster children also feel rejected and the challenging behaviour escalates. It then becomes even more difficult for the foster parents to manage the foster care situation. This results in a total breakdown of the relationship between the foster child and the foster parent, causing the social worker to remove the foster child to another placement. This could however be prevented by the foster parents being empowered with more knowledge and insight into the behaviour and feelings of the sexually abused child and how to cope with accompanying situations. This can even lead to an enrichment of the foster parent – foster child relationship which can make the foster situation for both an enriching experience. Qualitative data obtained during the focus group discussion in an earlier step was analysed by means of translation and utilised in the development of an empowerment programme.

- **Setting goals and objectives**
  Fouché and De Vos (in Alpaslan, 2010:10) state that the terms “goal”, “purpose” and “aim” are synonyms for one another. In the light of the analysis of the identified problems an aim and objectives or this research project were formulated. It was discussed under paragraph 3.

**The aim of this research is to develop, implement and evaluate a social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children to improve their psychosocial functioning and their knowledge and skills regarding the dynamics of sexual abuse.**
5.3.2 PHASE TWO: INFORMATION GATHERING AND SYNTHESIS

When an intervention programme is planned, it is necessary to first establish what has been done by others to understand and address the problem (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:480; Fraser et al., 2009:30). The aim of this phase is to compile a list of possible functional elements that can be utilised in the design of the intervention (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:476). The steps followed in this study are discussed next.

- **Using existing information sources**

  Researcher did a literature review in order to be updated regarding the latest developments in the identified areas of concern. “A literature review usually consists of an examination of selected empirical research, reported practice and identified innovations relevant to the particular concern being studied” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:480). Computerised databases are also seen as particularly helpful in retrieving possible sources of information. A variety of literature searches were conducted. Various textbooks on a multi-professional level, including psychology, neuropsychology, education, forensic social work, clinical social work, legal professions, medical professions and occupational therapy. A comprehensive internet search was done in order to be updated on the latest research done in this specific context. Various databases were consulted including EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, LexisNexis. Literature available at the Ferdinand Postimus libraries of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) and UNISA were consulted as well as Questia website. Through these resources, information on national as well as international developments was obtained. These searches yielded that there is no empowerment programme available for foster parents of sexually abused children, in South Africa. It might be included as part of a more general training of foster parents, but does not contain sufficient information to empower foster parents of sexually abused children. There was thus a need for the development of such a programme.
Studying natural examples

Insights into the possible successful outcomes of interventions can be obtained by interviewing people who have experience of the problem (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:481; Fortune, et al., 2010:39). For this study interviews were conducted with experts in the field of sexual abuse and foster care (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010; Grobler, 2008; Petzer, 2010; Sihlali, 2009). They expressed the need for an empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children to be developed and implemented. Their contributions towards aspects that should be included in the empowerment programme were used to gather more information and enabled researcher to narrow down towards a synthesis on the needs of foster parents of sexually abused children. During discussions with the professionals it became clear that the foster parents of sexually abused children should be involved in determining their own needs as that would ensure more reliable information. It was then decided to execute a needs analysis with foster parents of sexually abused children to determine their needs. This would guide the researcher into what should be included in an empowerment programme. The most effective way to gather information regarding their everyday experiences in foster care is considered to be within the qualitative process, according to a phenomenological design and utilising a focus group discussion as an interviewing method (Fortune, et al., 2010:39).

Sampling methods:

Non-probability sampling and more specific purposive sampling was utilized as sampling method (Babbie, 2007:183; Strydom & Delport, 2011:391). This type of sampling was utilised because of the relatively limited number of possible participants available (small population), and because the study is conducted on a small scale.
- **Participants: Needs assessment phase – focus group discussion**

Five (N=5) foster parents of sexually abused children on the caseload of Child Welfare South Africa: White River, were the participants in the first phase of the empirical study taking part in a focus group discussion.

Criteria for the participants were as follows:

- Screened foster parents.
- Have a foster child who has been sexually abused or allegedly sexually abused in their care, placed by order of the Children’s Court.
- Male or female.
- Single, married or in a permanent life partnership.

- **Participants: Development, implementation and evaluation of intervention programme**

Seven (N=7) participants took part in the second phase of the empirical study, namely the implementation and evaluation of the intervention programme. They were selected by purposive sampling by social workers of the Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit. The criteria was the same as above. Eventually it was found that all participants had at least a grade 12 education level, although it was not the initial requirement.

- **Data gathering and analysis**

Questions to elicit discussion during the focus group discussions were compiled after a literature study and discussions with experts in the field (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010; Sihlali, 2009). This correlates with the opinion of Greeff (2011:369) to be followed to compile questions for focus group discussions. It was used as a guideline to direct the focus group discussions in a semi-structured way. ADDENDUM C5. The information gathered was used as components in the development of the social work empowerment programme. The feedback from foster parents during this discussion was
recorded to ensure accurate collection, then transcribed and analysed by hand as described by Schurink et al. (2011:397).

- **Identifying functional elements of successful models**
  Potentially useful elements of an intervention could be identified by researchers through studying successful and unsuccessful models or programmes, (Fortune et al., 2010:262). Researcher perused various programmes, on the empowerment of foster parents, namely the programme from the Ondersteuningsraad, (2007), Christelike Maatskaplike Raad (Petzer, 2010), a programme developed by Dr J. Delport (2007) and a programme developed by Dr C. Fourie (2007). Other authors’ programmes were also consulted, but none was available specifically for foster parents of sexually abused children. Applicable elements of relevant programmes were extracted in order to use in the synthesis of information towards the development of an empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children.

5.3.3 **PHASE THREE: DESIGN**

- **Designing an observational system**
  According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:482) the researcher must design a method system to establish the effects after termination of the intervention. During the first phase of the empirical study questions were used to create a semi-structured focus group discussion. These questions were compiled after consultation with experts (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010; Sihlali, 2009) and perusal of literature. Standardised instruments (discussed next under measuring instruments) were used as pre- and post test to measure the effect of intervention programme. Pre-test was done before the empowerment programme was implemented and the post-test after the completion of the empowerment programme. A self-developed questionnaire was used for the qualitative evaluation by the participants. The single-system design (A-B-A) (Strydom, 2011:166) was utilised to evaluate the effects of the intervention programme.
Measuring instruments

Standardised measuring instruments namely Personal Multi-Screening inventory (PMSI), Generalised contentment scale (GCS) and Index of parental attitudes (IPA) of Perspective Training College (2009), (ADDENDUM C2,C3,C4,C5) were selected by researcher to measure the effects following the application of the empowerment programme on the psychosocial functioning of the foster parents of the sexually abused child (quantitative data). Self-developed questionnaires were utilised for the participants to assess the content of the empowerment programme at the end of each day (ADDENDUM C6) and at the end of the intervention (qualitative data) (ADDENDUM C7). Also three months after termination of the programme (qualitative data) (ADDENDUM C8).

Definitions of the behaviours associated with the problem were defined in operational terms. Psychosocial functioning as defined by Perspective Training College (2009) would include the following constructs: Interrelationship functioning, self-perception (inner insecurity, guilt feelings, lack of self-worth), negative functioning areas (frustration, helplessness and stress) and positive functioning areas (achievement, expectation and satisfaction).

Specifying procedural elements of the intervention

“The procedural element should be specified in sufficient detail to be able to be replicated by other typically trained change agents” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011: 483). In this study the procedural elements was the implementation of the empowerment programme through the process of psycho-educational group work. The process includes, the forming of the group, initial phase, transition phase, working phase and termination phase as identified by Corey and Corey (2006:102-287).
5.3.4 PHASE FOUR: EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING

- Developing a prototype or preliminary intervention

For this part of the study a prototype social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children was developed. Information gathered through an extensive literature search, perusing existing training programmes for foster parents; interviews conducted with experts in the field of foster care and/or sexual abuse (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010; Grobler, 2008; Petzer, 2010) and a focus group discussion of foster parents of sexually abused children during the second phase of the intervention research were utilised in the development process. A programme consisting of nine sessions was developed.

- Conducting a pilot test

According to De Vos (2002b:410) pilot tests in intervention research are used to determine if the intervention is feasible “…to see if the beast will fly”.

The questions utilised during the focus group discussion in the first phase of the empirical study was compiled with the use of experts and social workers in the field of sexual abuse and foster care (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010). It was also pilot tested on one (N=1) foster parent of a sexually abused child who did not form part of the main investigation. After the empowerment programme was developed, the prototype programme was pilot tested on two (N=2) participants who were not part of the main investigation. This was done in order to determine whether the developed programme would be practically viable. Two (N=2) experts (Delport, 2010; Erasmus, 2010) and social workers involved throughout the investigation and compilation of the empowerment programme were also consulted regarding the practicality and applicability of the programme before it was implemented.

- Applying design criteria to the preliminary intervention concept

When an intervention is designed it should follow certain guidelines and values applicable to intervention research. To ensure that this is done certain questions are relevant: “Is the intervention effective? Is it replicable by typical end-users? Is it simple to use? Is it practical? Is the intervention adaptable to
various contexts? Is it compatible with local customs and values?” (De Vos, 2002b:411).

During the design and evaluation of the preliminary intervention programme the researcher established the probable repeatability of the programme, the effectiveness, the practical implementation and adaptability of the developed programme and activities, by comparing it with existent programmes and by consulting with experts (Delport, 2010, Erasmus, 2010). The programme was prepared for the main investigation.

5.3.5 PHASE FIVE: EVALUATION AND ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT

- **Selecting an experimental design**

A single-system design was selected for this study. The reason for this is that the social work empowerment programme which was the independent variable would be used in practice for foster parents of sexually abused children. It would thus be a good design to link research with practice as it is a direct form of research, and results are immediately available according to McMillan (2011:228). The specific design was a basic experimental design and the A-B-A design (Strydom, 2011:166). Here, two comparisons are possible, between the first baseline and intervention, and between intervention and a second baseline. Due to the limited population of participants it was not possible to have a comparison group to compare the experimental group to.

- **Measuring instruments**

In this study the standardised Personal Multi-Screening Inventory (PMSI) from Perspective Training College (2009). General Contentment Scale (GCS) and Index of Parental Attitude were completed before and again after the intervention. A self-developed questionnaire was used to gather qualitative data regarding the intervention programme after the completion of each day as well as after the completion of the empowerment programme.
- **Procedures**

The empowerment programme consisted of nine sessions approximately 90 minutes per session, and was conducted over three days. The abovementioned standardised measuring instruments were completed as a pre-test before the implementation of the intervention programme and post-test after the implementation of the intervention programme, to gather quantitative data. (ADDENDUM C2, C3, C4, C5) The self-developed questionnaire was completed by the participants after the completion of each day (ADDENDUM C6) and at the end of the empowerment programme intervention (ADDENDUM C7). A third qualitative measurement was done three months after the completion of the programme in order to determine the sustainability of the results obtained during the post-test (ADDENDUM C8).

- **Collecting and analysing data**

Both quantitative data as qualitative data was collected and analysed during the empirical part of the study. It was done as follows:

During the first phase of the empirical study, qualitative data was collected by making a recording during a focus group discussion. It was transcribed and analysed by researcher by making use of coding as described by Tesch (De Vos, 2002a:345: Poggenpoel, 1998: 345). Data was categorised into two themes and eight sub-themes.

During the second phase of the empirical part of the study, qualitative data was collected during the implementation of the empowerment programme. Participants also completed a self-developed questionnaire to evaluate the programme, which provided qualitative data. Quantitative data was gathered through the standardised instruments (as mentioned under measuring instruments) and was analysed by researcher by making use of the Paswin computer programme provided by Perspective College (Faul & Hanekom, 2011).
Replicating the intervention under field conditions
According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:486) additional testing under actual field conditions should be done if it was not implemented with the intended users during the pilot testing. The empowerment programme intervention was implemented under actual field conditions with seven (N=7) participants as described in the previous paragraphs.

Refining the intervention
The social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children was refined after the implementation and evaluation was completed and the recommendations of the participants were processed and incorporated in the final empowerment programme.

Dissemination
This study will be submitted for publication in the journal Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk. It will also be utilised in the Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit Therapy Unit as part of the in-service training of foster parents with sexually abused children.

6. ETHICAL ASPECTS
Beauchamp and Childress (in Holloway, 2005:22) states the following rules on ethical principles in especially qualitative research:

- Veracity: telling the truth and informing participants in terms that they understand.
- Privacy: needs to be respected and is closely linked to confidentiality.
- Confidentiality; in a professional and in a research relationship
- Fidelity: professional loyalty – adhere to professional ethics.

Attention was given to professional ethical issues regarding the rights of participants and the responsibilities of the researcher (Strydom, 2011:123). The general Ethical Code of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (1986) was adhered to.
Researcher obtained permission from the relevant organisations namely, Child Welfare South Africa: White River and Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, Nelspruit to conduct the research within their organisations (ADDENDUM A2, A3).

Participants were informed about the aims of the research in a way that they could understand. Qualifying participants was approached by their case workers first to get their permission to provide the researcher with their details and contact them to explain the planned study. Informed consent was obtained from participants beforehand by signing a consent form (ADDENDUM B1, B2) (Strydom, 2011:117). Participants were aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time. This was explained to them during the preparation phase as well as included in the consent form. Participants were informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation (Babbie, 2007:26-27; Strydom, 2011:117-118). They were thus not deceived about the purpose of the research and the methods and procedures to be used.

The principle of confidentiality was adhered to throughout the research process. Information will be treated confidentially and this was conveyed to the participants and was included in the informed consent form. The researcher ensured ethically correct actions and attitudes under all circumstances (Babbie, 2007:26-27; Holloway, 2005:30; Strydom, 2011:123).

After the data obtained from the recording during the focus group discussion, was transcribed, the recording was destroyed in order to adhere to confidentiality.

Researcher ensured that the names of participants were not revealed and information obtained through standardised instruments and self-developed instrument were not made known with identification details. The names were removed before send off to the promoter.

During the data gathering and analysis of the data in order to ensure knowledge production, researcher adhered to ethical procedures and
endeavoured to reflect information as honestly and precisely as possible (Holloway, 2005:29).

A kind of ethical dilemma developed when the intended third measurement was about to take place. The ideal and more accurate information for the research would have been obtained if the participants had completed the three standardised instruments again three months after the implementation of the empowerment programme. However, especially the PMSI (ADDENDUM C2, C3) is a very long instrument consisting of 276 questions, of which some are very personal, and the participants were not happy to complete it again. Researcher compromised that a semi-structured interview rather be conducted to gather as applicable data as possible.

Ethical permission was obtained from the North-West University’s ethics committee (NWU-00027-09 S1).

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
   - The generalisation of research results might pose challenges as the research sample of both empirical studies were relatively small (N=5 and N=7).
   - Due to the limited population of this study it was not possible to include a control group to provide comparison of results.
   - The participants utilised the focus group discussion as a debriefing and ventilation session. Although the information was relevant it was an emotional session and the participants had difficulty focusing on the required information. More information regarding the needs of the foster parents might have been obtained if a debriefing session was provided beforehand.

8. DEFINITIONS OF MAIN CONCEPTS

8.1 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse refers to sexual abuse of a child by an adult, or some other person significantly older or in a position of power or control over the
child, where the child is used for sexual stimulation of another person (American Humane, 2008:1; O’Connor & Schaefer, 1994:319).

The sexual activities may include all forms of sexual contact including oral-genital, genital, or anal contact by or to the child or abuse that does not involve contact, such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, or using the child in the production of pornography, also humiliation, and sexual torture (New Hampshire Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2008:1; Orton, 1997:90; Townsend & Dawes, 2004: 55).

Child sexual abuse can thus be summarised is any form of sexual activity with a child by an adult, or by another child where there is no consent or consent is not possible; or by another child who has power over the child (Munro, 2000:1) By this definition, it is possible for a child to be sexually abused by another child who is younger, but be developmentally more mature.

Researcher views child sexual abuse as any sexually inappropriate act done with a child, by someone of a higher level of maturity.

### 8.2 EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

Empowerment is a concept central to the strengths perspective. Barker (1999:153) defines empowerment as follows: “the process of helping individuals, families, groups and communities increase their personal, interpersonal, socioeconomic, and political strength and develop influence toward improving their circumstances.” In order to develop an empowerment programme for foster parents with sexually abused foster children it is necessary to identify the needs in which areas they need empowerment.

### 8.3 FOCUS GROUP

Babbie (2007:308) gives the following description of a focus group: “A group of subjects interviewed together, prompting a discussion.” For the purpose of this part of the study a focus group was used to interview foster parents with sexually abused foster children in their care to gather information regarding
the specific empowerment needs of the foster parents, to enable them to cope with their foster care situation.

8.4 FOSTER CARE

The Children’s Amendment Act, 41 of 2007 (SA, 2008a:12) describes foster care as follows: “foster care’ means care of a child as described in section 180(1) and includes foster care in a registered cluster foster care scheme.” Section 180 (SA, 2008a:72) states:

“(1) A child is in foster care if the child has been placed in the care of a Person who is not the parent or guardian of the child as a result of –

(a) an order of a children’s court; or
(b) A transfer in terms of section 171.

(2) Foster care excludes the placement of a child-

(a) In temporary safe care: or
(b) In the care of a child and youth care centre.

(3) A children’s court may place a child in foster care –

(a) With a person who is not a family member of the child:
(b) With a family member who is not the parent or guardian of the child; or
(c) In a registered cluster foster care scheme.”

Foster care is the placement of a child, who needs to be removed from the parental home, into the custody of a suitable family or person willing to be foster parents. This is done by order of the Children’s Court (Cape Gateway, 2009:1).

Foster care can be summarized as the care of children by some one other that biological parents, appointed by the Children’s Court to act as foster parents.
8.5 FOSTER PARENT

Although this term has a wide variety of possible definitions, it is generally used to refer to adults who is appointed by the state to provide a temporary home for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. These services may be provided with or without compensation, and can often continue for several months or even years, depending on the circumstances of the child and the foster parents (Adoption Glossary, 2009: 1).

The Children’s Act (Act 38 of 2005), (SA, 2008a:12) provides the following definition of a foster parent: “*foster parent* means a person who has foster care of a child by order of the children’s court, and includes an active member of an organisation operating a cluster foster care scheme and who has been assigned responsibility for the foster care of a child.”

For the purpose of this study a foster parent will be a single person or a couple who has a foster child in his/her care by order of the Children’s Court, and excludes cluster foster homes.

9. STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH REPORT

SECTION A:
- Introduction, problem statement and overview of aim and objectives.

SECTION B:
- Article 1: The dynamics of sexual abuse, and the implications the placement of a sexually abused child in foster care, have for the foster care placement.
- Article 2: The empowerment needs of foster parents of sexually abused children.
- Article 3: Development and implementation of a social work empowerment programme for foster parents.
- Article 4: Evaluating the social work empowerment programme for foster parents of sexually abused children.

SECTION C: Summarised findings, conclusions and recommendations.
SECTION D: Addenda

SECTION E: Combined reference list.
10. REFERENCES


