# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK

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*Lanzo*

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For Riana

# PREFACE

This book provides an insight: the capacity of understanding hidden truths (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). This implies that the nature and dynamics of contemporary social work in South Africa is defined in terms of a developmentally orientated paradigm, so as to adapt to existing tendencies and perspectives. Because the total field of social work is so comprehensive, only an overview of this insight will be provided.

The lack of recent South African literature that reflects the realities of the South African welfare situation, is what inspired the writing of this book. This book is aimed primarily at social work students (particularly first year), however practitioners will also be able to use it as a useful reference book. For this reason a complete list of the most recent reference works is provided throughout the book. This is also the reason for the simple, compact format and layout, to ensure that it is an easy, useful and practical textbook to have close at hand.

In order to conceptualise the latest developments in the South African welfare field, a variety of neologisms (word creations) have been used. For this purpose the New Dictionary of Social Work (Terminology Committee for Social Work 1995) has been an important source of reference throughout. In the same context, to eliminate tautology (unnecessary repetition), the term ”client” refers, throughout the book, to the individual, group and community and is used together with other terms in the same sense to refer to all three primary social work methods (casework, group work and community work). The terms “social worker” and “worker” are used interchangeably.

The content included in this book is based on practice, supervision and lecturing experiences (particularly to first year

students who are introduced to the field of social work) as well as from a thorough study of, mainly recent, primary and secondary literature. In light of this, the style of this book is not that of a compilation work, as the facts have been compiled from a variety of different literature, but has been supplemented by independent and original thoughts. The personal opinions and content of this book are therefore subject to debate, but it is the very intention of this book: to contribute to the development of contemporary South African theory.

The writing of this book was both a great challenge and a pleasure. It is hoped that the reader will find it stimulating and be motivated to render the best possible service to the client.

Lambert K Engelbrecht

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# CHAPTER 1

# THE COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKER

There is something I don't know
that I am supposed to know.
I don't know *what* it is I don't know,
and yet am supposed to know,
and I feel I look stupid
if I seem both not to know it
and not know *what* it is I don't know.
Therefore I pretend I know it.
This is nerve-racking
since I don't know what I must pretend to know.
(Laing)

These feelings of uncertainty in Laing's words are probably quite familiar to many a social work student and practitioner alike. Zastrow (1989:308) points out that these feelings are not unique nor are they a secret, as it is common for people in helping relationships to feel this way. In this regard Smalley in Fox (1993:1) explains as follows: "Any beginning, any new understanding in life causes simultaneous feelings of hope and fear." The social work student and practitioner who wishes to make a difference in people's lives through the rendering of social work services, is therefore confronted with conflicting emotions.

Vinik & Levin (1991:59) highlight the fact that social workers that want to make a difference should rather focus on that which they can do as apposed to that which they cannot do. Brammer(1993:29) takes this idea further by emphasising that the person him/herself is an important instrument through which intervention occurs.

If people themselves are used as instruments to render assistance to others, it implies that, that person must possess certain expertise in order to help others. It is probably the social work student and practitioner's uncertainty regarding their competency that gives rise to the aforementioned conflicting emotions. Adler & Rodman (1994:19-21) define communication in the sense of competency. Since communication is central to social work and is the medium through which help is provided, communication, from a social work perspective, can for these purposes be regarded as part of the expertise required of the social worker. The said authors' view being competent as follows:

* there is no ideal form of competency - one set of expertise is not necessarily superior to another;

* competency is determined by the situation - expertise which have proven to be successful in one situation, may fail in another situation;

* attitude is a dimension of competency - in most cases a social worker is regarded as competent if the use of his/her expertise contributes to a satisfied attitude on the part of all participants;

* to be competent is something that can be learned - it is not necessarily inborn and can be acquired and developed over time, in various ways.

The statement that to be competent as a social worker is something which can be acquired and developed, should be liberating for every social work student and practitioner and should finally allay their conflicting feelings of hope, anxiety and uncertainty. In this regard Compton & Galaway (1994:573) ask

the following question: “So you want to be a social worker?” These authors answer this question themselves, on behalf of all social work students and practitioners, by stating that one of the exciting things about social work is that it is a never-ending learning experience, and it is this that motivates people to practice the profession.

Immediately the question arises: what are these expertise that must be acquired and developed to ensure competency? Cournoyer (1991:2-3) refers to skills and motivates this by highlighting the fact that the term “skills” is used in the titles of a variety of recent social work textbooks. However, various authors such as Johnson (1986:53-68) and Zastrow (1989:21-26) point out that skills exist in relation to a knowledge base and a value orientation. It however takes more than just appropriate knowledge, values and skills for the social worker to be competent to practice. Van Rooyen & Combrink (1985:90-116) point out that the helping professional is not an automaton that functions mechanically, but rather that he/she is a person who works in close contact with his/her humanity. Basic personality qualities are therefore necessary for social workers to perform their tasks. (Despite the fact that the said authors work may not be recent, their opinions remain particularly relevant in this context.)

For the purposes of this book, the expertise necessary for the social worker to be competent to render effective intervention, can be seen as two-fold, namely:

* knowledge base, value base and skill base of the competent social worker

* the personality of the competent social worker.

In light of the fact that this book is only introductory in nature,

this chapter will serve to enable the reader to identify the expertise necessary for effective and relevant social work intervention.

There is a link between the importance/purpose of this chapter and effective/relevant social work intervention. For many years the social work profession has indeed been irrelevant for the largest section of the South African population (Olivier 1995). Effective and relevant social work intervention is surely that intervention which can assist the client system to meet their needs. If 48% of the population live under the minimum subsistence level, are social workers competent to render assistance to that part of the population, thereby justifying their effectiveness and the relevance of the profession? The rest of this chapter will be presented with this background in mind. This will be done in accordance with personal opinions as well as the opinions of Adler & Rodman (1994:359), Botha & Cronje (1996:308-323), Brammer (1993:25-46), Brammer et al. (1993:89-104), Compton & Galaway (1994:7-9, 290-296), Cournoyer (1991:2-42), Hoffman & Sallee (1994:7-20), Lombard et al. (1991:172), Sheafor et al. (1994:29-46), Van Rooyen & Combrink (1985:92-115) and Zastrow (1989:21-25).

## KNOWLEDGE BASE, VALUE BASE AND SKILL BASE OF THE COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKER

In the literature numerous interpretations of knowledge, values and skills are encountered. For these purposes, the social worker's knowledge consists of the whole of that which the social worker knows and what is distinguishable, systematised and tested. The social worker's values consist of the worker's beliefs and the skills consist of the social worker's ability to apply knowledge and values.

The opinion is held that in order to render competent social work intervention in South Africa today, knowledge, values and skills with regard to the following aspects are necessary:

* the social work domain, which includes the nature, goals and terrain of social work service delivery;

* the history and policy of social work and the implications thereof;

* the levels at which values are expressed, with the focus on professional values and ethics;

* cross-cultural social work with the emphasis on culturally-friendly social work intervention;

* communication in social work which is aimed at appropriate types of communication;

* a theoretical and practice paradigm which is based on the ecological systems theory perspective;

* different approaches which address needs and problems in a practical manner;

* intervention by means of a problem solving process;

* intervention techniques through which stipulated goals are achieved;

* intervention roles which imply what activities are to be undertaken by the social worker;

* intervention methods which serve as recognised

professional procedures and which focus upon achieving the goals of social work.

## THE PERSONALITY OF THE COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKER

The term "personality" is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as the distinctive character or qualities of a person. For these purposes twenty personality qualities have been distinguished. However most positive human qualities would be appropriate in this regard. These twenty qualities have specifically been selected due to their relevance to the present welfare situation as well as the extent to which they appeared in most of the recent and relevant literature. This is an attempt to present an overall picture of a competent social worker and therefore no claim is made that this is a complete and distinctive set of qualities. In this regard, it is once again important to take note of the definition (earlier in this chapter) of competency. It is particularly important to remember that, like the knowledge base, value base and skill base, personality qualities that are regarded as necessary to be a competent social worker, can be learned and developed. This therefore poses a challenge to every social work student and practitioner.

*Love of people*

A love of people is usually the greatest motivation for social work students and practitioners to become involved in intervention. A pre-requisite is therefore that a social worker must like and be interested in people.

*Emotional maturity*
Emotional maturity suggests a complete developmental state, but is something that each social worker can strive towards. It implies, amongst others, that a worker must have a sober image of reality, be able to work independently, cope with frustrations, control impulsive behaviour, recognise related factors and take definite action. An emotionally mature person is also able to realise and acknowledge his/her human feelings. Such a worker can work through hurt feelings and can identify, examine, acknowledge and correct their own faults.

*Self-awareness*
Self-awareness implies that the social worker is striving towards self-knowledge by being in touch with his/her own needs, motives and values. The worker attempts to be in control of his/her feelings and behaviour, is not easily threatened by others and is comfortable with him/herself. The worker is aware of personal unresolved conflicts and makes every attempt not to allow this to harm others.

*Interpersonal communication abilities*
Communication must constantly be maintained at all levels. This implies therefore that communication must be both tactful and acceptable. The ability to listen should be equally good as the ability to talk and the social worker must be aware of the effect that his/her verbal and non-verbal communication has on others (this includes appearance).
*Empathic understanding*
Not all people can enter into another person's world of experiences with the same ease. Empathic understanding involves being able to think with someone by separating yourself from your own frame of reference. This must however be an objective action, so that you do not take on others' problems.

*Eager to learn*

No social worker can ever be truly competent if he/she is not eager to learn. This involves an ambition to know more so as to deliver a better service. This is achieved through self-development. Although basic intelligence is necessary, it is influenced by the workers openness towards learning. Statements such as "I work from experience", "I have an intuitive touch" and "I do not like studying" usually indicate a learning block that can seriously hamper competency.

*Assertiveness*

It is becoming all the more important for the social worker to act assertively with systems. This involves the manner in which the worker handles, expresses and asserts him/herself in the face of others. This involves the capacity of the worker to convey, for example knowledge, values and skills in such a manner that the rights of all participants are respected (including the rights of the worker). This does not imply passivity or aggressiveness.

*Perseverance*

There is the tendency, both nationally and internationally, to expect social workers to provide more assistance with less resources. For this reason the social worker must be tenacious because progress, development and change is sometimes laborious and slow. Challenges must be accepted without hesitation and should have a motivating effect upon the worker.

*Responsibility*
As professional people social workers work, to a large extent, autonomously. A great responsibility is owed to the clients and the community. In order to comply with these said responsibilities, the worker must be self-disciplined and primarily responsible to him/herself. The responsibility of the social worker is comprised specifically of professional responsibilities, such as maintaining confidentiality and general ethics. If the worker does not take basic responsibilities seriously, his/her professional position will be seriously compromised and can be regarded as equal to that of the client system.

*Optimism*
In order to influence and motivate others, the worker must believe in change and development and must be self-motivated. This can only be realised by maintaining a positive view of life. A person, who revels in the negative aspects of life, will have difficulty serving as an instrument of growth for others. This therefore involves an optimistic belief and the ability to convert obstacles into positive opportunities.

*Enthusiasm*
In order for intervention attempts to be regarded as credible, the social worker must be enthusiastic. This involves an intense interest, desire and "bubbly" zeal. This is usually accompanied by a sense of humour that is both contagious and motivating.
*Spontaneity*
The social worker should also display humane feelings. The application of techniques does not mean being rigid and artificial. Unforced and unplanned expression of feelings in the course of natural exchanges, is therefore sometimes necessary to motivate change, growth and development.

*Goodwill*
Involvement in other people's problems and needs should not be out of a sense of duty. The relationship with clients should be sincere and radiate warmth. If this is expressed both verbally and non-verbally, then it ought to be easy to connect with people.

*Open-hearted*
The social worker ought not to be reticent with the client system, as this can hamper trust in the worker. It involves the worker knowing how to reveal him/herself and how to be a "familiar" person, without contributing to the discomfort of the client system.

*Sincerity*
In order to be regarded by the client system as credible, the social worker should be honest in his/her actions and motives. This requires sincerity in the way in which the worker expresses him/herself, so that there is uniformity between behaviour, words and attitudes.

*Creativity*
In social work it is frequently necessary to create something from nothing or to change and develop things, therefore the social worker must be creative. This requires being original in the course of the intervention process and, in particular, the ability to present the abstract in a concrete manner.

*Adaptable*
Social work has to do with attempting to bring about change - for that reason the worker ought to be able to adapt him/herself according to the changes and circumstances. This implies an easy transition from one person and situation to another.

*Discretion*
The nature of social work requires of the worker to continuously make judgements in accordance with accurate and objective insights. This involves choices and decisions regarding ethical issues, strategies, processes etceteras.

*Energetic*
The dynamics of social work requires of the worker to be vigorous, reflecting his/her energy. This means the worker's energy is required to initiate change and development and correspondingly will determine, to a large extent, the energy that the client system will need to invest in change and development.

*Leadership potential*
Social work requires of the worker to provide continuous leadership. The worker must be able to utilise his/her leadership potential in all situations and on all levels to influence people as to the benefits of intervention. This includes, amongst others, fulfilling a variety of intervention roles.

Although this chapter has focused on what is required of the social worker to be competent, it is only theoretical in nature and probably a lot more could be said about it. The actual test for competency is the extent to which success is achieved in practice. Disraeli in Fox (1993:1) says in this regard: "Experience is the child of thought and thought is the child of action. We cannot learn men from books."

# CHAPTER 3

# SOCIAL WORK HISTORY AND POLICY

Gil (1990) argues that it is difficult for practitioners to remain politically neutral. It is quite clear why Gil poses this argument. Political systems have a definite influence on policy and policy ultimately influences intervention to the client. The whole history of social work is an example of this. Reeser & Epstein (1990:129-130) refer to a statement by Bishop Tutu (1985) in which he says political systems demonstrate a "remarkable capacity to be adjusted as the circumstances to which they seek to be relevant change". This statement will be motivated in this chapter by discussing the course of social work history in general and in South Africa in particular. After which relevant terms relating to policy will be defined, so that the implications of South African social work history for policy can eventually be examined. This ought to enable the reader to grasp the relevancy of history and policy for intervention.

## THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK

The history of social work is presented here in broad terms, based on the work of Johnson (1986), McKendrick (1990), Van Rensburg, Pretorius & Fourie (1992) and Zastrow (1989).

The emergence of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in England by 1860 is regarded, in most of the literature, to be the

origins of social work. The COS was initiated with the main purpose of co-ordinating charitable work. Help was individualised by way of friendship visitors who would visit people in need, usually the poor. The work of the COS was therefore the forerunner to casework. This work was however hampered by the conservative political ideology of that era.

Once the friendship visitors started to receive payment for their work, the training of social workers commenced in 1903 at the Department of Sociology of the University of London. Hereafter social work training also started in America. During the same period Settlement houses were developed in both England and America. This can be viewed as the forerunner to community work, as the poor were, amongst others, encouraged to become involved in demanding their rights, affordable housing was provided and the friendship visits were also used to collect rent money.

During this time Mary Richmond was one of the most influential women in social work. Through her book "Social diagnosis", which was a milestone for social work, intervention was organised into a process orientated procedure. In contrast to Mary Richmond, there was Jane Addams. She was a leader in the field of social justice programmes and made a large contribution towards the advancement of social justice and democracy. In contrast to Mary Richmond, she was opposed to making social work a profession. This ideological tension is still applicable today: a more clinical social work approach and professionalism on the one hand and social reform which warns against professional interests taking preference over those of the client, on the other hand.
The next beacon in the history of social work is Freud's theories, which had an influence on social work particularly from 1930 onwards. This resulted in the focus shifting from economic to

psychological problems. In the USA this movement was also promoted by the political and social climate, which advocated for a strong growth in individualism. It is interesting to observe that, to a large extent, the trends in America influenced social work in South Africa, probably due to the use of American textbooks in South Africa. The period 1945-1960 is, for example, characterised by the development of the group work method, community work and research. While the period 1961 till early 1980 is characterised by the decrease in psychoanalysis and increased recognition of the social systems theory.

In South Africa it was the Dutch Reformed Church in particular who took care of the welfare needs of people. Between 1864 and 1899 the DR-church founded various institutions in the Cape Colony. After the Boer war the Afrikaner Women's Organisations came into existence to offer assistance to the poor whites. In 1928 the DR-church requested that the Carnegie Corporation undertake an investigation into the causes of poverty among whites. Of the most notable recommendations made by the Carnegie Commission, was that a state department of public welfare and university training for social workers be introduced.

By 1937 the Department for Public Welfare was established and by 1964 social work training was offered at all universities. However separate university training was offered for the various population groups. The National Welfare Act of 1965 made the registration of social workers possible. A number of years passed however, before the Social and Associated Workers Act, 110 of 1978 was introduced, through which a statutory council could regulate the behaviour and training of social workers.

The coming to power of the National Party in 1948 had, as in many other areas of life, a great influence on social work. This was largely due to the apartheid doctrine that was enforced

through a policy of separate development. In 1966, for example, the Department of Public Welfare and Pensions issued regulations to registered welfare organisations in which they were instructed to establish separate organisations for all race groups. Social security grants received by whites were higher than those paid out to other population groups.

The constitution of 1983 was another factor that had a great influence on social work. This constitution extended the exclusively white franchise to the coloureds and the Indians in the form of a Trichameral Parliament, with separate representation for whites (the House of Assembly), coloureds (the House of Representatives) and Indians (the House of Delegates). Black people were pertinently excluded from this dispensation as their "political development" was to be realised through the homelands. Provision was made for the establishment of black local authorities in black communities. In practise this meant that there was a department of welfare for each population group. This situation became even more complicated for social work, when the then Department of Health and Public Welfare was rationalised resulting in the health personnel occupying many of the key positions.

The first democratic general election in South Africa on 27 April 1994 and the subsequent introduction of a democratically elected government once again brought about many changes in social work. It introduced a period of total transformation in other areas, but particularly in the field of social work. Currently social work is characterised by a developmental paradigm. The Reconstruction and Development Programme in particular, which was made known in 1994, was largely responsible for this new phase in social work. The White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 is already concrete proof hereof. The new constitution of South Africa has far reaching implications for social work. Due to the

fact that these documents are broad policy frameworks, it is necessary to first conceptualise relevant terms concerning policy.

## SOCIAL POLICY

Many social workers in South Africa regard policy as something that does not really effect practice. With the result that laws are not always thoroughly questioned. A possible reason for this tendency could be the manner in which the previous government implemented policy. They did not have a policy of inclusiveness and many social workers did not even have the franchise! To become involved in policy which effects the social work profession, could be made a requirement of every social worker. Where, for example, it was previously regarded as unprofessional for a social worker to participate in protest marches, these actions are now being seen more and more as an ethical responsibility. There is currently a call for greater expression of opinions and assertiveness on the part of social workers.

Social policy and related concepts will now be defined with reference to the work of Gil (1992), Gilbert et al. (1993) and the Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995).

*Policy*

Policy can be defined as an explanation of the actions necessary to achieve certain goals. It is sometimes formulated in the form of laws. In this regard decisions can be used in the same sense as policy.

*Welfare policy*
It is a system of interrelated principles and courses of action by the State to determine the nature of social relationships between individuals, groups and communities. It involves the allocation, distribution and regulation of resources to promote the wellbeing of people. What this means in practice is that welfare policy is determined by the State and is therefore mainly politically inspired.

*Social work policy*
It is a system of interrelated principles and courses of action by a welfare agency to

- determine the nature and range of social work intervention,
- formulate programmes for service delivery,
- maintain and improve the expertise of social workers and other service workers,
- and promote social work research.

Social work policy is therefore applicable to a specific welfare agency and those social workers involved.

*Social policy*
It is an accepted guideline for the change, maintenance or creation of living conditions conducive to human welfare. Social policy is therefore the term that is used when referring in the broader sense to welfare policy (of the state) and/or social work policy (of a welfare agency). Social policy can also be defined on the following levels:

- It is a philosophical concept, which serves as principles according to which attempts are made to find solutions to problems.

- It is a product of the conclusions that have been made. It

often takes the form of laws.

- It is a process, as it changes continuously as a result of changing circumstances.

- It must result in action, because policy must be able to be implemented.

- It influences peoples living conditions (e.g. politically, physically, economically, biologically, culturally), the quality of life (e.g. educational, health services) and social relationships (e.g. rights of different religious groups, races and sexes).

*The policy making process*

The policy making process has certain characteristics. It is a complex process of communication and feedback. It is dynamic because it changes with time and offers broad guidelines rather than specific instructions. This process is also aimed at action which makes it future orientated. That is why policy is usually flexible so as to adapt to changing circumstances. Finally, the policy process is also a political process (as already explained) because it is in the public interest. Policy must therefore always be interpreted in terms of the environment in which it is determined because political, social and economic factors all influence the policy making process. An additional characteristic of the policy making process, is that policy can be determined by both official (e.g. the cabinet) and unofficial institutions (e.g. interest groups and individuals).

Policy is usually proof of how a political system responds to the needs and problems made known, in the form of demands, by the environment. These demands are called policy issues. Various factors can give rise to policy issues, for example:

- circumstances and societal trends such as population growth and violence;
- the policy of political leaders;
- personal viewpoints of office-bearers;
- research regarding societal opinions;
- social problems presented by the media and pressure groups.

Once policy issues have been raised, policy proposals are submitted for consideration by those concerned. Policy can therefore be initiated at ground level or by the authorities. If the policy is formulated and accepted it is usually issued in the form of a declaration, for example through laws, regulations etceteras. The policy is ultimately executed by means of legislation, the courts and interest groups.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK FOR POLICY

Having provided an overview of the history of South African social work and a conceptualisation of policy, an attempt will be made to present a few basic insights regarding the implications of history for social policy.

Terblanche (1995) states that social work in South Africa has undergone a metamorphosis. He confirms that the fragmented manner in which the former political system delivered services, by means of the Own Affairs Welfare Departments of the Trichameral Parliament, did not have much impact on the total community. Previously the social work terrain was dominated by social workers from the state and registered welfare organisations. These persons were the main role players with regard to policy making and service delivery. Policy making was approached in a mainly clinical manner and was based on Western models. The

fundamental changes prescribed by the RDP and the White Paper for Social Welfare however, required a new paradigm. Now other role players such as community based organisations, non-governmental organisations and the beneficiaries themselves have also entered the policy making process.

The RDP is a policy framework for integrated, socio-economic transformation. Its purpose is therefore to transform all existing welfare policy and service delivery programmes. The rationale for the RDP is self-evident when bearing in mind the history of social work in South Africa. The RDP is, amongst others, motivated by the following:

- poverty and degradation which was created by colonialism and apartheid;
- racial divisions and economic disparity;
- discrimination against women, inhabitants of rural areas and the youth;
- domination of the economy by whites and exploitation of others;
- segregation with regard to education, health, welfare, transport and employment opportunities;
- the devastating effect of violence;
- the political resistance, political transition during the course of 1994 and the first democratic election;
- a priority of the democratic government is to address poverty and deprivation;
- an achievable, sustainable and viable programme is necessary for transformation in South Africa;
- the RDP proposes freedom and an improved quality of life for all South Africans;
- all parties in the government have committed themselves to the RDP (ANC 1994).

It is clear from the above-mentioned rationale, why the RDP

promotes the development of new encompassing legislation, which serves as a framework for a developmentally orientated welfare system. This implies that basic primary level service delivery is a priority and that all welfare services will be measured, revised and significantly adapted according to the new policy. For social work services in particular, this involves every welfare agency and social work organisation having to decide to what extent the developmental paradigm will feature in the policy of the agency or organisation. Examples of this are as follows:

- the extent to which the focus should be on community centred services or residential care;

- to what extent they should concentrate on prevention or treatment of social problems;

- to what extent social work services should be delivered in terms of fields of service (e.g. care of the aged, child and family care etc.) or service levels (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary level);

- to what extent they should work according to specialisation (e.g. social work methods) or rationalisation (e.g. a holistic approach).

The final implication of social work history for policy, to be referred to here, is the various models of welfare, which are determined by means of social policy directives (Bernstein & Gray 1996:43-44).

- A residual welfare policy places primary responsibility for welfare upon the individual and family. It is based on the principle that people should not become dependent and that they should pass a means test in order to qualify for certain

welfare benefits. Welfare is also regarded as a privilege. This model was characteristic of social work during the reign of the previous government.

- An institutional welfare policy is characteristic of First World Countries such as Britain. The principle adhered to, is that society is responsible for the welfare of its citizens and that all people have a right to welfare. Extensive services are provided to meet peoples needs from the time of their birth.

- A developmentally orientated welfare policy is important in a society with a high level of poverty. Welfare is regarded as a basic right and is approached holistically. Welfare is also seen as part of other systems (e.g. education and health) which can make a contribution to quality of life. One of the primary goals of this policy is to eliminate inequalities by way of, for example, self-help programmes. A developmentally orientated welfare policy is therefore in line with the RDP.

It ought now to be clear that the history of social work has continuously been influenced by political, social and economic factors. This culminates in the social policy that poses a great challenge to welfare agencies and social workers in South Africa.

# CHAPTER 4

# VALUES IN SOCIAL WORK

In order to reach the goals of social work, the social worker must convey certain values. This is probably the reason why a wealth of literature exists on values in social work. Lee (1994:131) demonstrates the central position of values in intervention, by means of a case study where a client asks: "What kind of a social worker are you? Are you the kind that thinks they can fix things…, or are you the kind that tries to fix us?" Therefore the values expressed by the social worker shape every facet of social work. The complexity of the expression of values in South Africa is however endorsed by Payne (1991:4) in that he points out that although much has been written about values, this has been done in terms of Western culture and is therefore not necessarily applicable to non-western cultures. Loewenberg (1988:X,94-95) highlights further complications regarding the expression of values, by mentioning the role of religion with regard to values. He argues that it is impossible for social workers to maintain a neutral set of values.

It is from this perspective that the following introductory discussion on values in social work will be presented, which will serve to make the reader aware of the complexity of the expression of values in South Africa. It is however important that the content of this chapter (values) be seen in terms of the definition and the goals of social work in South Africa.

## DEFINITION OF VALUE ORIENTATED TERMS

Loewenberg (1988:55-56) motivates that value orientated terms are used differently by different authors. What, for example, is classified by one writer as a value will be conceptualised by another writer as a principle. He points out that Ashenbrenner (1971) analysed approximately 3000 different conceptualisations of the term "value". Loewenberg's argument is also applicable to this chapter. For this reason the core of this chapter focuses only on the conceptualisation of professional values of the social worker in South Africa. For these introductory purposes however, it is still necessary to define a few simplified value orientated terms.

Values: These are ideals that one believes in and strives towards. It therefore involves preferences for certain actions (Bernstein & Gray 1996:137; Hoffman & Sallee 1994:32; Levy 1993:2).

Principles: This refers to a foundation, conviction, point of reference and basis for discussion (Lombard, Weyers & Schoeman 1991:76).

Attitude: This is a favourable or unfavourable predisposition (propensity) to behaviour (Adler & Rodman 1994:388).

Ethics: These are the values in action that influence preferences for behaviour in relationships (Levy 1993:2). It is therefore about right and wrong.

## RELIGION AND VALUES

For quite some while there was little comment from the welfare

field regarding the influence of religion on values in social work. In recent times only a few authors such as Mupedziswa (1996:378-386) aired their views in this regard. The new constitution of South Africa may possibly evoke more responses regarding this issue.

In Loewenberg (1988:15) reference is made to the Christian church as the mother of social work. This reference is probably historically correct, but social work today is certainly not only based on Christian values. A comment by Lombard in Grobbler & Schoeman (1980:6) is also clearly from a certain time perspective. She suggests that in a Christian country such as South Africa, Christian values and norms have, up till now, still exercised a necessary meaningful influence upon social work. In a democratic and multi-cultural South Africa where there is freedom of religion, the focus ought not only to be on the influence of Christian values, but on religion in the broader sense.

Loewenberg (1988:5) emphasises the importance of acknowledging the impact that the social worker's religion has on his/her expression of values. This author has conceptualised three attitudes of social workers regarding the impact of religion on practice:

- Many social workers ignore religion as if it is irrelevant to the profession. This group includes people who themselves practice, for example the Christian, Moslem or Jewish religion.

- Another group of social workers, who are most probably in the minority, are opposed to religion and are of the opinion that it is harmful to clients and in conflict with the goals of the profession. This group of people usually do not practise any religion.

- The final group of social workers, less prominent in the literature but probably the largest group, regard religion as central to their personal and professional lives.

Although some academics, social workers and students justify their entry into the profession upon humanitarian grounds, the reality is that a large number of practitioners in South Africa also justify their entry into the profession in terms of religious values. It would appear that "to have a calling" (from a religious value orientation) is a factor that greatly motivates many social workers and students to enter the field, while the literature disregards this factor. A possible reason is that academics, in particular, view this "awareness of a calling" as in opposition to and a threat to scientific practice and professionalism. Loewenberg (1988:149) however warns that religiously orientated clients and social workers are not unfashionable remains of a former era, but rather a living reality. Social workers (regardless of what they believe in) must therefore acknowledge and understand the impact of religion on their own and their client's value orientations.

Brammer et al. (1993:350) suggest that in order to understand the impact of values on religion, the following components must be distinguished:

- religion (e.g. Christian, Moslem, Jewish)
- denomination (e.g. DR-church, Catholic, Methodist)
- commitment (e.g. the extent to which religion is practised)
- individuality (e.g. own opinions and attitudes)

These authors mention how important it is that the *person* and not their religion should be the focus of attention during intervention. This implies that although the impact of religion on values must be recognised and understood, one should always strive towards the goals of social work. Just as a social worker unlike a teacher, for example, cannot deal with a client in a didactic manner, nor

can they deal with a client as a minister, pastor or any spiritual leader would.

## CULTURE AND VALUES

Payne (1991:4-6) highlights the diversity of culture and the influence that this has on people's values. This author refers to examples, such as the Western social worker who emphasises the importance of individual rights. In some cultures however individual rights are not important, but rather the duties and responsibilities with regard to the individual's family network. Egan (1994:52-53) stresses the importance of understanding cultural diversity such as gender, sexual orientation, politics, population group etc. This means that the social worker must be aware of his/her own values and prejudices and show understanding of the client's values. This should lead to culturally appropriate (culturally friendly) intervention. In practice this means that clients should be individualised in terms of the manner in which they express their values. It should therefore be possible, for example, to refer to a middle class black man as *this individual*. This individualisation of the client should however not be viewed in the same sense as individuality in a value context (as with the above-mentioned example provided by Payne). Since culture plays such an important role in social work, it will be discussed more fully in a subsequent chapter.

## LEVELS OF VALUES

Bernstein & Gray (1996:88-90) and Loewenberg & Dolgoff (1996:50-53) distinguish certain levels of values. Differences in the values of the respective levels can result in conflict, for example, differences between the values of a worker and a client

or differences between the values of the worker and the organisation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Societal values: | These are usually reflected through the government, in terms of the policy and welfare model which it subscribes to, for example a residual (welfare is a privilege) or institutional model (welfare is a right). |
| Professional values: | The values of the profession, which are reflected through respect for the person and social entitlement. Social workers are held accountable for the expression of their values by means of the ethical code. |
| Values of the organisation: | This is demonstrated by means of the policy of the organisation involved, for example, by only providing social relief for a limited period. This reflects the organisation's value of encouraging independence. |
| Values of the client: | Clients have their own frame of reference regarding values, which in the light of their problematic nature need to be reconsidered. |
| Social workers own values: | This is that which the worker as a person believes in, their own ideals and what they as human beings strive towards. |

## PROFESSIONAL VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK

Schoeman in Lombard et al. (1991:75) states that no profession can exist without a fundamental basis. The social work profession is built on a basic philosophy that is fundamentally based on a particular view of humanity and life. The social worker's view of humanity and life contributes towards achieving the goals of social work. For this reason, considerations such as equity, equality and social justice are not regarded as values, but rather as goals of social work. (This has already been discussed in the chapter dealing with the social work domain.) With this background in mind an introductory discussion on a few of these professional values will be provided with reference to the work of Brown (1992:49-51), Compton & Galaway (1994:221-239), Hepworth & Larsen (1993:52-89), Hoffman & Sallee (1994:33-37), Kadushin (1990:39-57), Lombard et al. (1991:75-78), Sheafor et al. (1994:85-96) and Zastrow (1989:30-47).

*Belief in the potential of people*

The social worker must believe that people are capable of change, growth and development. Therefore peoples abilities must continually be expanded.

*Affirming human dignity*

The unique ability of people to accept personal responsibility, is taken into account. There is belief in the person rather than in the intervention, by respecting the person's ability to take decisions.

*Acceptance*

People have the right to be accepted for what they are. The person must be seen within the context of his/her circumstances. Unacceptable behaviour is viewed as the manifestation of a process of dynamic causal factors.

*Non-judgemental*
The client and his/her situation are viewed objectively and this must be reflected in the worker's attitude towards the client.

*Individualising*
People's needs and situations are unique, in that they are experienced differently by different people. The value of the individual must be re-established.

*Right to self-determination*
People want to be in the position to make decisions themselves, which effect their lives. People have the potential to promote their own interests.

*Self-help*
People should be granted the opportunity to accept responsibility for doing something themselves to improve their circumstances.

*Address real needs*
The needs addressed must be those which the people themselves have identified and not that which has been forced upon them.

*Involvement with others*
People want to feel that they belong to a group or community. Opportunities must therefore be created so that the individual can become involved with others.

*Partnership*
The individual, group or community together with the social worker are partners in the intervention process. All parties therefore must have an interest in the intervention and accept responsibility for it by means of the division of roles.

*Responsible change*
Social work implies, amongst others, change. Intervention with a view to change must however be applied in a responsible manner so that it will in no way be disadvantageous to the person.

*Meeting on own level*
People must be met on their level of functioning, which is familiar to them. This does not mean that the social worker has to sacrifice his/her own identity, but must rather make him/herself understood by the client and move through the intervention at the client's pace.

*Confidentiality*
People find it difficult to share confidential information with outsiders. Information effecting clients must therefore be handled with great prudence. (Many training institutions have the practice whereby students take an oath or declaration of confidentiality.)

*Controlled emotional involvement*
Subjective elements are involved in every relationship including professional relationships. The social worker however should not become subjectively involved in an uncontrolled manner in the clients situation, as this can be at the expense of level-headedness and sound judgement, which can be to the detriment of the client or the situation.

## SOCIAL ETHICS

Ethics can be regarded as the operationalisation of professional values. This is usually done by means of a code of ethics. A code of ethics only provides a guideline according to which a professional person's behaviour can be judged. Certain

behaviours that could, for example, be unprofessional in one situation, may possibly be acceptable in another. Due to certain circumstances, certain values can take precedence over others. Ethical judgements therefore demand an immense amount of thought. Stated otherwise: to be able to apply a code of ethics, the social worker must be able to think ethically. Various attempts have been made to formulate guidelines in this regard (Levy 1993; Loewenberg & Dolgoff 1996).

Loewenberg & Dolgoff (1996:59-62) propose a hierarchy of ethical decision making namely the Ethical Principles Screen (EPS), which offers social workers a practical guideline on professional decision making. In practice the social workers ranking of ethical choices must comply with:

1. The guarantee of basic survival needs of all people. The protection of a person's life (both the life of a client and the lives of others) must take precedence over every other obligation.
2. The promotion of equitable, equal and accessible opportunities for all people.
3. Guarantee people their autonomy, independence and freedom.
4. Ensuring the least harm and/or repairable harm to people.
5. Promoting a better quality of life for all people.
6. Maintaining a person's privacy (confidentiality).
7. Exposing the truth and fully disclosing relevant information to clients and to others.

Loewenberg & Dolgoff (1996) suggest that the Ethical Principles Screen (EPS) be used in terms of a ranking order when ethical decisions need to be taken. The protection of a person's life, for example, ought to take precedence over the guarantee of autonomy.

It ought to be apparent that the above-mentioned Ethical

Principles Screen can be directly linked to the goals of social work. It can be put to good use with regard to the ethical code for South African social workers, as embodied in the Social Work Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978). This code of ethics focuses on the general point of departure and behaviour which effects the profession, the client, a colleague or other professional person, employer, social work agency and community.

Loewenberg & Dolgoff (1996:59) suggest by way of their Ethical Rules Screen (ERS) that the code of ethics should be examined early on in the course of an ethical dilemma. It must first be established whether any of the rules of the ethical code are applicable. The rules of the ethical code must take preference over the social worker's personal value system. Secondly, it is suggested that the ethical code be adhered to, where applicable. Thirdly it is proposed that, if the ethical dilemma can not be addressed by the ethical code, then the Ethical Principles Screen (EPS) must be followed. The ethical code must be read together with the ethical rules regarding the action or omissions that are seen to be unprofessional or unfitting. (Government notice R.54 of 15 January 1993 in the Government Gazette 14526 amendment.)

In a country like South Africa with its turbulent history of value expression, it is necessary that students, practitioners and academics cultivate ethical thoughts that are based on a healthy and just value system. Seen in the light of the former apartheid system, in particular, it is necessary that everyone involved in providing intervention, must examine themselves to determine the influence of personal values on professional values. Cournoyer (1991:58) states powerfully: "The skill of ethical decision making is fundamental to professional social work practice. Without such skill, a person cannot legitimately claim to have achieved professional status."

# CHAPTER 5

# CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL WORK

The sensitivity of culture is reflected in the following references made by Plionis & Lewis (1995:176): "the premium on correctness gives rise to a paradoxical impact: no language. Being charged with an 'ism' is so damning, that many believe that the risk of trying to bridge a cultural gap is too high." Many social workers will be able to identify with the aforementioned statement. Kadushin (1990:303) sketches the profile of a middle class, qualified, white, young and female social worker. Under South African circumstances this social worker will probably render services to an older, disadvantaged, poor, black man. A situation such as this can be detrimental to well intended intervention, if the social worker works in terms of her own cultural norm (Zastrow 1989:279). For this reason authors such as Brown (1992:233) and Hepworth & Larsen (1993:605) recommend that the social worker should be proficient in implementing cross-cultural intervention. In this chapter the suggestion will be made that the proficiency of the social worker not only includes knowledge of other cultures, but also implies an appropriate attitude on the part of the social worker.

Lynch & Hanson (1992:5) and Sheafor et al. (1994:410) warn against the danger that exists of different cultures becoming over-generalised and stereotyped, for example, providing recipes for cross-cultural intervention. On the one hand the social worker must be aware of certain broad homogenous characteristics which are present in cultures, while on the other hand be aware of the possibility that an individual may not present these specific cultural characteristics. Due to the cultural diversity that exists in

South Africa, no attempt will be made in this chapter to isolate and label the different cultural groups.

Sikhitha (1996:61) is of the opinion that literature on cross-cultural social work in South Africa is still limited and elementary. This author provides the reason for this himself, by explaining that during the apartheid system social workers could quite comfortably and safely work mainly within their own culture. The new Constitution of South Africa however requires of people to think and work in a multicultural manner. Due to the limited amount of literature available on multiculturalism in South Africa, this chapter focuses mainly on American literature, which has a wide variety of sources and even multicultural textbooks to offer (Ponterotto et al. 1995). In order to ensure that this information is relevant, it will be conceptualised from a South African perspective.

## CONCEPTUALISATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL WORK

Cultural terms are used differently by different people, depending on the cultural orientation of the people concerned. For these purposes the following definitions, seen from a social work perspective, will suffice.

*Culture*

The term culture is derived from Sociology and Anthropology and suggests a way of living that is learned and transferred to others. This includes concrete and abstract elements such as certain practices and a distinctive outlook on life and the world. It is a binding factor, enabling a distinction to be made between ”us” and “them” (Bernstein & Gray 1996:134; Sheafor et al. 1994:408; Strydom 1995:115; Van der Walt 1991:4).

*Multicultural*
This points to the diversity of cultures and is more than just the interaction between two cultures. Multicultural therefore implies the sum total of a variety of cultures (Bernstein & Gray 1996:138; Strydom 1995:116).

*Cross-cultural social work*
This implies the interaction that takes place during intervention between a social worker of one culture and a client of another culture. A variety of terms are used when referring to cross-culture, such as transcultural (Brown 1992:233; Hepworth & Larsen 1993:604; Sheafor et al. 1994:411) and intercultural (Mannikam 1991:69).

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity simply means the differences between cultures, in terms of class differences, gender differences, language differences, differences in origins, ethnic differences, age differences, racial differences, people with different sexual orientations, religious differences, political differences etc. (Mannikam 1991:69; Sikhitha 1996:61). Cross-cultural social work therefore implies that a social worker deals with cultural diversity during the course of intervention. In South Africa however the perception exists (probably due to the apartheid system) that cultural diversity and consequently also cross-cultural social work, is only seen in terms of population groups i.e. whites, coloureds, black people and Indians. Some perceptions in South Africa are even more explicit and see cultural diversity only in terms of peoples' skin colour i.e. white, brown or black! If the preceding cultural conceptualisations are taken into account, then obviously this view cannot be justified

either from a practical or theoretical perspective. The point of view subscribed to here, is that cross-cultural social work can only be meaningful, if the full extent of cultural diversity in South Africa is acknowledged and if it is not only seen in terms of population group and skin colour.

## CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

Social workers in South Africa, who in the course of intervention deal with a variety of cultures, ought to be sensitive to the various cultural perceptions. A few of the cultural perceptions discussed by Hepworth & Larsen (1993), Sheafor et al. (1994) and Thesnaar (1993), will be identified in the following section in the form of a summary, so as to serve as examples. It is however impossible to compile a complete list of cultural perceptions, in that it concerns every aspect of life.

Cultural perceptions are the way in which people of different cultural groups regard, experience and express the following aspects: outlook on life and the world, religion, group participation, death, harmony, order, sickness, healing, nature, time, symbols, roles, colloquial language, art, rhythm, food, recreation, dress, body decorations, facial expressions, bodily gestures, communication styles, family structures, names, authority, hierarchical structures and so on.

## ATTITUDE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL WORK

It is quite clear from the opinions of a variety of authors that *cross-cultural social work is not a method that can be applied, but rather implies an attitude that the social worker adopts.* The following are appropriate attitudes towards cross-cultural social

work which have been compiled from the opinions of the following authors: Compton & Galaway (1994:167), Hepworth & Larsen (1993:604), Lynch & Hanson (1992:39-40;51-52), Payne (1991:231), Sheafor et al. (1994:411-412), Sikhitha (1996:62-65).

- The social worker must have a positive attitude, understanding, respect, self-awareness and appreciation of his/her own culture, in order to adopt the same attitude towards other cultures.

- Adopt a cordial attitude towards people of other cultures, but avoid insincere over-friendliness.

- Guard against your own suspicious and hostile attitudes that have been formed as a result of previous subjective cultural experiences.

- Avoid the attitude that "everybody is the same", as this denies the existence of cultural diversity and integrity.

- Guard against an attitude of feeling sorry for or expressing sentimental sympathy towards other cultures.

- Prevent attitudes that can lead to over identification with another culture, as this leads to confusion and is usually not acceptable to the people belonging to that cultural group.

- Present a conciliatory attitude instead of just focussing on differences.

- Adopt an open attitude with regard to all the facts surrounding cultural differences and deal with them as hypotheses.

- Guard against a closed attitude with regards to the history of other cultures as it is important to that specific cultural group.

- Convey an easygoing attitude by acknowledging and rectifying errors in one's own interpretation of other's cultures.

- Adopt an understanding attitude towards other people who, for certain reasons suffer from cultural paranoia.

- Cultivate a patient attitude with regard to cultural differences in language and semantics and other confusing cultural perceptions.

- Reflect an eagerness to learn more about the other culture's "world".

- Display a flexible attitude by considering alternate cultural explanations for behaviour during the course of intervention.

- Display an attitude of acknowledgement towards the suppression of people's cultures in the past and the spreading of incorrect information.

- Maintain a realistic attitude so as not to overreact as a result of one's own guilt feelings about others misdeeds towards other cultural groups.

- Adopt a responsible attitude by rectifying incorrect information about other cultural groups.

- Maintain an empathic attitude that goes beyond empathy, so as to enter the world of other cultures without influencing their legitimacy, and to see the advantages and disadvantages of other cultures without losing one's own culture.

- Develop creative cross-cultural intervention strategies, but not at the expense of scientific or humane principles.

- Demonstrate a universal citizenship, which connects all cultures and yet also allows for them to be separate.

## CULTURALLY FRIENDLY SOCIAL WORK

If social workers adopt the above-mentioned attitudes this should give rise to culturally friendly intervention. “Culturally friendly social work intervention” is a neologism (a word that has been created) which implies that by expressing the appropriate attitudes, it is possible to have intervention which enables the social worker to work freely between cultural boundaries.

Van der Walt (1991:4) acknowledges that it is only human to accept one's own culture uncritically, whereas a person tends to be over critical of an unfamiliar culture. This brings relief to social workers that acknowledge this fact. These social workers will also recognise cultural diversity and perceptions and will make concerted efforts to express appropriate attitudes in cross-cultural social work. Only then will culturally friendly social work be possible.

# CHAPTER 6

# COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL WORK

The ability to communicate effectively is central to social work, because it is probably the most important skill required of the social worker in social work intervention. Introductory knowledge, values and skills in social work would therefore not be complete without reference being made to communication. Communication is such a broad field that it is difficult to only provide an introduction to communication. It is for this reason that in this chapter only the most important components of communication will be conceptualised, from a social work perspective. This will enable the reader to form a complete picture of those aspects important to communication in social work. The viewpoints provided in this chapter are based on Adler & Rodman (1994) and Devito (1997), except where other references are provided. In a few instances these will be supplemented by personal opinions.

## CONCEPTUALISING COMMUNICATION

The Terminology Committee for social work (1995:11) define communication as the process by which thoughts or feelings are conveyed, either verbally or non-verbally, by one person to another. Because communication is so complex, it is not sufficient to provide a general definition of communication. Those concepts pertaining to the process of communication must also be defined.

- Verbal communication is the spoken word when communication occurs by means of speech.

- Non-verbal communication is communication without words.

- Lineal communication is one way communication between people.

- Interactional communication is a two way cyclical process occurring between people.

- Communication takes places between a sender and a receiver. A person who communicates is both a sender and a receiver.

- Encoding of communication occurs in that thoughts, behaviour and gestures are "translated".

- Transmission occurs once the message has been encoded. The sender then no longer has control over the message.

- The message is decoded (received) by, for example, listening. Encoding and decoding occur simultaneously.

- Messages are sent and received both verbally and non-verbally.

- The channel is the medium by which a message is sent, for example, by talking, listening and touching.

- Feedback is used in order to check if the message sent was correctly received.

- Noise (disturbances) in the communication process can result in the receiver not getting the message that was sent. Noise can be physical (loud sounds), psychological (preconceived ideas) and semantic (different meanings of words) in nature.

- Communication is effective if the message is received correctly, in the form intended by the sender.

## THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

The purpose of communication is:
- to discover (by learning about yourself and others);
- to enter into relationships (by establishing and maintaining them);
- to help (through intervention);
- to persuade (by getting people to think and behave differently);
- to play (through entertainment, pleasure and relaxation).

## TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

The different types of communication all occur within their own distinctive context, but present the same basic characteristics.

| | |
|---|---|
| Intrapersonal communication: | To communicate with yourself. |
| Interpersonal communication: | To communicate with one other (or more) person. |

Small group communication: To communicate with people in a group situation so that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Public communication: To communicate with a group who form an audience and who are too many to enable participation.

Written communication: To communicate in written form with familiar or unfamiliar people in a formal or informal manner.

Electronic communication: To communicate with people by means of the electronic media, for example, a radio, television and computer.

Communication through the use of mediators: To communicate with people by means of an interpreter, facilitator or any other representative.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION

The following characteristics of communication are of importance to social work.

- Communication is circular (a circuit), in that it is a process that follows a circular course and results in mutual influencing.

- Communication always has an effect on the people involved in it.

- Communication is dynamic, because it is a process that occurs over time.

- Communication is transactional and always takes place between people, in other words people cannot not communicate.

- Communication always occurs within a specific context, such as a physical context (where), psychological context (how), social context (with whom) and a time context (when).

- Communication is presented in packages. Usually the whole body (verbal and non-verbal) is involved in conveying a message.

- Communication is a process of adaptation. There must be ongoing learning and adapting so as to accommodate and understand other's messages.

- Communication is continuous. It is an ongoing and consecutive process and does not have a real beginning or

end. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between the cause and effect.

- Communication has a certain content within a specific relationship. The relationship between people will determine what they say to one another.

- Communication involves symmetrical and complimentary transactions. In a symmetrical transaction the reactions correspond. In complimentary transactions the reactions supplement one another.

- Communication is transactional, because in order to send a message a person must be both a receiver and a sender.

- Communication is inevitable. It takes place all the time, even when a person chooses not to communicate, that in itself is communication.

- Communication is non-recurrent, because no reaction could ever be repeated in exactly the same manner.

- Communication is irreversible, because something that has already taken place cannot be changed or denied. Attempts to alter the effect of communication can however be successful.

- Communication is guided by rules, in that the nature of the communication is determined by the circumstances.

- Communication is complex, on account of the variety of types, functions, contexts and forms thereof.

## A FEW ASPECTS WHICH INFLUENCE COMMUNICATION

Only a few of the aspects which influence communication and which the social worker should know about, are mentioned here.

*The self*
The social worker's self image, self-awareness and self-disclosure will influence his/her response towards others during communication.

*Perception*
Perception influences the social worker by determining which messages will be absorbed and what meanings will be attached to them. This influences the way in which people are judged.

*Active listening*
If the social worker is a good listener, this will have a great influence on the intervention, in that it will provide the client with the reassurance that he/she has been heard. The listening process is comprised of reception (hearing), understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding.

*Attending*
This is the manner in which the social worker concentrates and focuses upon the client. This is linked to active listening and influences intervention in that it gives the client the reassurance that the worker is with him/her.

*Culture*
Culture influences every aspect of communication, due to the fact that the nature and manner in which a person communicates, is determined by that person's culture.

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Although the various forms of non-verbal communication differ from one another in many respects, the one form is usually applied in relation to the other form.

*Functions of non-verbal communication*
Examples of the functions of non-verbal communication are as follows:

- To repeat and confirm a verbal message by, for example, nodding the head and saying "yes".

- To intentionally contradict the verbal message by, for example, crossing one's fingers when telling a lie.

- Instead of saying "goodbye" to, for example, replace it with a wave of the hand.

- To, for example, tell a joke and to supplement it with a smile.

- For emphasis, for example, looking deeply into someone's eyes during a declaration of love.

- To regulate, for example, using a hand gesture when wishing to speak.

*Types of non-verbal communication*
Non-verbal communication includes more than just body language. The following are a few examples thereof:
The face: eye movements, blushing, sweating, expressions using the mouth, frowning and other facial

expressions.

Gestures: any movements of the limbs.

Posture: the manner in which a person sits, walks and stands.

Space: the size of a person's personal "bubble".

Touch: playful, intimate or aggressive.

Appearance: clothes, personal care, jewelry.

Silence: the way in which silences are dealt with.

Odour: body odour.

Environment: the manner in which the inside and outside of a house is decorated.

*Barriers to non-verbal communication in social work intervention*
Hepworth & Larsen (1993:177-179) refer to a number of non-verbal communication barriers that occur during intervention. The examples provided by these authors and supplementary examples will be briefly mentioned here.

- Facial expressions which reflect disapproval, shock, anger or embarrassment at an inappropriate moment.

- Inappropriate silences that make the client feel uncomfortable.
- Body language that can be offensive to certain cultural groups.

- Physical noise which makes it impossible to hear the conversation.

- Background movements or decorations that are distracting.

- Insufficient attending, for example, not maintaining eye contact.

- Uncontrollable gestures and movements such as trembling hands and muscle spasms.

- Irritating habits such as fidgeting, constantly touching certain body parts, objects or clothing, scratching or rubbing.

- Touching or coming too close to the client which can be embarrassing or uncomfortable for the client.

- Clothing or jewelry that is offensive to the client or which distracts their attention.

- Time concepts that differ from that of the client's culture.

- Odours which are unbearable.

- Decorations in the environment that make the client feel uncomfortable.

## VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Language is the most explicit form of communication. The main purpose thereof is to convey meaning.

*Characteristics of verbal communication*

- Choices of words and speech patterns can assist in identifying a person's culture, socio-economic status and literacy.
- If the pitch does not vary, it can become boring.
- The pitch and range influence the quality of the voice.
- The voice must have volume in order to be heard.
- The content of the words can reflect feelings.
- The pace of speech refers to how fast or slowly one speaks.
- The fluency with which one speaks can be either absorbing or irritating.

*Categories of verbal communication*

Any message can be conveyed by means of verbal communication. It can be categorised as follows:

- Exclusive and inclusive messages (certain people are included in the communication while others are excluded).
- Messages which indicate inferiority, equality or superiority.
- Messages which are based on criticism, recognition and honest judgement.
- Lies and honest messages.
- Gossip and confidential messages.
- Approving and disapproving messages.
- Racist and sexist messages.
- Glorification and slanderous messages.
- In social work a distinction can be made between informal messages (social conversations/chats) and formal messages (professional interviews).

*Barriers to verbal communication in social work intervention*
The aforementioned information in this chapter serves as necessary background, so as to gain an understanding of the barriers to verbal communication during intervention. The following examples are taken from the work of Hepworth & Larsen (1993:180-187) and can in one way or another be regarded as a barrier in a given situation.

- Moralising and preaching: "You should not have done that".

- Premature advising and providing of solutions: "I think the best thing for you would be if.....".

- Persuading, providing logical arguments, lectures, instructions and intellectualising: "Let us look at some of the facts regarding addiction to smoking".

- Judging, criticising and blaming: "You made a mistake by doing that".

- Analysing, diagnosing, making dramatic interpretations and stereotyping behaviour: "You are behaving in this manner because you are angry with your husband".

- The use of social work jargon: "The transformation process is not transparent or sustainable" or "your passive aggressive behaviour can be ascribed to your poor self image".

- Reassuring, sympathising, consoling: "Do not worry things will work out".

- Sarcasm, inappropriate humour, making light of client's

problems: “You think you have a problem!.....”.

- Threaten, warn, attack: “You better.....or else!”.

- Stacking questions: “What are you thinking about? How are you feeling now? What are you going to do now?”.

- Leading questions: “Are you not too young to go and live on your own?”.

- Inappropriate and repeated interruptions: it is frustrating for any person to be constantly interrupted in the middle of a sentence.

- Dominating the conversation: When the other person, for example, is not given the opportunity to speak.

- Safe topics: By continually sticking to certain topics such as the weather and the news without “getting to the point”.

- Passive responses: Not becoming actively involved in the discussion and/or not giving structure to the discussion.
- Parroting, the use of stock phrases and clichés: To constantly use the same words the client’s use, stopgaps such as “good” or “OK” and phrases such as “you know”.

- To only focus on the past: Clients are experiencing distress now which is important to them at this very moment.

## COMMUNICATION BY MEANS OF INTERPRETERS

Due to the fact that South Africa is a multilingual and culturally diverse nation, it is necessary for students and social workers to have some knowledge of the basic communication principles applied when making use of interpreters. Lynch & Hanson (1992:55-56) and Paniagua (1994:12-13) provide guidelines in this regard.

- Use interpreters who come from more or less the same background as the client.
- Use interpreters who have a basic understanding of social work (if possible).
- Attempt at least to acquire knowledge of the protocol and forms of address used in the unfamiliar language.
- Explain the role of the interpreter to the client.
- Look directly at the client when speaking and not at the interpreter.
- Avoid body movements that could be misinterpreted by the client.
- Use a positive tone of voice and facial expressions.
- Speak clearly and a little slower but not loudly.
- Follow a specific order when speaking (e.g. client speaks, interpreter translates, social worker speaks, interpreter translates).
- Limit comments and questions to a few sentences between translations (preferably sentence for sentence).
- Avoid simultaneous translations.
- Avoid using technical language and jargon.
- Try not to oversimplify the language being used.
- Emphasise core words and phrases.
- Continuously check whether or not the client understands.
- Follow up verbal communication with other written or visual material using the client's language.
- Be aware of the fact that the discussion will take double

the length of time and therefore ensure that sufficient time is made available.

- The effect that the interpreter has on the client must be assessed.
- Avoid using interpreters who are friends or family of the client as this could bring their objectivity (and confidentiality) into question.
- The use of child interpreters should also be avoided as this could be viewed as disrespectful in certain cultures.

## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL WORK

Written communication is the written operationalisation of the social worker's intervention. The quality of the written report is often seen as a reflection of the social worker's intervention. The policy and procedures of the agency, as well as the purpose of the report usually determine the format and nature of the reports that are written.

*Functions of report writing*

Brown (1992:131) distinguishes the following functions of report writing.

- It serves as an instrument for supervision, instruction, in-service training and the general professional development of the worker.
- It provides information for research and needs to be incorporated in programme planning.
- It is a reflection of the quality, quantity and type of service offered by an organisation.
- It is used for reference purposes.
- It is used to ensure continuity between workers and organisations.
- It is used to obtain funding for programmes.
- It is of value to the social worker in order to evaluate

his/her work and for the purpose of keeping records.

*Guidelines for written communication*

Brown (1992:129-139) and Sheafor et al. (1994:148-151,156-157) identify guidelines for report writing. The opinions of these authors as well as supplementary opinions are provided here.

- Reports must be written in concise, suitable, understandable and correct language.
- The purpose of the report must always be clearly stated.
- Reports must be written using paragraphs, which must be linked to one another and each paragraph must only deal with one topic. Single sentence paragraphs must be avoided.
- The choice of words must be simple and unambiguous.
- A formal report may never be hand written.
- Spelling, language and numbering errors are inexcusable.
- The layout of a report must be neat, logical and attractive.
- Supporting documentation must be contained in appendixes.

*Types of reports*

Decisions regarding individuals, groups and communities are frequently made based on the following reports: process reports, pre-sentencing reports, court reports, assessment reports, summary reports, background reports, profile reports, intake reports, legal aid reports, foster care reports, after care reports, adoption reports and reports applying for subsidies and financial support. It ought therefore to be clear that written communication in the form of report writing, is a fundamental task of a social worker.

Communication is indeed a complex process. It would however appear that students and practitioners who communicate effectively in their private lives, are also effective communicators

in their professional capacity. The ability to communicate can however improve through practice, which is to the advantage of the client. This leaves every student and practitioner with a grave responsibility in this regard.

# CHAPTER 7

# THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICE PARADIGM OF SOCIAL WORK

Payne (1991:37) argues that theory must undergo a process of naturalisation so as to adjust to social work practice. Theory must therefore be such that it reflects the characteristics (domain and goals) of social work in a certain period. The process of theoretical naturalisation is comprised of intellectual study and analysis, understanding, interpretation and application. This results in a certain paradigm, which for these purposes can be defined as a thought pattern or template. Payne (1991:38) takes it further: "I am arguing that there is a paradigm of social work, which is socially constructed and into which all current theory and practice may be fitted." In South Africa therefore a theoretical and practice paradigm, which takes the current trends in theory and practice into account, should be followed. (This has already been discussed in previous chapters).

Zastrow (1989:13-14) points out that the medical model, which emerged from psychoanalytical theory, belongs in the past. In social work at present the focus should be upon the ecological systems theory perspective. In order to enable the reader to gain

an understanding of the theoretical and practice paradigm of social work in South Africa, this chapter will be aimed at providing an introduction to the conceptualisation of theory and the ecological systems theory perspective as well as the operationalisation thereof. Due to the fact that the focus of this chapter (and book) is only introductory in nature, it will not be possible to fully discuss the full range of the theoretical and practice paradigm. Nevertheless an attempt will still be made to provide an overall picture, albeit selective.

## CONCEPTUALISING THEORY

The theory of social work is a philosophy that is based on certain values according to which human behaviour is explained. It consists of concepts which describe it, facts which can be proven, a process according to which the facts can be arranged and predictions (hypotheses) regarding the facts (Brammer 1993:158). Theory is therefore not merely knowledge or information.

*Theory and models*

A model is an organised set of guidelines and procedures, which is based on research and practice experience and which can offer a solution to problems (Compton & Galaway 1994:10). A model is therefore the operationalisation of theory and practice. Examples of models are those of Egan (1994) and Carkhuff & Anthony (1994).

*Theory and practice*

There is an ongoing debate in social work regarding the integration of theory and practice. The argument is usually about the fact that theory and practice are not linked. This arises from the assumption that social work is either too theoretical and can not be implemented in certain situations or is too practical so that it has no scientific basis. Payne (1991:53-57) suggests that theory and practice should not be viewed as two extremes, but rather that the one forms the basis of the other. The opinion is held that this debate amongst social workers, students and academics regarding the integration of theory and practice, will only be resolved, if the naturalisation of theory that is relevant to South African circumstances is accepted. Theory must therefore be developed which is linked to the goals of social work in South Africa.

*Viewing the theory*

To contribute to the debate on theory and practice the following three views regarding theory will be provided (Payne 1991:39-50).

| | |
|---|---|
| The pragmatic view: | the current theory can not be applied in practice. |
| The positivistic view: | theory is not useful, unless clear predictions can determine the correct results beforehand. |
| The eclectic view: | the combinations of several or more theories in such a manner so as to form a main theory. |

This book is written from an eclectic view, because the assumption is made that currently the majority of social workers in South Africa also subscribe to the eclectic view. For this reason the eclectic view will be discussed in more detail. An eclectic

view is:

- theoretical, because one main school of thought is followed, but techniques from other schools of thought can be added so as to adapt to the aim of the main school of thought;

- structural, because a variety of techniques from various theories are used to adapt to the client's circumstances;
- combinative, because more than one theory is combined during intervention;

- existential, because the social workers can apply theories which are linked to their own views on people and the problems of the clients;

- technical, because techniques from a variety of theories can be used, without any commitment to that theory;

- developmentally orientated, because intervention is regarded as a series of steps which is supported by theory;

- random, because the social worker can apply a theory which suits him/her.

*Types of theory*

Different theories with different goals exist in social work. They can be divided into four groups (Payne 1991:52).

- Theories about social work that explain the nature and role of social work in society.

- Theories of social work that explain the actions or activities that constitute social work, by explaining the relevancy of these activities in achieving the goals.

- Theories taken from psychology and sociology for example, which contribute to social work by explaining human and social behaviour.

- Theories of social work practice and social work methods, which together with the above-mentioned types of theories, explain the interaction between the social worker and the client.

*Value of theory for social work*
Theory has the following value for social work practice:
it provides structured models which can be followed;

- it offers approaches and perspectives to social workers which can serve as a way to order their minds;

- it offers explanations on the causes and effects in specific circumstances;

- it provides prescriptions to social workers so that they know when to do what;

- it offers accountability to the public by effectively defining acceptable practice, so that intervention can be measured accordingly;

- it justifies the use of certain models and practice (Payne 1991:51-52).

*Theoretical perspective of social work*
Payne (1991:249) reasons that it is possible to formulate a clear perspective for social work based on both practice orientated and theoretical trends. This is motivated by the fact that there is currently more acceptance of the naturalisation of

> theory. There is a greater tendency to implement social work techniques in a more focused manner, while the improvement of the general quality of life of people and their environment is being regarded as more and more important. Collaboration with the client system is also being proposed more strongly. There is also a greater awareness of the capacity of the social work profession to influence societal structures and networks to the advantage of the client. Although social work is an international profession, it was previously greatly influenced by Western models. There is currently a greater awareness of the need to develop theories that reflect cultural diversity and which take the client's social environment into account.

Currently social work subscribes to a perspective that is based on the total ecology of humans and the systems linked to them. For this reason an introductory explanation on the ecological systems theory perspective will be provided.

## THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE

The reference made in the literature to the use of the terms "ecology" and "system" in social work is very confusing. These terms are sometimes used separately and/or together and sometimes they are referred to in terms of a theory, model or even an approach (Compton & Galaway 1994; Hepworth & Larsen 1993; Johnson 1986; Payne 1991; Sheafor et al. 1994; Terminology Committee for Social Work 1995; Zastrow 1989). For this reason the above-mentioned authors' opinions are offered as a perspective. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a perspective as the apparent relation between objects as to position, distance etceteras. The relationship and importance of the ecology, systems and theory will, for these purposes, be differentiated from one another. Because the term "theory" has

already been conceptualised, the focus will be on the terms "ecology" and "systems".

*Human ecology*

The term ecology was originally used in the study of plants. It was subsequently also used for the study of communities (Grobbelaar & Louw 1990:15). In social work it is referred to as "human ecology", which is a study of human beings in their environments, the processes and interaction taking place between them and their environments and the way in which the social equilibrium is achieved and maintained. This refers to a perspective that emphasises the environmental context in which people function, and emphasises the concepts transaction, adaptation and goodness of fit. A transaction refers to a reciprocal exchange between people mutually or between them and the environment resulting in mutual influencing and/or change. Adaptation refers to a reciprocal process between individuals and the environment to accommodate one another. It results in a goodness of fit between human needs and environmental resources (Terminology Committee for social work 1995).

*Systems theory*

Systems, as a biological term, was originally used by sociologists to analyse systems in society (Payne 1991:134-135). The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995) defines a system as a whole of complex units in a specific interactional relationship in which mutual influencing takes place and which is characterised by a measure of regularity and orderliness. In social work the systems theory focuses on the configuration (the arrangement of elements in a specific form) client-environment-social problem as a unit.

The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995) distinguishes six systems in social work.

- The change agent system (the welfare agency who appoint social workers and other people to improve the social functioning of clients by means of social welfare programmes and programmes for community development).

- The client system (individual, family, group or community that has either asked for or sanctioned social work services, is expected to benefit from those services and has entered into an agreement of co-operation or a contract with a social worker).

- The action system (persons and resources in the community utilised by a social worker to achieve the objectives of social work intervention).

- The professional system (structure of institutions such as universities, professional associations and councils who influence the contents of knowledge, skills, value orientation and professional ethics of a social worker and define the range of social work actions).

- The problem identification system (person or institution that brings a potential client to the attention of a social worker or welfare agency).

- The target system (persons, groups and/or communities that have to be influenced or need to change in the interest of a client system to achieve the objectives of social work intervention).

Due to the introductory nature of this book, only the basic concepts central to the systems theory, according to Payne (1991:135), will be identified.

- A system is an entity (something which exists separately) with boundaries.

- In a closed system there is no interchange across the boundary. It therefore functions in a vacuum (like a hot water flask).

- In an open system the boundaries are permeable (like a teabag in a cup of hot water – it allows water in and tea out, but keeps the tea leaves inside).

## OPERATIONALISATION OF THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE

What is meant by operationalisation, is the practical application of the ecological systems theory. This implies the integration of the theory and practice during the social work intervention process, which has a beginning, a middle and end phase. (The intervention process is discussed in more detail in a subsequent chapter). One of the initial tasks during the intervention process is to assess the total situation. What is meant by assessment is a process that includes the analysis of factors that influence or determine the social functioning of the individual, family, group or community. (From here on reference will only be made to "the person", as if including the individual, family, group and community). This is how the appropriate system (e.g. the client system and change agent system) is assessed to determine whether it is closed or open, the nature of the environment in which people exist, their transactions and adaptation. This is done in terms of the past, present and the future, so as to determine the effectiveness of the adaptations. When transactions between the systems disturb the equilibrium, this causes stress which results in problems in the fit between human needs and the environment.

Payne (1991:141-142) points out that stress in this regard arises from life transitions (e.g. changes in developmental phases, status, roles and restructuring of life space), environmental pressure (e.g. unequal opportunities) and interpersonal processes (e.g. exploitation, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations). The operationalisation of the systems theory perspective involves the social work intervention with regard to those stressors that influence the person's behaviour in his/her situation-environment and consequently his/her social functioning. In order to understand the above statement it is necessary to define the concept social functioning.

*Social functioning*

Brammer (1991:3-4) points out that by 1958 Boehm had already identified a link between a person's behaviour within his/her environment and his/her social functioning, he said as follows: "Social work seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, singularly and in groups, by activities focused on their social relationships which constitute interaction between individuals and their environments." It is therefore clear that the term social functioning is fundamental to social work, not only at present but also historically. The enhancement of a person's social functioning by means of intervention also justifies the existence of the social work profession by distinguishing between a lay and a scientific approach.

The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995) defines social functioning as the individual's role performance in its entirety at all levels of existence in interaction with other individuals, families, groups, communities or situations. This implies that certain roles are fulfilled. A role is an expected or prescribed behaviour pattern of a person in interaction with other persons or within a given social context. The prescribed

behaviour pattern can be interpreted as norms and the social context as social institutions. A norm is formal or informal rules and standards of behaviour and expectations held collectively by a group, organisation or society. A social institution refers to a structure in society, such as the family, political, economic and religious institutions.

Brammer (1991:3) highlights the fact that social workers are supposed to link personal troubles with political issues, by improving the social functioning of people. However social functioning is mostly evaluated only in terms of a person's behaviour as it complies with the roles which are set according to the norms of social institutions. It can therefore rightly be asked: "When is a person's social functioning optimal and when is a person's social functioning a personal trouble or a political issue?" This can be explained by means of the following example.

An unemployed person from a poverty stricken squatter camp steals food to feed his children. Seemingly this person does not fulfil his role expectations, because he is not working as the breadwinner. He also contravenes the norms of a social structure (society) in that he broke the law (theft). He exhibits deviant behaviour, because he steals. As a person he has also not adapted, due to the fact that he is unemployed. His environment is also not facilitative, as it is a poverty stricken squatter camp. Finally – his own understanding of his role is inhibited, as he believes that he can steal to feed his children!

In the light of Gray (1992:15-16) the above example ought to clearly illustrate that optimum social functioning is relative and that there is not an absolute level of social functioning. (The unemployed man in the above-mentioned example is possibly a very good father to his children, spouse to his wife and leader in his community.) It can therefore not simply be argued that

gratification of needs (in this case it is a basic need) will improve the quality of life and promote social functioning. A person in a poor squatter camp can also live a healthy and meaningful life and function well socially, in that he is well adapted on all levels, in spite of the fact that his basic needs are not met.

It is therefore controversial to only focus on needs and not on the person in his/her situation-environment. That is why theories which only concentrate on needs (e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs) would in this case be questionable. The starting point of assessment should therefore not be "optimal social functioning". It is necessary to first determine if there is a link between the personal trouble and the political issues. The example of the unemployed man is referring to a personal trouble. In the said example however, it would be of no value if the focus during intervention had only been on stressing the person's individual responsibility. It would therefore have made little difference to his social functioning, as the man would not have been able to work due to the fact that there are no employment opportunities in the environment. This is therefore the result of unequal opportunities that already exists. That is why it is a political issue.

Determining the optimum level of social functioning ought to be a part of the end product of the assessment process. The opinion is held that determining the optimum level of social functioning can be done from the ecological systems theory perspective by means of five dimensions. The starting point of assessment and the first dimension, ought to focus primarily on the identification of stressors which have a reciprocal impact on the person and his/her environment and which inhibits the person's behaviour. A second dimension, is that the level at which the stressor begins to have an impact needs to be determined. This involves examining the situation so as to determine what systems in the person's situation-environment are influenced by this stressor. (Is it, for

example, a personal trouble or a political issue in an open and/or closed organisation system, client system or other system.) Thirdly, the systems' mutually reciprocal influence upon one another needs to be determined. As the fourth dimension, the systems' capacity must be established, so as to determine if they possess the strength to facilitate adjustment of the imbalance. A fifth dimension that must be determined and which is related to the previous one, is that the impact of the past, present and future with regard to the stressor and systems of the person and his/her environment must be determined.

In summary it can therefore be said that determining a person's optimum level of social functioning is part of the assessment process which is comprised of certain dimensions. It involves determining the stressors, adaptation, balance, transactions, systems, roles, competency, norms, social structure, impact and facilitation. After determining the said dimensions, intervention strategies aimed at promoting social functioning can be developed. (Due to the introductory nature of this book, systemic concepts such as input, throughput, output, entropy etceteras. will not be focussed upon. It is however implied by means of the above-mentioned dimensions.)

In order to further operationalise the ecological systems theory perspective, it is necessary to define the other core concepts, without which the said perspective would be of little or no value. Subsequently the core concepts, namely stressor, level of human functioning, person, behaviour and environment will be discussed, based on the work of Bernstein & Gray (1996), Compton & Galaway (1994), Fox (1993), Hepworth & Larsen (1993), Sheafor et al. (1994), The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995) and Zastrow (1989).

*Stressor*

A stressor is an event or process which, because of its demands on people, brings about a change in their biopsychosocial condition and influences their social functioning, should internal and external resources not be able to provide for their needs. It is therefore a demand, event or circumstances in the environment or person (or both) which disturbs the equilibrium. The demand is seen and/or experienced as a threat and results in a reaction. The causes of stress are unlimited, but when determining whether an event is a demand (stressor), the role that the person's interpretation or perception of the event plays, must be taken into account. Stressors can therefore not be determined in isolation from the person in his/her situation-environment.

*Levels of human functioning*

In relation to the previous statement, it is clear that a stressor results in a dynamic interaction and impact. Reference has already been made to the levels at which the stressors begin to have an impact. These levels can be conceptualised as the micro, meso, eco, and macro systems. Various authors (e.g. Bernstein & Gray 1996:18-19) refer to the said systems in this context as levels of the environment. For these purposes however it has been decided not to refer to the so-called levels only as levels of the environment, due to the fact that these levels also include the person and behaviour. That is why the various systems are referred to as levels of human functioning, as this implies totality and that which stressors have an impact upon.

The personal level refers, for example, to the physical and psychological health and level of frustration of the person. (This is discussed in more detail in the next point.) The micro system refers to the personal world, which includes the smallest systems such as the family and friends. The meso system points to the

network of personal worlds that are in interaction with one another. This involves, for example, the family member's relationships with people outside of the family. This refers specifically to the communication between the network of personal worlds. The ecosystem implies the larger institutions of which the person is not a direct part of, but definitely influenced by, for example, local authorities, the economic system etceteras. The macro system refers to the culture that influences the eco, meso and micro system and the personal level. (All the characteristics of systems as previously discussed, are of course also applicable to these levels of human functioning.)

These said levels of human functioning therefore form the total human ecology. Stressors can only be identified and understood if their impact and reciprocal response (reaction/behaviour) to it can be distinguished. This is what is meant by the operationalisation of the ecological systems theory perspective. Examples of what the person, behaviour and environment imply in practice, are provided as follows.

*Person*

For these purposes the concept "person" also refers to a family, group or community. In practice the following components can serve as examples:

- stage of development, life tasks and life transitions;
- work, income, qualifications, level of literacy;
- relationship capacity, socialisation;
- values, culture orientation;
- ego strengths, capacity to cope, competency;
- skills, potential;
- feelings that are experienced.

*Behaviour*

Behaviour is that which a person does and is usually regarded as either normal or abnormal. The norm against which it is measured has already been discussed in the section on social functioning. Behaviour is usually the field of study of psychologists and sociologists. For these purposes only a few examples from practice will be focused upon:

- the nature of the behaviour (what);
- duration, history (how long);
- intensity (how severe);
- frequency (when and how often);
- other stressors (how else is functioning hampered);
- previous attempts made by the person him/herself;
- previous attempts made by helping professionals;
- feelings of helplessness;
- coping with stress, communication (nature of the transactions), role behaviour, emotions;
- what is the person's motivation for addressing the behaviour;
- how does the person see the future, how should it be;
- what skills does the person need to cope with his/her situation effectively.

*Environment*

The environment as human context is so complex that it will never be completely understood. A few components that serve as practical examples are as follows:

- physical environment (housing etc.);
- other systems involved (who else is influenced);
- the availability and capacity of environmental resources and support networks;
- stratification (position in the community) of culture, status, economic class, religious involvement, leadership positions,

racism, general involvement in the community;
- the effect of the history of the environment;
- transactions in the environment (does the environment facilitate or inhibit the behaviour);
- perception the person has regarding the environment.

It ought to be clear that an effective South African theoretical and practice paradigm for social work, which is based on the ecological systems theory perspective, is indeed possible. It is however only possible if there is appropriate knowledge, skills and a value orientation regarding the conceptualisation of theory, the ecological systems theory perspective and the South African practice situation. Only then can the ecological systems theory perspective be operationalised. This ought to lead to effective social work intervention being rendered to the client.

# CHAPTER 8

# APPROACHES IN SOCIAL WORK

As with many of the terms in social work, different authors use different terms when referring to "that which is done". Reference has already been made in a previous chapter to the difference between a theory and a model (and to the authors' tendencies to use these terms interchangeably). To further complicate the terminology used to describe "that which is done", authors such as Sheafor et al. (1994) sometimes refer to approaches in the same context as a theory and model.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to provide an introductory conceptual framework of the approaches in social work. This will

enable the reader to distinguish a few of the approaches. Due to the fact that there are a vast number of approaches, only a few which are commonly used in South Africa will be discussed here. This however will be a concise discussion and therefore will not be sufficient to adequately equip the reader with the necessary knowledge to implement these specific approaches. The comprehensive reference list can be consulted for the purposes of aiding implementation.

It is very important to clearly understand that the approaches that the social worker uses will determine the process, techniques and roles to be used by the social worker. Each approach therefore also implies certain techniques, processes and roles that will be discussed in forthcoming chapters from a holistic approach.

## DEFINITION OF APPROACHES

Payne (1991:60-62) attempts to categorise "alternative" reviews of theories. Brown (1992:59,76) distinguishes between major and minor theories. At the same time Brown (1992:76) refers to a theory and an approach in the same context. Payne (1991:57-70) also highlights the fact that the so-called theories (approaches) are applicable to all the primary methods, namely case work, group work and community work, but that certain authors only apply some theories (approaches) to specific social work methods. It would therefore appear that definitions in this regard are made with certain purposes in mind. For the purposes of this book the focus is on all three primary methods of social work and the term "approach" will be used.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines an approach as an act or means of approaching. Pruis (1987:22-23) sums up the definition of an approach as follows:

- it is a way of approaching a phenomenon;

- it involves both a theory and a model;
- it corresponds to a preconceived idea or philosophy.

In social work therefore the concept "approach" can be used to distinguish "how it is done". It is the way in which a theory or theories are approached in intervention. In this regard a model refers to the specific manner in which certain approaches are structured, thereby forming pattern-like guidelines and procedures to be adhered to during intervention. During intervention however, the focus should not be on the names of the terms, but rather on the selection and content thereof, by being able to distinguish between them.

Van Rooyen & Combrink (1985:36) identified several approaches in social work in the first edition (1980) of their book "Gevallewerk, 'n Integrerende Benadering". Although this was done from a casework perspective, there is proof that it can also be identified in group work (Corey 1995:139-437) in terms of theoretical approaches and in community work (Lombard, Weyers & Schoeman 1991:134-147,154) in terms of intervention objectives. Examples of approaches are behaviour modification, problem solving, psychosocial, functional, crisis intervention, family therapy, psychoanalytical, existentialism, gestalt, client centred, task centred, transactional analysis, reality therapy etceteras.

For the purposes of this book there will be a concise discussion on those approaches which are commonly used in models such as Egan (1994) and Carkhuff & Anthony (1994). In order to adapt to social work in South Africa the empowerment approach (Lee 1994) will be included in this discussion. First, before discussing the rational of the following selected approaches, namely psychoanalytical, behaviour modification, client centred, task centred, problem solving and the empowerment approach, it is

necessary to highlight important factors which must be taken into account when selecting an approach. This will be done based on the work of Hepworth & Larsen (1993:17-19) and Zastrow (1989:26-27).

## SELECTING AN APPROACH

It would be easy to formulate a set of guidelines for the selection of approaches within given circumstances. However, the fact that social work is an art and a science, means that this is not possible. For this reason Zastrow (1989:26) suggests that students and practitioners should master a number of approaches, so that they have a "bag of tricks" from which to choose. The choice of approach however should be motivated by the desire to render the best possible service to the client and not according to that which bests suits the social worker. Another aspect that influences the choice of approach, is the practitioner's view of theory. Whether or not the practitioner works eclectically and what theory or theories the practitioner's work is based on, will therefore determine the approach that is followed. The view maintained in this book corresponds with that of Hepworth & Larsen (1993:18) which is as follows: "The theoretical base of this book, therefore, is systematic eclecticism practiced under the umbrella of ecological systems theory (perspective)". The opinion is held that this view is the answer to South African circumstances and is suitable for the greatest number of clients and problems. The following aspects should be considered when selecting an approach for intervention.

- The rationale of the approach which is chosen must primarily be suited to the person involved, behaviour (problems and situations) and the environment.

- The practitioner's personality does influence intervention, this therefore also plays a role in the choice of an approach. The rationale and techniques of certain approaches are more suited to certain personalities.

- The agency that delivers the service and the field of service (e.g. institutional care, care of the disabled or child and family care).

- The extent to which approaches are supported by empirical research.

- The extent to which approaches can guarantee results with the least time, money and effort being expended.

- The extent to which the techniques prescribed by that approach can be applied in the course of intervention. (The practical application of the psychoanalytical approach, for example, can be questioned, while the behaviour modification approach is specific, concrete and practical.)

- The level of knowledge and skills that the practitioner has in the application of the approach during intervention. In some instances well-intended actions can easily cause damage.

- Ethical implications. This aspect is related to the previous aspect. Some of the approaches require specialised training, which is not always provided as part of all social work instruction. This can result in certain ethical issues, which are addressed specifically by the ethical code for social work in South Africa.

It is therefore clear that only those approaches that advance the

goals of social work and particularly under certain circumstances, such as those in South Africa, ought to be considered for application. This also implies that, in relation to the first and primary factor mentioned above, the goals that are to be achieved through a specific intervention would determine the nature of the approach.

## THE PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

To a large extent social work is influenced by psychodynamic approaches. It in fact forms the basis of social work intervention. The psychodynamic approach is based mainly on the work of Freud and psychoanalysis. Other contributions include that of the psychosocial approach by Hollis and Woods and alternative psychodynamic approaches such as the problem solving approach by Perlman (this is discussed in a separate section in this chapter) and transactional analysis (Payne 1991).

Due to the fact that a discussion and differentiation of the psychodynamic approaches is a job on its own, only an introductory focus on psychoanalysis will be provided in this book, as it forms the basis and origins of all approaches. The rationale and definition of a few terms that are of importance to social work will be provided hereafter, based on the work of Corey (1995:139-183), Payne (1991:74-100), Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995) and Zastrow (1989:341-352).

*Rationale for the psychoanalytic approach*

Psychoanalysis refers to a frame of reference of the human psyche. It focuses on the unconscious and the influence that the past has had on a person's present functioning. Circumstances must therefore be created to work through the unresolved problems. Resistance must be broken down by managing defence-

mechanisms in an acceptable manner. Insight is gained through techniques such as developing insight and interpretation (this will be discussed again in a later chapter) with regard to the id, ego and superego. This approach is based on a medical model, where the person in need ("sick patient") depends on the social worker ("expert therapist") for help. There is therefore less emphasis placed on the equal relationship between the worker and client. Little provision is made for cultural diversity and environmental factors. This approach is aimed particularly at clients who are able to express themselves well verbally and who exhibit psychological problems. Clients who have practical problems and who do not easily partake in conversation or self-evaluation are more difficult to manage through the use of this approach.

*Definitions of a few terms which are of importance to social work*

Ego: the rational part of the psyche that forms a person's view of him/herself in terms of his/her own interests, achievements, qualities and wellbeing.

Superego: that part of the psyche that represents the moral codes of society and regulates the individual's ethical standards, conscience and sense of right and wrong.

Id: that part of the psyche where instinctive impulses are dominated by the pleasure principle and gratification is demanded regardless of the consequences, moral beliefs or norms.

Insight: the capacity to see problems and situations in perspective.

Resistance: conscious or unconscious negative reactions of

clients to every effort made to change their behaviour and improve their adaptation.

Transference: the phenomenon where, in a professional relationship, the client transfers elements of attitudes, feelings and needs from previous relationships onto the social worker. (Counter transference occurs from the social worker to the client.)

Unconscious: the thoughts, feelings, impulses, motivation and events that a person is unaware of.

Identity: a person's view of him/herself and his/her place in life.

Defence-mechanisms: Any unconscious attempt to adapt to unpleasant circumstances such as anxiety, frustration and guilt feelings. (Knowledge of a variety of defence-mechanisms is of particular value in social work. Due to the limitations of this book it will not be discussed here.)

## THE BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION APPROACH

The psychodynamic approaches dominated social work for quite some while in the history of the profession's development. The behaviour modification approach started taking root as a reaction to the validity of the psychoanalytic approach in social work. Behaviour modification originally developed from the work of people such as Pavlov, Bekhterev and Bandura. It was derived

from the experimental work in the field of classical and instrumental conditioning and the application of learning theories to the management of human problems. In the following section a concise account of the rationale for the behaviour modification approach will be provided based on the work of Brown (1992:62-64), Corey (1995:345-378), Payne (1991:118-133), Sheafor et al. (1994:63-64) and Zastrow (1989:432-454).

*Rationale for the behaviour modification approach*

The behaviour modification approach is concerned with the elimination of negative behaviour and the acquisition, reinforcement and maintenance of desirable behaviour. Behaviour is the result of a person's genetic composition, biological characteristics and the environment. Behaviour is learned and is the product of the reinforcement of that to which the person is exposed. In order to gain control of the behaviour, those events that precipitate the behaviour, the behaviour itself and the consequences thereof, must be isolated. The focus is therefore upon the observable and external behaviour and not on the person's life history, except in cases where this is of importance (e.g. previous symptoms that were exhibited). It is therefore concerned with the "here and the now" and aspects of behaviour which influence a person's functioning. It is assumed that there is a good relationship between the social worker and the client, but this is not a prerequisite, because the client's willingness to participate and experiment must be established beforehand. The social worker is therefore actively and directly involved and sometimes acts as a coach.

The behaviour modification approach, in particular, is characterised by a wide variety of practical techniques, which can be applied because of their effectiveness in modifying specific behaviour. Techniques which have been implemented with great success in social work, include modelling, training in assertive

behaviour and positive reinforcement. (These techniques will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.)

## THE CLIENT CENTRED APPROACH

Carl Rogers is regarded as the founder of the client centred approach. This approach is implemented from a humanistic perspective and is currently used in disciplines such as psychiatry, psychology and social work. Although reference is made to the "client" in this approach, the basis of this approach is that it is not only applicable to casework, but also to group work and community work. This is one of the reasons why increasing reference is being made to the person centred approach as opposed to the client centred approach. A brief account of the rationale for this approach will be given in the following section, based on Brown (1992:76-78), Corey (1995:263-290), Sheafor et al. (1994:65-66) and Zastrow (1989:357-365).

*Rationale for the client centred approach*

When utilising this approach the social worker acts in a non-directive manner. The client becomes the centre of attention and is accepted unconditionally. The relationship between the worker and the client deserves special attention, as this needs to be a warm relationship in which the client can feel free to discuss his/her problem. The focus is upon the client's potential to manage his/her problem him/herself and it is the client's experiences, perceptions and feelings in particular, which receive attention. Special emphasis is therefore placed on the person's aspirations to grow and adapt, as well as to the emotive aspects characterising the client's situation. More attention is also devoted to the immediate situation than to the client's past. The client must be voluntary, highly motivated and well spoken and must not be overwhelmed by problems that may exist in the

environment (e.g. insufficient income and violence). In summary therefore, this approach rests on the assumption that all people strive for self-realisation and are inherently good.

In utilising the client centred approach, the personal qualities of the social worker are stressed more than the specific techniques, since the social worker employs his/her personality to bring about growth and change. Techniques such as interpreting and advising are not used. Empathic responding, active listening and reflecting are those techniques upon which most emphasis is placed.

*Definitions of a few terms which are of importance to social work*

| | |
|---|---|
| Empathy: | this is the capacity of the social worker to place him/herself "in the shoes" of the client, so as to understand what the client thinks and experiences. This must also then be communicated to the client. It therefore involves entering the client's world, without sacrificing your own identity. |
| Congruency: | the extent to which a person's experience of him/herself is consistent and is accurately expressed. |
| Self-image: | a person's perception and evaluation of him/herself. |
| Self-realisation (self-actualisation): | a natural tendency of each human being to develop to full capacity. |
| Non-directive: | during the process of self-realisation the worker uses the client as a guide – the |

worker therefore offers no guidelines.

## THE TASK CENTRED APPROACH

Reid and Epstein developed the task centred approach, it is a time limited approach where the results can be empirically tested. The rational of this approach is briefly discussed according to the work of Brown (1992:71-72), Johnson (1986:420-421), Payne (1991:108-116) and Sheafor et al. (1994:69-70).

*Rationale for the task centred approach*
This approach makes use of the contents of the systems theory, role theory, psychoanalysis, learning theories and communication theory. It focuses on specific target problems and the goals, which stipulate what change is required, are formulated specifically. It can be used in individual work, but also with larger groups and can also be adapted for unmotivated and involuntary clients. It places special emphasis on taking action and carrying out tasks. That is why it is also suitable to use when dealing with problems that are the result of insufficient resources, as well as with clients who know what their problems are but are unable to take the necessary action to change their situation. Larger tasks are divided into smaller tasks so as to ensure success and motivation. Priorities are established so as to keep the client focused and to mobilise their inner capacity. This approach is empirical and can therefore be measured by means of the completion of tasks.

Examples of typical problems that can be addressed through the task centred approach, are interpersonal conflicts, problems with organisations, decision making problems and problems with role functioning. Techniques of the task centred approach involve performing any practical task that can lead to the management of the problem.

## THE PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH

John Dewey described the problem solving concept when he analysed the thought processes of the individual. Polya also developed a model according to which mathematical problem solving could be done. The founder of the problem solving approach in social work however, is Helen Perlman, who with her P-component Model defined the client's situation as follows: the person with a problem comes to a place (welfare organisation) where he/she is helped by means of a process to solve his/her problem. The stages in Perlman's problem solving process correspond to those identified by Dewey and Polya: the nature of the problem is rationally considered and judged, solutions and alternatives are decided upon and the implementation and results of the solutions are evaluated. Elements of this problem solving process are also found in the work of Mary Richmond and Dunham, which is what makes it possible for this approach to be used in all the primary methods of social work. This approach will be discussed further based on the work of Brown (1992:62) and Johnson (1986:414).

*Rationale for the problem solving approach*

The basic problem is the manner in which the client solves his/her problems. The client's problem solving capacity must therefore be improved. For this reason the client him/herself is regarded as the problem solver. The worker-client relationship and the process are regarded as the medium of intervention, as this experience will enable the client to manage existing and future problems. The client must be motivated to engage in intervention and must present a rational understanding of his/her problem. Techniques of the problem solving approach focus on practical steps that can improve the client's problem solving skills.

## THE EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

Mention is made in the literature of empowerment as an approach, but is not generally defined as an approach. However Judith Lee in her book "The Empowerment Approach to Social Work Practice" created a conceptual framework for empowerment as an approach. (The concept "empowerment" has already been defined in a previous chapter.) Because empowerment refers to the acquisition of personal and collective power, it implies that this approach can be used with regard to all three primary methods of social work. The rationale for this approach will be briefly discussed in terms of Barber (1991:29-41), Fitzgerald, Mc Lennan & Munslow (1995:288-294),Hepworth & Larsen (1993:495-500), Lee (1994), Payne (1991:224-233) and Sheafor et al. (1994:406-408).

*Rationale for the empowerment approach*

This approach is based on a concern for people and their environments. This implies that people, who experience poverty, stigmatisation and oppression, should be assisted in their endeavours to empower themselves. This means that people's individual capacity to adapt must be developed and that attempts should be made to change oppressive environmental conditions and circumstances. Individual and collective action is necessary. Aspects which are of importance are, holistic transaction orientated concepts, knowledge of oppressed groups, social policy and programmes, the advancement of a just society, equal opportunities, equity and access to resources. Knowledge of the functioning of a person's ego, learning theory and problem solving is also necessary. It is also required of the social worker to have a specific value orientation and the skills to utilise this approach. The techniques that can be applied when using this

approach, are holistic in nature and include techniques from the behaviour modification, client centred, task centred and problem solving approaches.

If the goals of social work are taken into account, then it ought to be clear that the empowerment approach should be receiving a lot of attention in South Africa at present. Due to the holistic nature of this approach, it is necessary that the student and practitioner also be well grounded in the use of the other approaches in social work.

# CHAPTER 9

# THE INTERVENTION PROCESS IN SOCIAL WORK

When providing intervention to individuals, groups and communities, social workers make use of different theories, approaches and resultant techniques. This implies that there will also be different perspectives regarding the implementation of these processes. The reason for the diversity in intervention is because social work is concerned with such a great variety of clients, problems and environments. The purpose of social functioning however always remains the same.

For this reason the purpose of the intervention process in social work, according to Hepworth & Larsen (1993:30) is to:

- assist people to restore their equilibrium;
- promote people's growth and coping capacity;
- develop, mobilise and make resources available;
- reduce stress and tension;
- satisfy problems and needs.

It would appear that the intervention process in social work proposed by different authors, is essentially the same as the problem solving process, irrespective of the approach that is followed (Brammer 1993; Brown 1992; Compton & Galaway 1994; Cournoyer 1991; Fox 1993; Hepworth & Larsen 1993; Hoffman & Sallee 1994; Johnson 1986; Sheafor et al. 1994; Zastrow 1989). For the introductory purposes of this book the focus will specifically be on the intervention process as proposed by Hepworth & Larsen (1993:30-41). The reason for this choice is that these particular authors present the intervention process in a compact and orientated manner, which can easily be applied to different situations and methods. These authors also explicitly explain that they subscribe to an ecological systems theory perspective, which corresponds to the view expressed in this book.

Before the intervention process can be discussed however, it is necessary to make certain suppositions about it, in view of the fact that the process does not offer a recipe for intervention and many variables need to be considered during the implementation thereof.

## A FEW SUPPOSITIONS REGARDING THE INTERVENTION PROCESS

- Although the different phases and the cyclical nature of the process is emphasised, this does not imply that the process cannot proceed simultaneously in one or more phases.

- The activities or steps in the various phases are not so inflexible that they can be separated into watertight

compartments.

- The cyclical process implies a forward movement by means of phases. But at the same time it allows for freedom to return to a previous phase. The activities in the various phases need not necessarily be performed consecutively.

- A condition for the successful use of the problem solving process is that the social worker must not only be skilled in the use of the process. The social worker must also be able to implement the process in interaction and together with the client and with his/her collaboration and co-operation.

- An outstanding feature of the problem solving process therefore, is the involvement of the client in the process.

- It implies that the worker and the client must agree as to whether or not the goal set within a specific phase has been reached, before moving to the next phase or a previous phase.

- The implementation of the intervention process is always influenced and directed by the characteristics and dynamics of the person and the behaviour/problem and the environment.

- The intervention process can be applied to case work, group work and community work, although the specific social work method used can result in a difference in focus during the implementation of the intervention process.

- The different authors use different terminology to describe the phases of the intervention process. Irrespective of the terminology used, the following elements are present throughout the process: making contact with the client, mutual contracting, implementing the contract by means of action, evaluating the process and termination.

- An important assumption is that although evaluation is distinguished as a separate phase, evaluation takes place during each phase of the process. Evaluation is therefore also a continuous activity. (In some situations every phase can be regarded as a continuous activity, for example, contracting can take place in each phase. This results in the trend developing where a process within a process is followed.)

- The final supposition is that, according to Hepworth & Larsen (1993), three phases can be distinguished in the intervention process namely:
  * Exploration, assessment and planning
  * Implementation and goal attainment
  * Termination and evaluation

## PHASE I: EXPLORATION, ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

This phase implies making contact with the client and mutual contracting.

*Establishing rapport*

Effective communication during intervention is necessary to get and keep the client involved. What is meant by rapport is the relationship between people, that presupposes trustworthiness and which involves an acknowledgement and the awareness of the other as a unique individual (Terminology Committee for Social Work 1995:52). This involves the client trusting the worker and regarding him/her as a sincere and understanding person. To establish rapport it is essential that the social worker take into account cultural factors that are expressed by means of the worker's values. Empathy and genuineness are therefore indispensable to the worker during this phase.

*Exploring the client's situation*

Establishing rapport and exploring the client's situation occur simultaneously. Empathic responding by the social worker does not only refer to the worker's understanding, but also unleashes the feelings and emotions of the client. In this regard it is necessary to explore the effect that the client's emotions have on the other systems (e.g. interpersonal and environmental systems) involved. It is of particular importance to explore the client's potential as well as that of the systems involved, so that these can be used as possible resources.

*Formulating a multidimensional assessment*

Assessment is an ongoing process that commences with the first contact with the client. It is a process of analysing factors that influence or determine the social functioning of the individual, family, group or community. Assessment is also a product, because it gives rise to the formulation of a problem/need or hypothesis. Because the assessment by the social worker, for these purposes, is done from an ecological systems theory perspective, a specific guideline is necessary so as to ensure that all aspects are accommodated. Cournoyer (1991:144) offers an exploration matrix, which for these purposes is adapted to form a guideline for assessment.

| **Assessment guideline** | Past | Present | Future |
|---|---|---|---|
| Person (individual/group/ community) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Behavior (need/problem/ circumstances) | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Environment (situation) | 7 | 8 | 9 |

This assessment guideline can for the purposes of assessment be used as a product and a process. This enables the social worker to assess in a multidimensional manner, by means of a specific guideline. All aspects of importance with regard to the person's behaviour in the environment can be assessed by means of a specific time dimension. (The aspects of importance have already been discussed in a previous chapter on the theoretical and practice paradigm in social work. It is also directly applicable to this.) Since all aspects are related to one another and therefore influence each other, the numbering system of the thought framework serves as an aid to analyse the various components. It is however important to realise that the various components cannot really be separated from one another, but can only be differentiated for the sake of a structured thought process.

The assessment guideline is of little value unless the client is involved in it. Various creative aids (such as the eco map and genogram, which are visual presentations of the client's situation) can be used to supplement the assessment guideline.

When the social worker and the client reach an agreement over the nature of his/her problem, the client and worker are then ready to formulate goals regarding the problem. The assumption is made that the client is motivated to move on to the action phase

of the process. Unfortunately clients are not always motivated to change their circumstances.

*Motivating the client*

It is important to realise that clients are not always aware that a problem exists and/or motivated to work on it. Many clients are also not voluntarily involved in intervention (e.g. clients who are involved in intervention for statutory reasons). This offers a challenge to the social worker to eliminate the resistance of such clients, so that the client can accept ownership and responsibility for the problem.

*Referral and matching clients with appropriate resources and systems*

It sometimes happens that the resources necessary for intervention are insufficient. In such situations it is necessary to mobilise the resources so as to bring about a fit between the client and the appropriate resources. It is however important that the client must be ready to be referred to a resource. A decision must be made together with the client as to what resource and network best suits the client's needs. The client's right to self-determination must however be taken into account and false expectations of a resource must not be created by, for example, specifying what a resource will be able to do.

*Negotiating goals and formulating a contract*

When an agreement is reached with regard to the problems and needs of the systems, goals can be formulated. The goal formulation flows from an agreement (contracting) over factors such as what needs to be achieved, when it must be achieved and how it is to be achieved. This implies amongst other things specifying roles and practical arrangements. These steps always form part of a joint process.

## PHASE II: IMPLEMENTATION AND GOAL ATTAINMENT

This phase is seen as the "heart" of the action phase of the problem solving process. This phase is an attempt to achieve the set goals according to priorities. It involves the implementation of specific tasks and strategies. It is once again important to remember that the intervention is a joint attempt by the social worker and the client and that it is the result of assessment, the setting of goals and contracting.

*Enhancing self-efficacy*

The improvement of the client's self efficacy is an important step during the implementation of the intervention. The improvement of the client's self-efficacy involves establishing a belief and expectation that the tasks and change, resulting from the objectives that have been set, can be performed and attained. This is achieved by highlighting the potential of the client and the appropriate systems', by unleashing this potential and utilising it.

*Monitoring the intervention*

To reach goals, it is important that the progress be monitored regularly. This is done by evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention and by directing the client's attempts at achieving the goals. Poor progress can undermine the whole intervention process. That is why it is necessary to constantly motivate the client and to continuously strengthen the client's self-confidence. Various methods of measurement can be applied for these purposes, for example, intervention research that is aimed at the creation of systematic procedures for the design, testing and evaluation of intervention.

*Obstacles to goal attainment*
Progress during the intervention process does not always occur without hindrances. Clients usually experience uncertainty when attempts are made to change. Uncertainty gives rise to stress and stress reactions. For this reason, which is a given, the social worker must be aware of possible manifestations of the client's behaviour during intervention. These manifestations which become obstacles to achieving the goals, can take on a variety of forms ranging from limited co-operation by individuals to resistance from systems within the community.

*Reactions resulting from the worker-client relationship*
Emotional reactions in the relationship between the social worker and the client can also be an obstacle to goal attainment. Either the client, or the worker or both can exhibit emotional reactions. The client, for example, can have unrealistic expectations of the relationship with the worker or can feel disappointed and rejected as a result of the worker-client relationship. While the worker could possibly be bored by the relationship, or the worker could simply just not like the client system. It is not only negative feelings that are a barrier to goal accomplishment during intervention. Unrealistically optimistic feelings (e.g. amorousness) in the worker-client relationship can also be an obstacle.

*Enhancing the client's self-awareness*
Self-awareness is one of the first steps towards self-realisation. The social worker must facilitate the process of self-realisation by assisting clients with the process of self-discovery. The worker can achieve this by means of empathic responding, which brings clients into contact with more deep-seated feelings. Confrontation can also be used in this instance, but must be used in the right circumstances and context so as to evoke the desired reaction.

*The social worker's use of self*

In order to reach the goals that have been set, it is necessary for the social worker to use his/her own personal qualities in the intervention process. The worker's personality is also a contributory factor that impacts on the level of success achieved through the intervention process. The spontaneity of the worker and the extent to which sincerity is shown, plays a large role. Because the social worker is in contact with a variety of systems, the assertiveness of the worker is of great importance. Increasingly in South Africa there is a call for training institutions to offer opportunities for social work students to develop professional assertive behaviour.

## PHASE III: TERMINATION AND EVALUATION

It is easy to terminate if there are time limitations attached to the intervention, or when it is clear that the goals that were set have been reached. In other instances however it is more difficult for the social worker to withdraw, as it is difficult to determine when intervention has reached saturation point. (In this regard the reader is referred to the discussion on optimal social functioning in a previous chapter.)

*Feelings which arise in response to termination*

It is natural that subjective feelings will develop between clients and social workers. For this reason these specific feelings must be dealt with during termination of the intervention process. Feelings of loss, relief or uncertainty regarding the future are common. Reactions to these feelings can undermine previous successes derived from intervention.

*Planning for sustainability after termination*
It is very important that strategies for sustainability should come into effect when termination occurs. Continued growth after termination is just as important as the intervention process itself.

*Evaluating results*
Accountability for the results and attainment of goals is only possible if an objective evaluation is done. Measurement, which is aimed at evaluating the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention, is therefore essential. The procurement of financial resources is increasingly being determined by empirical results, which is placing a greater onus on social workers to not only prove the quantity (amount) of intervention, but also the quality (how good) of the intervention.

It ought to be clear that the intervention process places a great responsibility on the social worker. It can only be achieved if the social worker understands the dynamics of the process and if it is not regarded as the social worker's process, but rather as the worker and the client's process. Apart from the already mentioned role orientation by the worker a certain value orientation is also necessary: the social worker's belief must be vested in the person and not in the intervention process. The capacity of the individual, group and community must therefore never be undervalued.

# CHAPTER 10

# INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES IN SOCIAL WORK

A technique is a procedure as applied by the social worker in the intervention process (Terminology Committee for Social Work 1995:65). A technique is therefore applied in order to achieve a specific goal.

Different authors use different terms to refer to the recognised procedures in social work. Terms such as skills, competencies, strategies, modes of intervention and intervention objectives are used, inter alia, by authors. For the purposes of this book the term "technique" will suffice.

Various authors have also made attempts to group techniques. This is usually done from a certain perspective, which contributes to the reason why authors only discuss a few techniques. For the purposes of this book, as many as possible of the recognised techniques that are commonly used in social work will be defined. (However no claim is made that this is a complete list.) No attempt will be made to group the techniques, as this is an impossible task due to the overlapping between the various techniques. For practical purposes the techniques will be arranged in alphabetical order. Only those techniques that can be accounted for from an ecological systems theory perspective will be discussed here. Certain specialised behaviour modification techniques will therefore not be discussed (e.g. implosive theory and systematic desensitisation).

This chapter therefore only provides an orientation regarding the

various techniques in social work, which will enable the reader to distinguish these techniques. To be able to do this, it is first necessary to discuss a few suppositions regarding the techniques.

## A FEW SUPPOSITIONS WITH REGARD TO THE INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES IN SOCIAL WORK

- In social work it is more important to know when and how to do what than to philosophy as to whether it is a skill, strategy, mode, grouping or technique.

- The approach and perspective, from which intervention is implemented, will determine the techniques that are used, for example, certain techniques are characteristic of the behaviour modification and the client centred approaches.

- The specific phases of the intervention process also influence the use of certain techniques.

- The goals and resultant type of intervention also determines the nature of techniques to be used.

- Intervention techniques are always applied in accordance with the person and his/her behaviour and his/her situation-environment.

- The central characteristic of the techniques used in social work is that communication is the medium through which all intervention techniques are applied.

- The intervention techniques are applicable to all methods of social work and are adapted according to the particular nature of each method.

- Most techniques are used in conjunction with and in support of each other.

- One technique can also be part of the whole of another technique.

- Some people use some techniques naturally in the course of conversation. Intervention techniques however must be consciously used in social work to achieve certain goals.

- The social worker therefore requires specific knowledge and skills to use the intervention techniques effectively.

- In order to integrate the use of intervention techniques in the social worker's personality (to automatically know when and how to do what), it is necessary to be able to distinguish the nature, purpose and application of an appropriate technique.

## DISTINGUISHING APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES IN SOCIAL WORK

Reference has already been made in the introduction to this chapter, to the different opinions held by the different authors. In an attempt to accommodate the most recent opinions of most authors, the aforementioned suppositions and the following distinction of appropriate intervention techniques has been compiled from the work of the following authors: Brammer (1993), Brammer et al. (1993), Brown (1992), Carkhuff & Anthony (1993), Cournoyer (1991), Egan (1994), Hepworth & Larsen (1993), Hoffman & Sallee (1994), Ivey (1994), Kadushin (1990), Lombard et al. (1991), Sheafor et al. (1994), Terminology

Committee for Social Work (1995) and Van Rooyen & Combrink (1985).

*Acknowledgement*: openly conveying to the client that his/her ego strength is developing and that this will probably improve his/her social functioning.

*Active listening*: when the worker puts all his/her thoughts, feelings and observations aside so that his/her full attention can be focused on that which the client is saying.

*Advising*: the provision of an expert opinion on the sort of action that seems preferable for the client system in the light of available knowledge and information.

*Association*: the free association or directed association with something to free the client's feelings and thoughts and to make him/her open to discussion, for example, by means of a brain storm, object or feeling.

*Attending*: the worker intimates to the client both verbally and non-verbally through his/her eyes, carriage and body movements that he/she is being listened to.

*Bargaining*: when negotiating with opposing people or groups in order to bring about compromises and mutually equitable agreements.

*Challenge*: to pose an invitation to clients that will increase their self-awareness and thereby bring about positive change in their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

*Clarification*: manner whereby clients are helped to realise that their feelings and desires are not having the desired effect, by

highlighting the facts regarding the problems so that clients can better understand themselves within the problem situation.

*Confrontation*: it is used together with clarification to present clients with realities contrary to their own views, attitudes and behaviour and to point out facts, opinions, feelings or experiences to them.

*Consultation*: the worker conveys expert knowledge at the request of others.

*Direct influencing*: to promote specific behaviour in a direct manner, for example, to influence parents as to how they should act towards their children.

*Education*: the creation and utilisation of one or other type of formal or informal learning opportunity or instructing people on how to conduct themselves in a variety of situations.

*Empathic understanding*: to think with the client rather than to think about him/her and the way in which this understanding is conveyed to the client.

*Encouragement*: The worker's attitude, approach and conduct that are aimed at supporting the client system in some or other meaningful way.

*Environmental manipulation*: to change the client's environment positively by influencing the environment by means of generating, mobilising and expanding resources.

*Euphemism*: to soften and eliminate the use of insensitive language by conveying it to the client in an acceptable way, for example, saying "things that trouble you" rather than "problems".

*Experimenting (practising)*: new behaviour is learned through practising it.

*Explanation*: information is given and events are clarified in order to relieve the client's feelings of discomfort caused by confusion and fear.

*Exploration*: the objective and subjective facts and feelings are scrutinised together with the client so as to determine the dynamics thereof and formulate the problem as a whole.

*Extinction*: to not reinforce unacceptable behaviour by, for example, ignoring it so that it can gradually diminish and eventually disappear.

*Facilitating*: the action whereby resources are created, mobilised, co-ordinated or controlled.

*Focusing*: to concentrate on a specific aspect of a problem situation.

*Funding*: this involves fundraising, acquiring state and other forms of subsidies, acquiring sponsorships and implementing control measures.

*Generalisation*: reducing client's discomfort by explaining to them that most people will display similar reactions under similar circumstances.

*Giving direction*: managing client's feelings by giving direction to their thoughts through verbal leading thereby constructively influencing the client system's thoughts.

*Group decision-making*: to influence the composition, functioning and decision making process of groups (e.g. committees).

*Immediacy*: to explore with the client as to what is happening at that specific moment in the worker-client relationship.

*Influencing*: this refers to specific actions which are aimed at promoting specific behaviour or practices, for example, petitions or protest marches.

*Insight development*: the manner in which the client is guided to see problems and situations in perspective, by revealing an intellectual understanding and emotional awareness thereof.

*Interpretation*: the manner in which clients are guided to gain insight into that which is unacceptable to them, or regarding the relation between elements in their problem situations which would not otherwise be explained in the course of their ordinary thought processes.

*Linkage*: all the communicative actions on the part of the social worker that are aimed at establishing productive co-operation and mutual satisfaction of needs between various systems.
*Lobbying*: endeavours to change the point of view of legislators, decision makers, as well as public opinion in favour of issues affecting specific groups and communities.

*Mediation*: to resolve issues in as friendly a manner as possible, for example, division of personal property and the custody of children during a divorce.

*Minimal encouragers*: short and powerful verbally encouraging responses to the clients such as “hmm”, “and?” or nodding of the head, a facial expression or gesture.

*Modelling*: the change of behaviour in the client by observing and copying the behaviour of others.

*Motivation*: to encourage a client to participate and get involved in the intervention process.

*Negative reinforcement*: disapproval that is shown to a client when he/she exhibits behaviour that is unacceptable in the environment.

*Negotiation*: to develop insight among parties that are in conflict with one another, by influencing their thoughts, feelings, decisions and behaviour.

*Observation*: focusing upon, identifying and interpreting the client's attitudes, feelings, actions, reactions and environment.

*Opinion*: the worker gives his/her subjective and/or objective view in the form of feedback to the client, in order to increase the client's self-awareness.
*Paraphrasing*: the worker reformulates in his/her own words the essence of what the client has just said.

*Perception control*: to check if that, which the client has said, was correctly understood and if the same meaning is attached to the content as the client initially intended.

*Personalising*: for clients to accept ownership and responsibility for their problems by making it applicable to them personally.

*Probing*: questions, statements and interjections that help the client to define experiences, behaviour and feelings more concretely.

*Providing tangible intervention*: this is a concrete deed such as the provision of food, accommodation, grants, facilities etceteras to reduce immediate pressure from the environment.

*Punishment*: is administered to reduce and to eliminate negative behaviour, for example, verbal criticism, a disapproving attitude and denying privileges.

*Questioning*: to encourage communication regarding facts and feelings by asking open questions, closed questions, focused questions, probing questions, direct and indirect questions.

*Reassurance*: it is aimed at counteracting apprehension, anxiety and uneasiness, and instilling confidence by explaining to clients that there is understanding for their feelings and actions and that possible solutions to their problems exist.
*Reflection*: to give feedback to clients with regard to their feelings and attitudes through the selective repetition or reformulation of their words and the interpretation of their sensations and actions.

*Repetition*: the social worker or client repeats words, movements, tasks and actions so as to focus on the emotional impact thereof.

*Role play*: reality is simulated to develop insight, learn skills, cope with feelings and/or practise, interpret and modify modes of behaviour.

*Screening*: to determine if further intervention to the client is justifiable, for example, can the client recover naturally, is no recovery possible and is the resistance too great?

*Selection*: to help a client who is faced with various problems, to isolate and cope with one problem at a time.

*Silence*: it is a specific form of communication within the context of the worker-client relationship, where the worker decides in the interests of the client whether to maintain or break a silence.

*Social intervention*: to intervene even without the co-operation of the client (e.g. statutory) to protect the client against him/herself or others.

*Suggestion*: it is less forceful than giving advice, it is open, optional, vague and tentative and points to a variety of possibilities and/or alternative actions.

*Summary*: the selective summing up of meaningful information so that the client, for example, can experience a sense of progress.

*Support*: to assist a client through, for example, encouragement, generalisation and acceptance, in order to reduce tension and promote self-confidence.

*Survey*: a given practice situation is analysed so as to evaluate the course that was followed and results thereof.

*Ventilation (catharsis)*: creating an atmosphere that is conducive to the release or reduction of tension caused by repressed, traumatic experiences.

*Verbalising (storytelling)*: to create a climate and to give clients the opportunity to tell their stories, so as to develop an understanding thereof.

It ought to be clear from the above distinction of intervention techniques that there are only slight differences among some of the identified techniques. Because each technique has a specific

purpose, it is necessary that the social worker know precisely what he/she wants to do, how he/she wants to do it and why he/she is doing it. That is what makes the difference between a lay and professional approach to providing intervention to people. The large number of intervention techniques that can be identified also emphasises the dynamics and professional element of social work.

# CHAPTER 11

# INTERVENTION ROLES IN SOCIAL WORK

The terms used for the roles that people fulfil were originally created by sociologists. These terms are now commonly used in the behavioural sciences. The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995:54) define a role, inter alia, as follows:

* an expected or prescribed behaviour pattern;
* an expected or prescribed working method.

If the above description is applicable to the social worker, then it can be deduced that there are two functions of roles:

* career roles which indicate the social worker's position in society (e.g. professional status and behaviour according to an ethical code);
* intervention roles which highlight the activities and procedures of the social worker and give an indication of what the worker does.

This chapter focuses on the intervention roles of the social worker that are aimed at achieving specific goals during intervention. This is done by creating a conceptual framework of intervention

roles, which will enable the reader to distinguish different roles. This chapter is an introductory discussion on the various roles that is based on personal opinions and the opinions of a variety of authors (Compton & Galaway 1994:427-437; Hepworth & Larsen 1993:25-29; Hoffman & Sallee 1994:76-94; Lombard et al. 1991:174-204; Sheafor et al. 1994:16-28; Terminology Committee for Social Work 1995; Zastrow 1989:12-13). In order to be able to distinguish a few appropriate intervention roles, it is necessary to first make the following suppositions regarding the intervention roles.

## SUPPOSITIONS WITH REGARD TO INTERVENTION ROLES

- The policy, procedures, nature and field of intervention usually influence the intervention roles fulfilled by the social worker.

- Just as the social work approach, process and techniques that are used are determined by the person's behaviour in the situation-environment, this also determines the nature of the intervention roles to be fulfilled.

- Roles are therefore not randomly fulfilled during intervention, as they are aimed at achieving specific goals during intervention.

- One role is usually fulfilled in conjunction with another, which implies that a multitude of roles are fulfilled.

- Roles are not influenced by the size of a system and are therefore fulfilled when working with an individual, group or community.

- The fulfilment of roles by the social worker is not only focused on the client system, but is also aimed at all the appropriate systems in social work.

- Due to the fact that the fulfilment of roles is aimed at the whole social work domain, there is never any question of surrendering to one role and rejecting other roles.

- In practice it is difficult to distinguish specific roles, as there is usually an overlap between the different roles that are fulfilled.

- To effectively fill a role, social workers must be sensitive and flexible.

- A social worker's preference and personality can influence his/her role fulfilment (e.g. a worker can be more attracted to the role of counsellor than to that of manager or activist).

- Conflict, which arises between the various roles fulfilled by the worker, can be counter productive.

- A social worker's role perception (vision), view of the role (interpretation) and role obligation (commitment) therefore determines the worker's role fulfilment in his/her role network (sum total of roles) during intervention.

- It ought to be clear that to fulfil intervention roles, knowledge, skills and a value orientation are necessary.

## DISTINGUISHING APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION ROLES IN SOCIAL WORK

Some intervention roles that the social worker can fulfil are more direct in nature (e.g. the role of agitator) than others that are more non-direct in nature (e.g. the role of counsellor). To group the roles beforehand would however mean that the person's behaviour in the situation-environment is not taken into account. For this reason the following roles have been distinguished, based on the roles commonly performed by the South African social worker. They are not listed in any specific order.

*Counsellor*: to guide the client, by means of interviewing, towards insight with a view to modifying behaviour, empowerment and the acquisition of skills to cope with problem situations.

*Broker*: helping clients and potential clients to identify and locate available community resources as well as bringing together various segments of the community in order to promote mutual interests.

*Public relations officer*: to establish linkages in various networks, to mobilise and strengthen them by means of mutual linkage between clients and others concerned, experts and help networks.

*Marketer*: to positively influence the public with regard to the image, attitudes and opinions of the change agent system, client system, action system, professional system and problem identification system.

*Manager*: to plan, organise, activate and control by means of

decision making, co ordination and communication, in accordance with policy. (In the literature the said components and activities are sometimes distinguished as separate roles – which emphasises the dynamics and importance of this role.)

*Expert*: to impart expert information and advice with credibility and authority, to those parties who use the social worker as a consultant.

*Leader*: to act as a guide, foregoer, leader and accompanist together with different systems during intervention. (The term "leader" must be understood in terms of the full context of the word, it implies "together with" and must not be interpreted as distanced from the other systems.)

*Enabler*: to encourage or facilitate self-sufficient action of client systems, which will promote the interaction between individuals and the environment.

*Facilitator*: to expedite the process of social change by bringing together people and communication structures, stimulating activities, developing and channelling resources and ensuring access to expertise.

*Motivator*: to urge systems to become involved and to participate, by taking people out of isolation, building optimism, utilising conflict creatively and by making people's existence rewarding and productive.

*Researcher*: to scientifically determine the extent of problems, needs and phenomena and identify possible solutions, by analysing related factors.

*Educator*: to develop the skills of systems by providing relevant

information, giving advice, identifying and modelling alternative behaviour patterns and their consequences, teaching problem-solving techniques and clarifying perceptions.

*Negotiator*: to negotiate with people in conflict situations by sharing differences, talking about it, resolving it and by coming to some or other solution or compromise that is acceptable to everyone.

*Mediator*: to get involved in the negotiation process as a mediator, without having any vested interests in either party, by acting as a communicator and catalyst.

*Advocate*: to champion the rights of the individual, groups and communities, either directly or through community action.

*Activist*: to act as a campaigner and crusader for people by taking sides.

*Agitator*: to act as inciter, rabble-rouser, instigator and abettor by becoming personally involved in a cause.

*Professional person*: to be involved in the rendering of competent social work intervention which meets the ethical, practice and theoretical requirements by contributing to the development of the social work profession.

It ought to be clear from the intervention roles that have been differentiated above, that the social worker that specialises in one or other field will place more emphasis on the fulfilment of certain roles. For the social work student and practitioner who are involved in social work intervention in general, it is important that they distinguish and fulfil each of these roles. The extent to which the social worker expresses his/her identity through the

fulfilment of roles, will therefore determine the quality of intervention rendered to the client.

# CHAPTER 12

# THE INTERVENTION METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK

The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995:61) defines a social work method as a professionally recognised procedure of a social worker supported by academic education and professional training and research to achieve the objectives of social work. From this definition it is clear that the attainment of social work goals is central to the methods in social work.

The primary or direct methods (casework, group work and community work) and the secondary or indirect methods (research and management) have already been identified in chapter two of this book. For the introductory purposes of this book an attempt will be made to highlight the links between the various methods and the implications thereof, rather than to discuss each of the different methods. This chapter will therefore enable the reader to ponder over the recognised professional procedures in social work.

## THE LINK BETWEEN THE PRIMARY SOCIAL WORK METHODS

The central factor in the primary methods of social work is the ecological systems theory perspective that forms the basis of this book. From this perspective additional links can be highlighted (Barber1991; Brown 1992; Lombard et al. 1991; Vinik & Levin 1991).

- The focus of the definition of social work is aimed at promoting people's social functioning. This implies that people should be assisted on various levels in terms of their personality (casework), group level (group work) and community level (community work).

- There is a connection between the historical development of the various methods, for example, the roots of both casework and community work can be seen in the COS. There is also a relationship between the common interest of these methods and the problems of individuals and their environments.

- It can therefore be deduced that each method has a role to play in the enhancement of people's social functioning. One method is not more important than another and can not replace another method.

- Social problems can not be viewed in isolation. During assessment the focus is upon all the systems that influence a need or problem. A person can therefore only be understood in a family, community or societal context. For this reason the focus cannot be on either casework or group work or community work. The focus must not be aimed at the method, but rather at the problem or need.

- The rationale for the various methods are all subject to the following motivations: why is it done?, what is done?, how is it done?, with whom is it done?, who gives the right to do it?, where is it done? and when is it done?

- The application of the respective methods also all consist of the involvement of the client, a worker-client relationship, a process of intervention, specific

approaches, techniques and roles that the social worker must fulfil.

- In all three primary social work methods the social worker requires general, but also specific knowledge, value orientations and skills.

## THE INTEGRATED APPLICATION OF THE INTERVENTION METHODS

Lombard et al. (1991:13-26) refer to an integrated application of social work methods as a comprehensive approach. People's problems are therefore not divided up just for the sake of conforming to casework, group work or community work. In this regard the term "integrate" refers to "complete" or "round off". The knowledge, value orientation and skills of the various social work methods are therefore combined (this has already been highlighted as a link between the various methods).

An integrated application does not deprive the methods of their individual character. Although certain principles apply to all the methods, there are also differences in the content and emphasis, which differentiates the methods from one another (just as the dynamics of, for example, an individual differ from that of a group or community). The focus of the integrated application of the social work methods is therefore aimed at the change that is desired. The method applied is that which best addresses the problem or need. In practice each method is still applied separately, but the impact of each method is seen more broadly and in relation to the other methods. This implies that the social worker must possess a good grounding in all the social work methods, so as to assess which method must be applied to address a specific need or problem.

## THE INTERVENTION METHODS AND THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Brown (1992:92-94) highlights the difference between the social work academics and practitioners in particular, regarding the application of the social work methods. He highlights the advantages and disadvantages of specialised and integrated procedures in social work. Gray & Bernstein (1994:199-207) in their article "Integrated practice: a misnomer in social work" invite practitioners in South Africa to become involved in the debate on specialised or integrated procedures, so as to enrich social work theory.

Gray & Bernstein (1994) maintain that theoreticians are motivated by an integrated procedure to generalise clinical theories to community development. According to these authors however, it is only the size of the client system that has changed and not so much the modus operandi (procedure). The assumption is made that the integrated application of social work methods is not a reality in practice, due to the fact that concrete examples thereof cannot be found in practice. The reason why integrated practice is termed a misnomer is that social workers can only do one thing at a time and have not yet found a way in which to work simultaneously with individuals, groups and communities. The general practice therefore is that social workers still specialise in one of the methods.

Where social workers in South Africa previously placed a lot of emphasis on casework, it would appear that more recently there has been a complete shift towards community development. This can be clearly seen in the light of policy frameworks such as the RDP and the White Paper for Welfare. The opinion is that just as casework in South Africa was historically a response to white

poverty, so the community-orientated methodology that is currently proposed for social work, is in response to the apartheid era. Although the justness of the community-orientated methodology can not be doubted (seen in the light of the social problems in the RSA), it remains important to maintain a value orientation of pure motives in this regard. If this method could only be justified from a political perspective, it could seriously hamper the credibility of social work as a profession.

In this regard Vinik & Levin (1991:38-39) state as follows: "It becomes a professional definition..... Who suffers?" It should therefore be a challenge to every social worker to determine from a professional definition who is in need. It is however a reality that the social work domain, just like other fields, is influenced by politics and resultant policies. In this regard Vinik & Levin (1991:57) provide yet another valuable answer: "determines whether the appropriate level is 'case' or 'cause', whether a particular situation needs to be changed for one person, or a change in circumstances is indicated for many." The intervention methods that the social worker uses in practice will therefore determine, to a large extent, the future of social work in South Africa.

It appears quite clear that social work in South Africa (just as in the rest of the world) will only remain relevant if social work students and practitioners are self-assertive – not only in influencing the clients and those systems involved, but also in influencing political systems. The contents of this book ought to make a contribution to that self-assertiveness, as the author is in agreement with Loewenberg (1988:61) who says that: "Social workers know a great deal more than they are able to recall or report verbally." The belief in the future of social work is therefore: social workers can make a difference!

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