

**THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL
SOCIAL WORKER**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this is my own, and original work. This study has never been presented in part, or completely at any university for the obtainment of a degree.

Signature

16 November 1995

Date

SUMMARY

This study deals with the unique characteristics of rural social work, and the professional development of the rural social worker. Considering that the profession until now has been more concerned with the dramatic urbanization process, that more than 51 percent of the South African population reside in rural areas, while the majority of welfare organizations are in the urban areas, away from the people, and that limited research has been undertaken in this field, then it becomes evident that this is a subject that deserves attention.

A non-experimental descriptive and explanatory study was appropriate. The survey method was used to collect the data. The literature study investigated the nature of rural social work, methods that social workers can use for their professional development, the role of the supervisor, and the role that the organization can play in the social worker's professional development.

Data was collected by means of a self-administered mail questionnaire. Quantitative research was implemented to conduct and verify the incidence of certain phenomenon, while qualitative research was used to describe and explain the social reality. Social workers and supervisors of welfare organizations and state departments in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape were represented in the study. The study provided information on the theory of rural of social work, and the professional development of social workers. It also offers guidelines for the enhancement of the professional development of rural social workers.

Social workers can use this study for their own professional development. Furthermore, private welfare organizations and state departments functioning in rural (and urban) areas can use this study to develop a greater understanding of rural social work practice, and to promote the professional development of social workers. It is important to implement the recommendations in order to determine the effectiveness thereof. Further research, resulting from this study could contribute to increasing the effectiveness of rural social work.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie handel oor die unieke eienskappe van maatskaplike werk in plattelandse en landelike gebiede, en die professionele ontwikkeling van maatskaplike werkers wat in hierdie gebiede werksaam is. As in ag geneem word dat die professie tot op hede veral ingestel was op die dramatiese verstedelikingsproses, dat meer as 51 persent van die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking in landelike gebiede woon terwyl die grootste aantal welsynsorganisasies in die stedelike gebiede gekonsentreer is, en dat baie beperkte navorsing oor maatskaplike werk in landelike gebiede gedoen is, is dit duidelik dat hierdie 'n veld is wat aandag verdien.

'n Nie-eksperimentele, beskrywende en verklarende studie was die mees aangewese vir hierdie ondersoek. Die opnamemetode is vir die uitvoering van die ondersoek aangewend. Die aard van maatskaplike werk in plattelandse en landelike gebiede, metodes wat maatskaplike werkers vir hul professionele ontwikkeling kan benut, die rol van die supervisor, en die bydrae van die organisasie is in die literatuurstudie ondersoek.

Data is deur middel van self-gedadministreerde posvraelyste versamel. Kwantitatiewe navorsing is gedoen om die voorkoms van bepaalde verskynsels te tel en te kontroleer, terwyl kwalitatiewe navorsing gedoen is om die sosiale werklikheid te beskryf. Maatskaplike werkers en supervisors in diens van privaat welsynsorganisasies en staatsdepartemente in die Oos, Noord en Wes Kaap is verteenwoordig in die ondersoekgroep. Die studie verskaf inligting rakend die teoretiese onderbou van maatskaplike werk in plattelandse en landelike gebiede, en die professionele ontwikkeling van maatskaplike werkers. Dit verskaf ook riglyne vir die bevordering van die professionele ontwikkeling van maatskaplike werkers.

Maatskaplike werkers kan hierdie studie benut om hul eie professionele ontwikkeling te bevorder. Die studie kan ook deur privaat welsynsorganisasies en staatsdepartemente in plattelandse, en landelike (asook stedelike) gebiede benut word om groter begrip vir die uniekheid van maatskaplike werk in plattelandse en landelike gebiede te ontwikkel, en om die professionele ontwikkeling van die maatskaplike werker te bevorder. Dit is noodsaaklik dat die aanbevelings prakties geïmplementeer sal word ten einde die effektiwiteit daarvan te bepaal. Voortgesette navorsing wat hieruit spruit sal daartoe bydrae om die effektiwiteit van maatskaplike werk in plattelandse en landelike gebiede te verhoog.

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SECTION A:
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE STUDY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The motivation for this study is done from a theoretical, practice and research perspective.

1.1.1 Theoretical Perspective

The question as to who is responsible for the social worker's growth and development was addressed by Van Biljon in 1970. This author (1970:425) concluded that every social worker should accept responsibility for his/her own growth. However, sixteen years later Cerff (1986:72,135) observed that the average social worker shows a lack of interest in policy that affects the profession, become stagnated easily, and simultaneously question the meaning of his/her profession. This again posed the question as to whether social workers accept sufficient responsibility for their own professional development. This question is even more critical for social workers who work in isolated circumstances in rural areas. It is of extreme importance that rural social workers render effective and efficient services, as clients in rural areas seldom have the choice of more than one agency, or social worker who can provide the required services. Farley, Griffiths, Skidmore & Thackeray (1982:12), and Martinez-Brawley (1986:106) have said that the rural social worker is often the entire social service system, and that the social worker requires advance knowledge and expertise that will enable him/her to function as a generalist, and to carry out a wide range of different tasks in often isolated working conditions that are also marked by a lack of resources, and are often also characterized by wide geographic dispersion. The term rural and special characteristics of rural areas will be discussed in more detail in chapter two. However, it can be mentioned that rural areas are complex, and as Wijnberg & Colca (1981:92) explain, show a diversity in their ethnic compositions, lifestyles and community structures. This again demands special skills and knowledge of the social worker, and the ability to adapt to different circumstances. Social workers often have to acquire this knowledge and skills through ongoing continuing education, and professional development, as it is impossible that the social workers' graduate education and training have fully equipped them for the different practice demands.

Professional accountability demands, as various authors (Cohen, 1984:6; Compton & Galaway, 1979:45; McKendrick, 1990b:242; and Meyer, 1979:272), have suggested that the social workers shall not try to intervene in today's problems with yesterday's knowledge, and with only a handful of loosely associated methods. Social work only takes

its meaning and has relevance insofar as it responds to a society's problems and needs, and as South Africa and the South African welfare policy, and social work practice are undergoing several changes, it is vitally important that the social workers shall keep abreast with new developments that will enable them to render relevant, effective and efficient services. This can only be achieved if the social workers accept responsibility for their ongoing professional development.

1.1.2 Practice Perspective

The researcher became aware of the unique problems of the rural social worker in both previous and current employment situations. The researcher was as professional consultant employed by the South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare responsible for the supervision and consultation of social workers in a part of the Eastern Cape. This direct contact with social workers who render services in rural areas has made the researcher both aware and concerned about the unique situation of the rural social worker. The social workers continuously complained about the isolation, the lack of support from colleagues, the lack of stimulation and few opportunities for professional development. A common complaint has also been that the social work education training did not prepare the social workers adequately for services in rural areas. In the current employment situation, the researcher is responsible for the consultation of supervisors whose areas of service rendering also include rural areas in the Northern and Western Cape. The direct contact with supervisors and social workers in these areas, have again stressed the unique situation of the social worker and supervisor in rural areas, and continuously posed the question as to who is responsible for the rural social workers development.

In view of the demands that a changing country is placing on the social work profession, and the unmet needs of people in especially rural areas, it was of concern to observe that the social workers have been mainly applying the casework method. In an exploratory and qualitative investigation into the world of the black social worker that was undertaken by the Social Work division of the Human Service Research Council in 1988 (Muller, 1988:35) it was also found that the social workers who had participated in the research project were mainly applying the casework method, and that they were uncertain as to how to apply the community work method in rural areas. McKendrick (1990a:13-14) has also stated that social workers often respond to people's needs in ways that are neither relevant nor acceptable, and that social workers become depressed and demotivated since their efforts seem to have little impact on some social problems. These findings, own observation, and the fact that forty-five percent of the South African population (an estimated 18 million people) are poverty stricken and live in the rural areas whilst the bulk of welfare agencies are concentrated away from the people in the urban areas (Thabede, 1995:v), let to the

believe that rural social work is demanding, and that it requires the social workers to be innovative, highly skilled and knowledgeable. It also demands of the social workers to be self-reliant, self-directed, and self-motivated. This confirms that it is essential that attention is given to the rural social worker's ongoing personal and professional development.

1.1.3 Research Perspective

Gingsberg (1971:1143) has noted as far back as 1971 that there has been little systematic inquiry into the characteristics of effective social work practice in rural communities. Enquiries at the HSRC, and a computer search have revealed that no such a study has been undertaken in South Africa. The literature study has further indicated that not much has been written about rural social work in recent years. It must however be mentioned that there is a wide range of literature available on social development, including development in Africa, and Southern Africa. Although there are similarities between development, and social work in rural areas, it was difficult to find literature on rural social work, and the rural social work practitioner per se. This served as a further motivation to undertake a study into the subject of rural social work, and especially the rural social worker's professional development.

1.2 RESEARCH GOALS

The goal of this study is to provide practice guidelines for the professional development of rural social workers to the rural social workers, supervisors, and rural welfare organizations that will ensure effective and relevant service rendering to rural clients.

1.2.1 Objectives

The following objectives have been formulated in order to achieve the goals of the study:

- (a) To determine the special characteristics of rural social work, including the differences between urban and rural social work practice, and the knowledge, skills and attitudes the rural social worker should possess ;
- (b) To determine to what extent rural social workers accept responsibility for their own professional development;
- (c) To determine what methods, and strategies are available to the rural social worker to further his/her own professional development;
- (d) To determine the supervisor's role and task in the rural social worker's professional development;
- (e) To determine the role that the organization can play in the rural social worker's

professional development.

1.3 HYPOTHETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In view of the above goals and objectives, the following hypothetical assumption was formulated for this research project:

- 1.3.1 Rural social workers will have knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to render effective services if they accept responsibility for their own professional development.

Due to the intervening variables, the following subhypothetical assumptions were formulated:

- 1.3.2 There is a positive correlation between the rural social worker's experience of supervision and the social worker's competency and professional development.
- 1.3.3 There is a positive correlation between the rural social worker's sense of identity with his/her work, and the social worker's professional esteem inside and outside the rural welfare organization.

For the purpose of this study, education and training of social workers who practice in rural areas will not be considered as a variable, as it is the researcher's opinion that rural social workers should accept responsibility for their own continuous professional development.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature and empirical study were undertaken in order to achieve the goals and objectives of this study. The methods which were used in the literature and empirical study were as follows.

1.4.1 The Descriptive and Explanatory Survey Method as Research Strategy

The descriptive and explanatory survey method was used in this research project. This method is according to Babbie (1989:236) and McMurtry (1993:262) one of the oldest and most widely used procedures to collect data. It provides a systematic way of collecting data by obtaining opinions and/or answers from selected respondents who represent the population of interest. Leedy (1993:187) describes the most important characteristics of the descriptive survey as that it deals with a situation that demands the technique of observation as the principle means of collecting data. The population for the study must be carefully chosen, clearly defined, and specifically delimited in order to set precise parameters for ensuring discreteness to the population. Caution must be taken as data in descriptive survey research are particularly susceptible to distortion through the introduction of bias into the

research design. The collected data must be organized and presented systematically so that valid and accurate conclusions can be drawn.

It was decided that an explanatory survey (Mindel & McDonald, 1988:302) would be most appropriate for this study, as the researcher is familiar with the research field due to direct involvement as consultant and supervisor of rural social workers and supervisors. A testable hypothesis could be formulated on the basis of the researcher's existing knowledge of the research problem, and the belief that there is connection between the variables.

The goals and the objectives of this study have made it possible to use qualitative and quantitative methods. Authors such as Bostwick & Kyte (1993:179), and Epstein (1988:185) suggest that qualitative and quantitative methods work hand in hand. Every measurement involves some degree of abstraction, and quantitative and qualitative descriptions on their own fail to tell everything about a phenomenon. Quantitative methods are suitable to count and correlate social and psychological phenomena, whilst qualitative methods seek the essential character of these phenomena.

Quantitative methods were used to count data that was collected through the use of self-administered mail surveys from the respondents. Qualitative methods were used to describe and explain the various relevant phenomena in this study. Guidelines as described by Leedy (1993:187-192) and McMurtry (1993:277-282) were applied to develop the questionnaires that were used in the mail survey. These included the formulation of structured and unstructured questions in clear language, suitable return envelopes were included, and confidentiality was assured. The questionnaires were also drafted in Afrikaans and English in order to make it more accessible to the respondents. A pretest, as described by Mindel & McDonald (1988:319-320), was also conducted. The questionnaires were presented to four social workers and two supervisors employed by "Diakonale Dienste" to test whether the questions were clearly understood, and all relevant questions were included. Minor changes were made to the questionnaires that were eventually sent to the supervisors.

1.4.2 Literature Study

A comprehensive literature study was undertaken to give a theoretical perspective on the subject. The literature study has included a study on rural social work, different aspects of supervision and also management. A computer search was done to find the most relevant literature. Literature was obtained from the J S Gericke library at the University of Stellenbosch, and the Erika Theron library at the Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch. The inter library facility at the J S Gericke library was often used to obtain literature from other universities.

Literature from South Africa, other Africa countries, Britain, and the United States of America have been used. A few resources from India, and the Netherlands have also been included. Care was taken to use the most recent resources, and the majority of the books, journal articles and dissertations are between 1975 and 1995. Older resources were used in exceptional situations, and only to illustrate the development and use of certain concepts, for example, peer supervision. It must be mentioned that it was difficult to find recent literature on the subject of rural social work. Furthermore, it was clear that much of what has been written about the fundamental knowledge, skills, and accountability of the profession by authors such as Compton & Galaway (1979), Goldstein (1974), Pincus & Minahan (1973), and Siporin (1975) are still relevant and appropriate, and it has been included in this study.

1.4.3 Empirical Study

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sample was selected according to the non probability sampling method as described by Arkava & Lane (1983:159) and Babbie (1989:269). This method was found to be suitable as a component of the universum was known to the researcher, and the subject of the research study was best known to the respondents who were selected to participate in the research project. The universum consisted of welfare organizations and state departments in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape. Organizations that render child and family services in the rural areas of the above mentioned three provinces were selected. The state departments were included as social workers from these departments also render child and family welfare services in the rural areas. The following organizations and departments were approached to participate in the research project:

- (a) "Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging"
- (b) Child and Family Welfare Societies
- (c) "Christelike Maatskaplike Raad"
- (d) "Diakonale Dienste"
- (e) Provincial Administration: Eastern Cape: Department of Social Services
- (f) Provincial Administration: Northern Cape: Department of Social Services
- (g) Provincial Administration: Western Cape: Department of Social Services.

The Provincial Administration: Northern Cape did not respond to the initial request to participate in the research project. The "Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging" and the Provincial Administration: Eastern Cape only gave permission to involve their social workers and supervisors in the study after the mail survey had been completed. It was therefore impossible to involve this organization and state department in the research project. Questionnaires were sent to 163 social workers, and 37 supervisors, thus a total of

200 questionnaires. It was decided to involve supervisors and social workers in the research project in order to get a more holistic picture of the rural social workers' professional development. McMurty (1993:267,278-279) has pointed out that one of the disadvantages of self-administered mail surveys is the low response rate, and that it is not uncommon for mail surveys to yield response rates of only 10 to 20 percent. As this affects the external validity of the data, it was decided to send questionnaires to all the rural social workers and supervisors at the participating welfare organizations and state departments in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape. The mail survey had yielded a response rate of 23 percent, i.e. 38 social workers and eight supervisors returned the questionnaires. The research findings are based on the responses from these 46 respondents, and the literature study.

1.5 DEFINEMENT OF THE RESEARCH FIELD

As mentioned before social workers and supervisors who render services at child and family organizations and state departments in the rural areas of the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape were involved in this research project. Although the term rural is commonly understood as a non-metropolitan area, it was important to define rural areas in more detail as there are patterns of diversity between the rural areas. Wijnberg & Colca's (1981:92) criteria were used to define three different rural areas. Rural area one has a highly organized service delivery system with an adequate number of social workers to deliver services. Rural area two is an area with minimal service delivery systems. These service systems are less visible, less comprehensive and less professionalized. The informal helping networks are most critical. The third rural area is characterized by wide geographic dispersion. Towns and villages are isolated from each other and from metropolitan areas. These areas have virtually no formal systems and the informal ones are sporadic and undependable. Periodic visits by a social worker covering an extensive geographic region may be the only semblance of a service system. For the purpose of this study, social workers and supervisors who rendered services in all three the rural areas were included. Social workers who live in metropolitan areas and visit rural areas sporadically, were excluded from the study, as it was the opinion that these social workers do not experience the typical difficulties of a rural social worker who is working in an isolated area, with limited contact with colleagues, and sporadic supervision and support of an experienced supervisor.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Literature on the subject of rural social work was limited. In chapter two the researcher has therefore often used the work of authors such as Farley *et al* (1982) , and Gingsberg (1976). It is possible that a too narrow perspective was offered on the subject of rural social work, and that the literature was not resented enough.

There are two limitations to the study. Due to the fact that two of the state departments, and one of the welfare organizations that were approached did not participate in the study, it is difficult to draw the conclusion that the responses are representative of the larger universum. The low response rate is the second limitation of the study. The mail survey had yielded a response rate of 23 percent, despite several attempts to ensure a higher response rate, for example personal contact with supervisors and social workers, and the extension of the return date for the questionnaires. Questionnaires that were received two months after the extended return date were not included in the research report. This low response rate can affect the external validity of the data, because although the responses gave a clear perspective on the difficulties that are associated with rural social work, and the professional development of the respondents, it is difficult to draw the conclusion that these responses are representative of the larger universum. McMurty (1993:267) has also pointed out that another disadvantage of self-administered mail surveys is the fact that it is difficult to get in depth or open-ended responses. This problem was experienced in this study, and it was found that open-ended questions were not always completed in detail, or not completed at all.

1.7 PRESENTATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE REPORT

The research report will be presented in two sections, and will consist of eight chapters. Section A consists of chapter one, the introduction, and the literature study, which includes four chapters. A description of the unique aspects of rural social work, and the characteristics of rural welfare organizations are described in chapter two. The personal and professional development of social workers, with specific reference to the social worker's own responsibility in this regard, are discussed in chapter three. This is followed by a description of the role and responsibility of the supervisor in chapter four. The role that the organization can play in the personal and professional development of the rural social worker is described in chapter five.

Section B consists of three chapters. The findings of the empirical study are presented in chapters six and seven, and this is followed by the conclusions and recommendations in chapter eight.

CHAPTER 2

RURAL SOCIAL WORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The social work profession has been serving rural areas on a limited basis since the turn of the century. It is, however, evident that the profession until now has been more concerned with the dramatic urbanization process than anything else. Bernstein (1991:228) quoted Cox who said that social work is mainly urban with a recruitment into social work of upwardly mobile professionals who would not live elsewhere than in a city. Despite the rapid rate of urbanization, however many of the most intractable problems are located in rural areas. The long neglected social problems of rural areas demand that the social work profession readdress the critical human needs in rural areas. Buxton (1976:29) declares that to the extent that communities in urban, and rural areas have similar problems, rural and urban social work practice are similar. Therefore he believes that much in social work practice is applicable to all areas. However there is real merit in the attempts to point out key differences if those who practice in rural areas are to be able to develop special skills and put them to use.

In this chapter the focus will be on the characteristics of rural areas, rural social work practice, the rural agency and the rural social worker.

2.2 DEFINING RURAL SOCIAL WORK

Any discussion of rural social work practice requires common definitions. Waltman quoted Weber (1986:466) who said that the term rural generally referred to the environmental surroundings, the social systems, and the people who reside in areas that have relatively low population density, either in the country or in small towns or villages. According to Gingsberg (1976:5) sociologists have defined rural as areas of low population density, small absolute size, and relative isolation, where the major economic base is agricultural production and where the way of life of the people is reasonably homogeneous and differentiated from that of other sectors of society, most notably the city. Waltman (1986:467) declares that the word rural means more than a numerical population limit. It connotes a way of and an outlook on life characterized by a closeness to nature, slower pace of living, and a somewhat conservative life-style that values tradition, independence, self-reliance and privacy. Rural people use informal networks for decision making and problem solving. They simultaneously experience freedom and isolation.

Wijnberg & Colca (1981:92) mention that rural populations show a diversity in their ethnic and racial compositions, in their lifestyles and community structures. There are also differences in the history of their internal relationships, and the formality, visibility and accessibility of their service structures vary. Wijnberg & Colca (1981:92) have selected as the critical criterion the degree of organization of the service delivery system. A well developed rural area has a highly organized service delivery system with an adequate number of workers to deliver services. The felt need in this area consists of improving the quality of direct service to individuals and families. Social workers, though in sufficient number and well-motivated, do not have the requisite skills. A second category of rural areas is described as an area with minimal service delivery systems. Service systems are less visible, less comprehensive and less professionalized. The informal helping networks are most critical. This rural area is often serviced by the nearest urban area, and a sharp difference exist between the value system of the service deliverers and the recipients of services. A third category of rural areas is characterized by wide geographic dispersion. Towns and villages are isolated from each other and from metropolitan areas. These areas have virtually no formal systems and the informal ones are sporadic and undependable. Periodic visits by a social worker covering an extensive geographic region may be the only semblance of a service system. For the purpose of this research, the categories as described by Wijnberg & Colca will be used.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL AREAS

The challenge that faces rural social workers is usually complicated by the dilemma of where to begin in the intricate mash of socio-political problems, with little or no resources. The rural social worker is expected to create and distribute scarce resources among too many, long suffering, powerless and alienated people (Malaka, 1992:1). In order to render an appropriate social work service in rural areas, it is important that the social worker has an understanding of the characteristics of rural areas. In the following paragraphs, some of the characteristics of rural areas will be described.

2.3.1 Open Communication System

According to Farley, Griffiths, Skidmore, & Thackeray (1982:8) the small rural community is perhaps the most open communication system in our society today. News travels very quickly and residents can respond readily. The social worker has to recognize and use the communication system in the community. The professional who actually lives in the community must be even more aware since he or she does live in a sort of "fish-bowl" situation. There are some negative aspects of "everyone" knowing "everyone else's" business, but the skilled rural social worker can capitalize on this open communicative system in a positive and productive way. Vice Irey (1980:40) suggests that the relationships

and interaction within rural communities are more visible and open to public scrutiny. Thus the processes and structures of system transactions are available to the alert and knowledgeable social worker.

2.3.2 Sense of Community

An important positive characteristic of rural communities is according to Farley *et al* (1982:9) and Vice Irey (1980:41) the positive sense of community. The citizens are very aware of their community and consider it theirs. The rural social worker soon learns that the community tries to take care of "its own". Many individuals who would be described as dysfunctional in a larger, more urbanized setting are completely accepted by the rural community. They are given a "place" and are treated like people even though they may be functioning on a marginal level. This sense of community perhaps stems from historical times when people in rural towns had to depend on each other to survive. Farley *et al* (1982:9) stress that it is important that any professional working in a rural community should know how to capitalize on the sense of community through initiating self-help projects and volunteer programmes. Voluntarism may be the greatest untapped resource available in rural communities. There is a wealth of resources in a rural community if it can be utilized in a productive way.

2.3.3 Lack of Services and Recreation.

Gingsberg (1976:3), Malaka (1990:14) and Stoffregen (1991:12-13) point out that rural communities frequently lack the services and amenities available in cities. Lack of infrastructure in the rural villages refers to the absence of good roads, houses, electricity, water, sewerage systems and other basic facilities in a residential area. Important services such as education, health and mental health are also frequently unavailable to small town residents. Rural areas seldom provide a good basis for economic development requiring infrastructure. Rural areas have an inbuilt disadvantage through lack of infrastructure, and it is unlikely that any government could afford to provide such infrastructure in a manner that is comparable to that found in urban areas. To overcome this disadvantage, there would have to be some level of income and demand within the rural areas themselves which would prompt production and services to move to rural areas.

Problems related to the lack of infrastructure is further stress by the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta (Gingsberg, 1976:11). This Board claims that there are unique problems in rural areas, particularly because there is a lack of basic public services. Therefore the problems in rural areas tend to be more like problems of underdeveloped countries; that is basic public services and necessities are lacking. In South Africa the availability of services in rural areas have, according to Malaka (1990:14) further been

affected by the apartheid policy of the previous government. The provision of education, health and welfare services were based on an apartheid framework which was inequitable, undemocratic, inefficient and inappropriate in relation to meeting the needs arising from a situation of mass poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. Services related to sustaining life will have priority (i.e., food, shelter, health and transportation) over social services focussed on the quality of life. There are also unique difference in the social welfare delivery system of rural areas. It may be a less formal system, with an informal network and resources which are not commonly viewed as part of the traditional welfare system. These systems need to be studied so that the positives are recognized and strengthened. Programmes based on urban experience may be dysfunctional in rural areas (Gingsberg, 1976:12).

Vice Irey (1980:41) explains that the rural communities rely on informal networks for social service delivery. Networks exist as semi-permanent social structures in all communities. These networks are one of the most vital bridges between the individual and the environment. She stresses that it is important in rural areas to be aware of, to understand, and to be able to work with the various types of networks, as natural helping networks are very important and that building on these networks may be a reasonable way to enhance the quality of life for all.

2.3.4 Inter-agency Cooperation

Even though services are minimal in many areas, there is positive inter-agency cooperation. The social workers in a rural area know each other well and can work together effectively. According to Midgley (1990:298) social workers in the developing countries have gained invaluable experience in training and using para-professionals and indigenous workers for a variety of tasks to ease staff shortages without harming the quality of service.

2.3.5 Employment Patterns

Gingsberg (1976:4) claims that rural communities tend to be one- or two-industry or company towns. Frequently the industries are unattractive to young men and women. Whether the industry is mining, or farming, it often seems to conforming for the brightest young people, who know that there is a variety of jobs in the cities. Gumbi (1992:7) mentions that South African rural areas contain within them the most rugged part of the country, and that they are mostly unsuitable for farming productively, and furthermore, the available land for stock is mostly overgrazed. In view of the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of rural areas find it difficult and almost impossible to subsist on the land they occupy, the majority of the people are pressurized by financial needs to migrate to towns and cities in search for employment.

According to the 1993 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Report fifty one percent (51%) of the total South African population were residing in rural areas in 1991 (1993:22). Taback & Triegaardt (1992:91) explain that in order to gain a holistic and realistic picture of the composition of the rural population in South Africa, it is important to divide the population up into white rural South Africans and black rural South Africans. White rural South Africans are largely engaged in agricultural activities and have historically lead economically gainful lives; however, this is changing due to the devastating effects of the drought which South Africa has experienced. Contrasting to this is the black rural population, which has been modelled and influenced by many historical events in South Africa over the past fifty years. This began with the 1913 Land Act where Black persons were forced off the land which they owned; black persons were then not allowed to own or buy land. Eighty percent (80%) of rural dwellers were subsistence farmers at the beginning of this century; during the mid-eighties, the figure had dropped to eight percent (8%).

The above is confirmed by Steyn (1991:2) who claims that outside the commercial farming areas, the rural dwellers of South Africa earn less than fifteen percent (15%) of their income from the agrarian economy, i.e. from crop-raising, fishing and forestry. A very small minority of rural households may be considered as deriving fifty percent (50%) or more of their means of livelihood from subsistence production. The constraints imposed by an uncertain water supply and semi-arid climatic condition over most of the country, limit the possibilities for the rural sector even further.

There are other problems too that limit employment. Gingsberg (1976:4) mentions that the lack of efficient, low-cost public transportation is perhaps one of the biggest problems, as available jobs may be kilometers away. Although commuting is viewed as a problem, by and large, of the suburbs, it is a common phenomenon in rural areas. People are bound, for social and economic reasons, to family-owned homes that are located a substantial distance from the nearest attractive employment.

2.3.6 Poverty

In the African National Congress's (ANC) Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994:14) it is stated that poverty is the single greatest burden of South Africa's people. Poverty affects millions of people, the majority of whom live in the rural areas, and are women. This view is supported by Thabede (1995:v) who claims that forty-five percent (18 million) of the South African population are poverty stricken and live in the rural areas.

Poverty in rural areas tends to be longstanding and generational. This view is supported by Muzaale (1987:75,80) when he says that there is growing consensus among rural development analysts and practitioners in the Third World that rural poverty is worsening

despite decades of rural development effort primarily because such effort has been founded on poorly conceived causal models. The guiding models of these development efforts have tended to be single-factor explanations of a highly complex problem and have tended to ignore such important variables as the historical, social, national, and international contexts in which poverty and underdevelopment have thrived. Before the advent of colonial forces the rural economies operated independently of the pressures of the international economy and a modern state economy. In such independent, indigenous economies, families operated as autonomous, self-sufficient units. Production relations were indistinguishable from family relations and were virtually free from tendencies of exploitation. Pre-colonial economies often suffered from natural disasters such as drought and floods, but local level mutual social support systems did provide a reliable safety-net, except where such disasters uniformly affected whole communities. Even then, there existed institutionalized inter-community voluntary exchange relationships to provide cover against such contingencies.

According to Muzaale (1987:80) modern export enclaves developed at the expense of the traditional subsistence sectors. In Central and Southern Africa in particular lands of high agricultural potential were annexed and made available to European settlers for plantation agriculture while natives were pushed to geographically isolated marginal lands. Unable to extract an adequate livelihood from the marginal lands and unable to produce enough cash income from those lands to meet their tax obligations, young men had no alternative but to migrate and sell their labour within the export enclaves. Those who remained - mainly women, elderly, and young children - exchanged their produce with consumer manufactured goods on highly unfavorable terms of trade. In this way the indigenous rural economy lost superior land, superior labour and valuable produce to the export sector. Muzaale (1987:81) states that post-colonial, indigenous governments of Africa have not done much to alter economic relationships, either internally or externally, and the dual structure of African economies continues basically unchanged. Export enclaves continue to thrive at the expense of the rural economy in order to support urban consumption, and to finance urban-biased social services and economic infrastructures. Steyn (1991:2) claims that the challenge facing rural areas is to find means of enhancing the generation and retention of income within rural areas, rather than allowing this to be siphoned out to the large urban sector.

Another causal factor of rural poverty, is according to Muzaale (1987:82), the demographic factor. This factor has three relevant dimensions, that is age-structure, growth rate, and absolute size. Rural populations have a predominance of young children who are non-producing members of families. High dependency ratios are presenting a real constraint to progress. While they do not produce, young children need to be fed, they need education, and they need health care. For this reason, a high dependency ratio, as influenced by the

number of very young children, the aged, and other unemployables, can retard development and contribute to continued rural poverty. The growth rate of the population is another important contribution to rural poverty. It has an impact on fixed family resources, like land, and this means an increasing rate of sub-division of family land at each generation, rendering the land inadequate. This is a situation which has the potential for pushing part of the rural population to the urban area where their situation might be worse. The demographic factor clearly appears to have a direct impact on rural poverty.

Muzaale (1987:82-83) also mentions what might be called precipitating factors to the problem of rural poverty. These are episodic shocks for the rural population. Richer households are better able to stand the impacts of episodic shocks than poorer ones. Examples of episodic shocks in the rural producer's environment include drought, floods, epidemics of crop, animal and human diseases, and civil strife. Many rural communities are faced with famines and poverty at its worst. The most popular explanation of such situations is drought, but drought translates into famine only when the community has been subject to long term vulnerability, a vulnerability which is manifested in small food stocks in the family which may barely last to next harvest. Families which are strong and have large food reserves will remain safe in a drought for a much longer time than one without a food reserve.

It is emphasized by Derman (1992:3) that it is the poor who have picked up the welfare tab in the South African society. The urban poor have little access to institutional supports, and for the rural poor these are non-existent and it is within the context of marginal economic endeavors and its role in social welfare that the family has developed particular organizational characteristics in the struggle for survival. Thus, for example, a dependency on migrant remittances has resulted in a subservient status of women. Such subservience is reinforced by a system of bureaucratic patronage which characterizes South African government structures. Cultural concepts such as polygyny coupled with female fidelity in marriage have created a condition in rural areas where not only are women subservient to men, married women feel constantly threatened as their continued status within their family is always at risk. Derman (1992:3), and Steyn (1991:6) explain that rural families are characterized as tension-filled with different levels of dependency and inter-dependency, literate and illiterate, numerate and innumerate, employed and unemployed. Rural households are thus characterised by fragility and dependence of such magnitude that even slight adverse changes in the status of active gleaners will have large consequences.

Muzaale (1987:81) states that the problem of rural poverty is worsened by the fact that rural development plans and programmes, which are supposed to be implemented by the rural poor, supposedly for their own improvement, are drawn up without the participation of the

poor. As a result, these programmes are not properly focused on the basic needs of the poor.

2.3.7 Religion in Rural Areas

Social workers and other human service workers in rural areas have observed that religion plays a major role in rural communities, perhaps a greater one than in urban areas. Meystedt (1984:220) says that because religion is such a deep-seated, dynamic and personal phenomenon, it is likely to affect all aspects of the community life. It will undoubtedly influence the services the social worker wishes to develop or offer to a community. It is therefore important to know the predominant religion and its pervasiveness in a community.

Gingsberg (1976:12) and Meystedt (1984:223-226) state that if a social worker is perceptive and imaginative, the extent to which religion can be used as a resource is great. It can offer a wide range of choices on a variety of levels - from specific utilization of instruments that of importance to practise, to training the clergy to serve the community in a particular area of concern. The congregation can serve as a resource by providing a support group to those in need. It is also true that if the congregation supports the social worker and the services offered, less resistance and higher utilization are likely. A higher quality to and number of services can be promoted by providing educational programmes for the leaders. It is also feasible for a social worker to be aware of adequate congregational services to prevent duplication. Other advantages are that churches normally own buildings that can be used for social, recreational and educational activities. Further, it usually has an educated adult who has the time and is expected to have the compassion for helping people with their problems. Meystedt (1984:226) concludes that a rural social worker can use religion as a window through which the client and community can be more clearly seen and as a valuable resource for treatment of the individual and service to the community.

2.3.8 Smaller Scale of Living

According to Gingsberg (1976:6) rural communities are characterized by a smaller scale of living than urban areas. Impersonal services are uncommon in a setting where everyone knows everyone else or at least everyone else's relatives. The smaller scale of living has its positive and negative aspects as do most of the characteristics of rural life. It is important to note that a smaller scale of life does not imply simplicity. Rural communities are often as socially complicated as cities. Many of the things that happen may be based upon little-remembered but enduringly important family conflicts, church schisms, and crimes. Vice Irey (1980:41) explains that the relationship between past and present is an important characteristic that needs consideration, as rural communities have a history of long standing events that influences present events and interactions.

Gingsberg (1976:6) stresses the fact that it may require months of investigation before a newcomer in a rural area fully understands the power relationships of the community's institutions. Rural social workers should not unquestionably support the norms of the community, but they must be able to accept those norms and work for change at a pace that is acceptable to the people themselves. Those who are too quick to tell others their faults are unpopular in both the metropolis and the village. However, the results of such behavior are more rapid, persuasive, and dramatic in the rural community. A willingness to accept change as something that happens slowly, without becoming a total supporter of the status quo is a requisite skill for the rural social worker.

2.3.9 Geographic Isolation

According to Farley *et al* (1982:10) geographic isolation is a phenomenon that the social service delivery system has not addressed well. Small rural communities are spread out, but an even more difficult problem is that many families still live on small farms or in underdeveloped rural areas. The problem of geographic isolation is further complicated by the fact that rural areas often have a poor infrastructure. The infrastructure which serves the farms, are often particularly poor. The social worker in the rural area thus feels a geographic isolation that is real. The social worker often have to serve a wide geographical area in which the distribution of the population is uneven. Travelling may be time consuming, and equally difficult for the social worker and the client system. Therefore, the social worker needs to be creative and innovative in serving the rural population, and in ensuring that effective services are rendered.

2.3.10 Personnel Isolation

Rural areas have fewer formal helping networks, and rural agencies often employ only one social worker. The rural social worker is therefore often isolated from colleagues. Opportunities for professional stimulation is less available, and as noted before, resources for effective professional practise are limited. If the social worker is the only professional person in the community, he/she can feel very isolated. Webster & Campbell (1977:6) note that the community will have heightened expectations of the social worker, and can expect the social worker to deal with all the community problems. The community will continuously scrutinize the personal life of the social worker, and emphasis is being placed on who the worker is, rather than who he/she represent as practicing professionals. These factors can contribute to the social worker's feelings of isolation. Farley *et al* (1982:10) suggest that the rural social worker needs to be able to recognize and deal with the pressures of being the "only one" available. Even learning to limit one's practice is a delicate art in a rural community where the social worker's effectiveness will depend on his/her positive communication with the community.

2.4 RURAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

According to Gingsberg (1976:7), and Horejsi and Deaton (1977:199) social workers preparing for service in rural areas need a special understanding of the structure of social welfare in rural communities. In many cases the organization of services differs markedly from the structure of services in urban areas. The most important difference is the small number of agencies and professionals. The rural social worker therefore needs special skills in working with a scarcity of services and with hidden, undefined, and informal services. The majority of rural practitioners, regardless of their educational preparation or personal preferences, are forced by circumstances to adopt a generalist approach. Collier (1984:60) also explains that rural relationships generate many rural social problems indissoluble into the aspects of urban social work practice. The same author suggests that aside from the practical advantage of the generalist approach - that it reduces the number of people needed to render services - it has been noted that in a range of situations a single helping person is often more valuable. Rural villagers find it strange and wasteful if a person has only one specialized skill, since their lives cannot be organized around one single activity in the normal course of events. A large influx of outsiders also upsets the social mechanisms of a small village. The same author (1984:61) continues that all cohesive and working communities have ways of helping their members in distress, and many of these are still strong among rural people. Generalist social workers are best able to discover these helping relationships because of the broad conceptual base they work from; they can borrow from many useful sources to engage methods, skills and groupings that will incorporate the strengths that exist. Generalist also have a better capacity to exercise on-the-spot judgement about the best analytical tools and models. A generalist social worker has enhanced ability to appreciate interdisciplinary approaches, cross-cultural possibilities as well as non-professional and para-professional opportunities for helping.

Collier (1984:62) suggests that while generalist practice may seem to oblige the social worker to take on every facet of every problem, it has the advantage of setting up cross-disciplinary contacts with other professionals in which the sharing of opportunities becomes commonplace. Such coordination need not overburden the clients. Rural practice eventually produces professional relationships that are open, cooperative and collaborative, in which efforts often provide multiple outcomes which benefit many people. Generalism also encourages non-professionals to engage in problem-solving, since the barriers between professional and non-professional are broken down as frequently as those between professionals. According to Martinez-Brawley (1982:89-90) the rural generalist is also a worker who will utilize knowledge and understanding of the rural reality in political ways, to ensure that rural clientele gets its rightful share of resources. This conceptualization of the model rural social worker is congruent with the characterization of rural social work not

just as a practice but as a social movement.

Waltman (1986:468) declares that the relationship between the social worker and community dynamics is unique about rural social work practice. Waltman further suggests that if rural social workers want to achieve community acceptance of themselves and the services they offer, they must respect individual and community values and standards of behavior, which may be quite different from urban ones. A rural value system includes an emphasis on self reliance, a preservation of local autonomy, helping one's neighbours, a reliance on tradition and resistance to change, and respect for certain long-standing and cherished institutions. Figure 2.1 compiled by Waltman (1986:468) illustrates the relationship between primary social work methods, with attendant knowledge and skills, and rural values. These categories are not mutually exclusive and may overlap and blend. Each social work method identified is viewed as the one most relevant to the corresponding rural value.

Rural Values	Social Work Methods
Self-reliance	Casework
Local autonomy	Social action
Helping neighbours	Consultation
Reliance on tradition	Community organization
Respect for institutions	Groupwork

Figure 2.1. Interface of rural values and social work methods (Waltman, 1986:468)

In the next paragraphs the unique aspects of rural social work as mentioned in figure 2.1 will be discussed.

2.4.1 Self-reliance

According to Malaka (1990:14) there is a reluctance of rural people to seek professional help with their problems. Interests in one another and helpfulness towards each other are common features of ruralism, and help from outsiders are not readily accepted. It is vitally important that the social worker shall understand the rural etiquette, since an oversight of the basic habits of the rural people is regarded as offensive and results in a reluctance to cooperate with strangers. Manner of greeting, manner of dress, expected behaviors between adults and children or royalty and non-royalty are often taken for granted and these can pose a major communication problem between the social worker and the rural community.

Waltman (1986:468) has also stressed that it is important that clients are treated with dignity and respect and that they are involved in any problem-solving or helping process. In

addition to possessing basic social casework skills such as interviewing, and assessment skills, the worker must establish a therapeutic relationship with a client who may be very uncomfortable and somewhat resistant to counseling services. The rural client may have difficulty articulating his or her attitudes and feelings; thus the therapist must be skillful in observing and interpreting nonverbal communication. Knowledge of the dynamics of human behavior, growth, and awareness of rural socio-economic and cultural differences are helpful in determining appropriate interventions and treatment techniques.

Preserving confidentiality is extremely important in the therapeutic relationship with a rural client, but it is often difficult to maintain. Moore-Kirkland & Vice Irey (1981:321) suggest that the principle of confidentiality should not be discarded. The confidential nature of the therapeutic relationship should not be the single standard, however. An effective approach of dealing with social systems, rather than isolated individuals may not be feasible, effective, or even ethical under the traditional concept of confidentiality, but it may be more effective in the rural context. However, the client's right to privacy must be guarded and honored. The social worker must know how to balance an effective intervention plan that involves strategic members of the client's social network with effective safeguards to the client's right to privacy. Moore-Kirkland & Vice Irey (1981:321) propose that collection of data should be limited and purposeful, and that information should be sought only if it relates to a purpose mutually defined by the social worker and client. Furthermore, the way in which the information will be used should be an explicit part of the contract between the social worker and the client.

The responsible application of the concept of confidentiality demands that if the client system- individual, family, or group - is being adversely affected by misinformation or poor communication, social workers must use their knowledge of the situation to correct the misinformation. Moore-Kirkland & Vice Irey (1981:321-322) explain that social workers need to consider carefully which categories of information are inviolably private, and which are essentially public, and which are discretionary. Social workers can be more effective social brokers and resource agents if they do not automatically claim the traditional standard of confidentiality or rely on an ad hoc criterion of individual professional judgement. Instead, they must recognize and deal assertively with the theoretical and practical problems posed by the social realities of the profession. Therefore, as Zastrow (1992:42) explains, it will be incorrect to promise a client absolute confidentiality, as it is seldom achieved. It is more precise to indicate that a system of relative confidentiality is being used in social work.

2.4.2 Preservation of Local Autonomy

Waltman (1986:469) states that rural citizens dislike intrusion into community affairs and

usually resist any proposal or programme that lessens their control over their daily life. They prefer minimal outside involvement and maximum local control. When becoming involved in rural community concerns such as threats to local control, the social worker must know the rules of democratic and legislative processes and the ways that legislators react to public pressure. Social action skills are needed: lobbying, testifying at hearings, enlisting the aid of the news media, and motivating and mobilizing citizens' groups. Since rural social workers have the opportunity to develop ongoing working relationships with area legislators, they may have significant influence on social legislation. She warned that rural social workers should not use the term social action in a rural community as it connotes demonstrations, civil disobedience, and violence, actions that are frightening and deplorable to most rural citizens.

2.4.3 Helping Neighbours

According to Waltman (1986:469-470) rural social workers must be aware of informal, natural helping networks; they must attempt to strengthen and expand these networks without imposing their professional standards on them. Knowledge of consultation methods is needed to gain entry into the rural community's mutual aid system, which is comprised of various individual and organizational caregivers. Effective communication and collaboration skills are especially important in establishing working relationships with these natural helpers in the service delivery system. Equally important is the worker's credibility, which can be achieved only with careful attention to various demographic, economic, political, and socio-cultural characteristics of the rural area.

2.4.4 Reliance on Tradition and Resistance to Change

Waltman (1986:470) remarks that before advocating change in community structure or helping patterns, the rural practitioner should seriously evaluate, with the involvement of community leaders, whether the traditional ways are not more appropriate. It is often more appropriate for the social worker to provide indirect leadership to encourage efficient use of money and personnel, both of which are often scarce resources in rural areas. Attending community planning meetings affords the opportunity to cultivate and nurture working relationships with other community leaders. Knowledge of community resources, the organization and delivery of rural social services, and important community forces is a prerequisite to any efforts toward social planning or social change. Change in rural areas usually takes place very gradually and social workers must remember to initiate and develop changes at the client's or community's own pace.

Ankrah (1987:17) says that change as a growth producing process suggests a model of practice that discovers procedures for helping people and communities to be more change-

conscious, and more change-competent. In expectations, for example, that rural people are slow to act on the changes recommended, social workers should experiment with methods of reaching out to stimulate people to change. Social workers should enable them to act positively in future situations requiring change. As social work serves to stimulate self-actualization at the individual or family levels, for example, human systems become accumulatively more flexible, spontaneous, expectant, and willing to try other changes. Social work in rural areas can draw on viable networks of relationships, extended families, clans, and village groupings to create and to promote the cooperative atmosphere enables more positive steps towards change to be taken.

2.4.5 Respect for Certain Institutions

Malaka (1990:14) and Waltman (1986:470). note that if rural social workers wish to enlist support of the important community institutions, they must demonstrate their personal commitment by becoming involved in their activities and programmes. Knowledge of group dynamics and the groupwork skills of organization, facilitation, and mediation are helpful in promoting transactions between individuals and groups and among the various community groups. It is further important to treat the rural leaders with respect, and to learn the relevant procedures in approaching the leaders, kgoshis and indunas.

From the above, it is clear that rural social workers need to be skillful in working with individuals, families, groups and communities. According to Gingsberg (1976:10) the rural social worker needs the supportive skills associated with research, social policy planning, administration and management. Such skills are needed because, again, when there are few social workers, all are likely to be called upon to carry out different activities. A social worker who is the only professional in an office must also be aware of, and skillful in management processes.

Farley *et al* (1982;161-162) stress that social work administration is recognized as highly important because of the reality that all social workers in an agency along with other staff members, participate in the administrative process either effectively or otherwise. All agency staff are involved in either leadership or teamship roles. The number of administrators varies from agency to agency, depending on the size and complexity of the organization, but all staff members are a part of an agency team and as such either help to build agency services or hinder or hamper them. Most social workers in rural communities are drafted for and involved in leadership activities and positions. Because rural agencies are small and staff limited, it implies that administrators have increased power and responsibilities. Where there is only one staff member, he or she is it - with all the problems and responsibilities of a social work agency. Even with a staff of two or three, it is paramount for them to have knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities so that they can

fulfill community needs. There is more independent action, less collegiality, and less consultation with other professionals. Thus, competent leadership is essential for effective rural social work practice. With only one or two staff members, relationships are personal and numerous. Such a closeness calls for understanding and acceptance that are unique and challenging, as well as rewarding.

According to Farley *et al* (1982:174) the five traditional management processes are salient for effective social work practice in rural areas. The five management processes are: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. Planning encompasses skills in formulating specific long-term and short-term objectives, management by objectives, and competency in decision making. Organizing includes expertise on span of control, delegation of authority, effective use of committees, and tapping powers of both formal and informal organization. Staffing involves competency in hiring, supervising, and terminating staff when needed. Directing encompasses significant aspects of leadership, motivation, communication and public relations. Controlling, the fifth process, includes effective budgeting, and programme evaluation. Gingsberg (1976:10) adds that programme development skills, such as those associated with creating and conducting a programme of volunteer services, or raising funds for a special project, are often needed by the rural social worker. These may be associated with the services of the worker's own agency or with wider community efforts in which the worker may be the key figure.

Gingsberg (1976:10) suggests that research skills are needed because facts about rural and small-town life are often difficult to obtain. Adequate programmes of service require hard data on population trends, social problems, community attitudes, and other factors that will determine the nature of a given effort. A knowledge of social policy formation and modification is also crucial because on one hand so many of the problems of rural areas are the direct result of social policy decisions and because so many may, on the other hand, be overcome with adjustments in social policies. The same author (1976:10) further explains that just as it is important to know a great deal about a number of methods and processes in social work, it is also crucial for the rural social worker to have skills helping communities to achieve results. The rural social worker must therefore be skillful not only in understanding and analyzing problems, but also in implementing solutions. For example, knowing the extent and nature of family crisis in a rural community is important, but knowing how to find a solution is equally important.

Jacobsen (1980:196,200) and Martinez-Brawley (1982:99) explain that rural social work practice is closely related to community work and community development, and of the most appropriate processes available to the rural social worker is community development. It is a preferable strategy largely because many of the goals, strategies, and techniques employed

in community development are consistent with both the fabric of rural communities and the resources available to the rural social worker. The community development process tends to emphasize the participant's interdependence and their shared values and beliefs. The concern for an organized comprehensive community approach on the community's terms helps to insure that the process does not move quicker than the rural community is able to accommodate. Malaka (1992:5) agrees and explains that social workers should not develop programmes that are foreign to the inhabitants of rural areas. Effective strategies in rural social work evolve around community development programmes which involve participation of most of the community members and are beneficial to all. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994:5) and Steyn (1991:3) further stress this point. If rural communities mobilize themselves, they should be able to achieve more, and meet more needs than through a passive reliance on external help. Development programmes should be people-driven processes that rely on the energies of the local people.

De Graaf (1986:12-14) also stresses the fact that people will only commit their own resources - like labour, land, energy, information and social relationships - if they have the impression that the activity to which they are contributing is theirs, and that it is controlled by them. Non-participatory programmes can take place as long as external resources are available, but will not tap the wealth or resources local people have. Programmes that are centrally planned, or planned without real participation of the people concerned, will inevitably be based upon very fragmented information, guesses and assumptions. Only local people know the unique details of the physical environment, the intricacies of their own social relationships, the results of previous attempts towards change, the political balance in the community. All these information will only become available through involving the local people. When people participate they will acquire, practice and improve a number of social and organizational skills that have a kind of a spill-over effect into other areas beneficial to the participants. Planning, deciding and organising activities teaches people skills and attitudes and creates social networks which are extremely useful in any kind of change or problem situation in life, and not merely the specific project situations where these skills initially were developed. Most of all this applies to the organizational structures that the people develop among themselves, and in relation to the outside world. These structures are social tools that will make the participants' lives and world more "manageable" in a very real sense, far outweighing the particular advantages such structures may have had for the specific projects.

De Graaf (1986:14) says that participation, if really grown and effective in all stages of a programme, makes that programme a local event, rooted in what people locally want, choose, learn and do. The more the programme reflects their choices, action, and involvement, the less it depends on outside support, and the better the chances that there

will be lasting change, a self-perpetuating process of changes for which people need less interference from government or development agencies. They might need continued material support in a situation of scarcity and poverty, but it will be their demand and decision that will channel such support, not the design, resources, and choices from outside.

In conclusion, Martinez-Brawley (1982:101) note that rural social work practice is highly indigenous and locality connected. The first aspect of localism has to do with the rural community itself, its differences, its uniqueness, and its heterogeneity. Rural social work has developed symbiotic relationships with the communities it serves, and it has become profoundly aware of the vast differences that exist among communities that share rurality as a common denominator. Rural ingenuity has always been able to develop local responses to specific problems, and rural social work has learned to capitalize on this heterogeneous response.

2.5 THE RURAL AGENCY

According to Farley *et al* (1982:191,193), and Webster & Campbell (1977:6) rural agencies are usually small, informal, and have a strong, personal direct link to the community they serve. The typical rural agency is characterized as having one to three workers. The agency's service area is likely to include several small towns and villages. The rural social worker normally becomes the "agency". The personal visibility of the rural practitioner is so great that residents will quickly equate both his or her professional and personal behavior with the agency. This high degree of worker visibility may affect the credibility of the worker. It is therefore important that rural social workers understand the unique position of their agency within the rural community structure. Many times people in rural communities have a negative view of social service agencies. In urban areas there is much less personalizing of social services than in rural areas. In the rural community people know the clients of the agencies intimately and may have already formed the opinion that they are "lazy" or "immoral". This feeling can be generalized to the agency. Rural agencies and social workers continually have to conduct themselves in ways that will develop trust with the local residents. The agency must, according to the authors, not be viewed as an intrusion on the independence of the community, but as a means of assisting the community to fulfill its own goals and responsibilities

Farley *et al* (1982:194-196) mention that the small rural agency is ill equipped to meet the demands of rapid-growth rural communities. Agencies are normally understaffed, underfunded, and are not prepared to meet the increased caseloads. The combination of lack of social service infrastructure and dramatically increased social problems will challenge the small rural agency staff. Rural social workers need to plan carefully to allow themselves time for planning and prevention activities. Care must also be taken to prevent burnout in

agency staff members who are faced with continual crises situations. Rural social workers can assist the agency to fulfill its obligation to rural residents by being aware of attributes which can contribute to the agency's success. The authors describe two groups of attributes which will facilitate effective agency functioning, namely operational and attitudinal attributes. These attributes will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

2.5.1 Operational Attributes

Farley *et al* (1982:196) mention that strong leadership is a basic pre-requisite for a successful agency. The person who is chosen to direct a rural agency needs to have the ability to conceptualize, articulate, and implement the goals and objectives of the agency. In addition, a strong leader must be able to think and plan ahead realistically, set priorities, make decisions, use and delegate authority constructively, and communicate effectively with others. Cronje (1993:380) and Skidmore (1983:147) have stressed the importance of leadership qualities such as persistence, effective use of time, an ability to compromise, a caring attitude and creativity. It is very important for the social worker in a management position to have self-management skills, clear personal values and goals, adequate problem solving skills, trainer capability and team building skills.

A second important operational attribute is, according to Farley *et al* (1982:197) a strong management committee. Rural agencies need the support and guidance of a strong committee who are knowledgeable about and interested in the work of the agency. The work of the agency can be seen as part of the communities' effort to care for its residents if the committee is functioning properly. The committee members should know as much as possible about the operation of the agency and be able to disseminate the information in the community. The active committee will also assist the agency in policy and funding decisions.

Rural communities have an informal power structure or leaders who operate unofficially but many times with greater power than elected officials. These leaders reflect local values and may play an important role in determining how money is spent and the support the community will give new programmes. Farley *et al* (1982:197), and Webster & Campbell (1977:6) claim that strong support of, and liaison with community leaders are another important operational attribute. Rural social workers must therefore identify, and work continually with the informal power structure of the community if they expect to receive their support. It is further important to inform the local government officials and funding sources about the total agency operation. Since relationships in rural communities are more informal and personalized, many inexperienced social workers tend to neglect the political structure and do not receive the support they need to run an effective agency.

Rural agencies need continual public information and effective communication efforts. According to Skidmore (1983:195) social workers need to be aware of the importance of public relations in regard to both their own agency and its services, and the community as a whole. Many of the problems that social agencies have in rural areas stem from the fact that local citizens do not understand what the agency is trying to accomplish and how it manages its day-to-day operation. Efforts should be made to educate people in the community about the agency. Aspects of effective communication, especially in a rural community, are the recognition and understanding of the multi-cultural composition of the society. Austin (1981:29) describes culture as a system of beliefs, values and traditions that exerts a major influence on the behavior of each person. Cultural orientations often influence the acceptance and interpretation of facts. The social worker's role as a facilitator place a considerable responsibility on him\her for bridging communication gaps by broadening his\her bases of understanding in order to communicate effectively with people whose cultural background is different from his\her own.

A strong intra-agency support system is mentioned by Farley et al (1982:197) as a fifth important operational attribute. The staff of rural agencies is often faced with a wide range of human problems spread across large geographical areas. Often the social worker is the only professional in the area so the burdens of the entire community may be placed on him or her. The task can be overwhelming and burnout is an ever-present phenomenon. The agency needs to have a renewal system built into it for in-service training. Midgley (1990:298) is also of the opinion that the use of informal support networks in service delivery reduce costs, and enhance the effectiveness of intervention.

2.5.2 Attitudinal Attributes

Respecting the community value base is the first attitudinal attribute mentioned by Farley et al (1982:198). Agency personnel must be very sensitive and able to respect the community value base. Some of the most successful social agencies in rural areas are those that are administered by and consist of workers who are indigenous to their area. These social workers hold the same value base as the community and the local citizens generally support the agency. If the agency has personnel from outside the area, these social workers have to work hard to understand the community. The workers and the social agencies who are most effective in rural areas are those who anticipate with the community, suggest to the community, and then wait for the community to give them the new direction. It is important for personnel in rural agencies to be able to work within the structure of the community.

Farley et al (1982:199) stress that continually reaffirming high standards of professional practice is a second important attitudinal attribute. Because the rural social agency is so visible, professionalism must pervade the atmosphere. The issue of confidentiality is

particularly crucial. Everyone knows who is coming to the agency and there is a great tendency to ask agency personnel about their work. Once the confidentiality of the agency is undermined, the agency immediately loses its value to the community. The entire agency must exemplify the social work principle of individualizing and respecting the rights and dignity of every human being. Effort and energy need to be expended to ensure that clients are treated in a professional manner in every way. If clients are treated professionally, the community will be aware of it, will respect the agency, and give it sanction to carry out its functions.

2.6 THE RURAL SOCIAL WORKER

The social worker in rural areas functions ideally as a generalist who is knowledgeable about a variety of practice methods and who possesses skills in working with individuals, groups and communities. The social worker is often one of the few helping persons found in the rural community, and they are thus expected to fill a variety of roles. It is therefore important to look at the roles that are most frequently played by the rural social worker, and some of the characteristics of effective rural social workers.

2.6.1 Direct Service Role

Farley *et al* (1982:45) explain that it is essential that every social worker in the rural community identify him or herself as a social worker and assume a responsibility to define the social work profession and its role in the community. This will require every rural social worker to have a knowledge of the direct service role, a respect for its value, and a sense of responsibility to see that clients receive accurate information about the social work potential for assisting and then assure that such resources are made available to prospective clients. It is also essential that the specific social work role for which he or she is employed be clearly defined, visible to the community, and performed efficiently and effectively to assure credibility for him or herself as a social worker as well as to the total profession. It is important that the social worker's roles convey to the community that direct services include work with individuals, families, groups, and the entire community, and that social work involves activities related to enrichment of social functions, prevention of dysfunction, as well as treatment of dysfunctional behavior. The social worker must conscientiously seek to establish with the community that social work is a valuable resource for every community member.

Direct practitioners have further, according to Hepworth & Larsen (1990:27) opportunities to improve or to expand agency services based on assessment of unmet client needs, gaps in services, needs for preventive services, and findings of research studies that indicate more promising results achieved by interventions other than those currently employed. Roles that

relate to system development include those of programme developer, planner, policy and procedure developer. It is important to note that in rural areas direct practitioners often participate in policy development and planning concerned with the needs of a broad community rather than the needs of a circumscribed target group. These roles are usually played in concert with community leaders.

2.6.2 Organizer

Omer (1977:132) and Siporin (1975:38) consider one of the social worker's primary roles as that of an organizer: one who is able to help individuals, groups, and communities to come together to think, discuss, debate, determine value and policies, plan, administer, implement and advocate. The social worker's primary objective is not to fulfill all these functions alone, but to help the community to identify the issues, problems, and needs and then to determine the line of action, based on the community's values and resources - financial and otherwise. The social worker's primary responsibility is to work with the formal and informal leadership, and with existing organizations to help them realize that through joint deliberation and action something can be done about their needs and problems. The social worker acts to establish bridges between people, and to build a viable, functioning community with which people can identify and in which they can attain communal selves, create affectional bonds of neighbourhood and solidarity with others.

2.6.3 Educator

To fill the previous role adequately, the social worker also has to assume the role of an educator. Farley *et al* (1982:53) and Omer (1977:132) suggest that the social worker must educate the community by word and action about the role of the social worker in the broader dimensions than previously experienced, expanding and extending what may have been a narrow and restrictive public image of social work. The term educator is used in a very broad sense, and it does not imply that the community people are dumb or illiterate. The emphasis is on the fact that the issues and problems that one has to deal with are complex, interrelated, and need an interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial approach. All community members may not be able to have this broad-based knowledge to make a sound decision. The social worker may also not have the requisite knowledge and expertise but is expected to be able to tap the resources from which such knowledge can be derived.

2.6.4 Resource Specialist

Farley *et al* (1982:46,204) and Webster & Campbell (1977:7) note that rural areas often have a small number of professionals, a lack of private agencies and an insufficient local funding bases. One of the most difficult and most challenging roles which the rural social

worker must assume is therefore that of assisting in the optimal utilization of the limited resources available in many rural areas. It requires imagination and creativity to put resources together in a different configuration in order for them to serve human needs effectively. It requires a patient and continual effort to keep focused upon how social workers can meet client needs and avoid the defensive stances that often appear when there is an overlap of service interest and activity with certain needy persons in the small rural community. It also requires an attitude of willingness to let others share in working with the client. The worker must be open and candid with clients, helping them understand that the worker is in some cases making referrals for services which the worker could provide. The worker must recognize with clients that the referral makes it possible for the worker to use freed-up time in providing help to those in the community for whom no outside resource is available. The worker must further help clients to see outside sources of help as a right that it is available.

It is impossible for the rural social worker to meet all the community needs alone. It is therefore extremely important to use the often untapped local human resources in the implementation of programmes. Katan & Nghatsane (1986:636,640) explain that indigenous workers are a valuable resource as these workers possess insights into values, beliefs, morals, customs and terminological cues of the community. They will therefore be more capable of communicating in the language of service users, and consequently be more effective in the delivery of services. The indigenous workers might interpret the policy and rules of the agency to the client system on the one hand, while informing the agency about the real needs, expectations, and preferences of the clientele on the other. Indigenous workers can also be employed as social auxiliary workers. Social auxiliary workers are according to Lombard & Pruis (1994:259-261) members of the social work team who are specifically trained, are registered as such with the South African Council for Social Work, and work under the guidance of the social worker, and are paid employees of the organization. The use of auxiliary workers can enable the social worker to concentrate on tasks requiring a higher level of specialization. The auxiliary worker's task will be mainly of a social care nature. This implies that the auxiliary worker will concentrate on assisting the social worker to promote the social well-being of the client system by helping to meet their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and security. The use and training of community members as social auxiliary workers, and the use of indigenous workers may help to open new employment opportunities for poor and unemployed people, overcome the manpower shortages that limit the activities of the rural agency, and make the rural agency more meaningful and responsive to basic human needs.

2.6.5 Facilitator of Interdisciplinary Cooperation

According to Farley *et al* (1982:49) the rural social worker often finds himself in the role of the facilitator of task groups and their functions. Members of such groups often have competing values and conflicts frequently arise as a result of the interaction. As an expert in human relations, the social worker has a special role in and contribution to make to the resolution of these conflicts. The use of human relationship skills in facilitating the functioning of groups also extends to agency staff. The rural social worker who may often come from a clinical background will find him-/herself needing to assume these task-group functions which might more appropriately be assumed by a social worker with greater administrative and planning experience. Every social worker in rural practice should, however, know and be comfortable with the fact that he/she does have a particular expertise in managing human relationships. Such expertise is a basic part of social work training. Rural practice will require routine application of this skill and knowledge as a part of the direct-service practice delivery role.

The rural social worker will not only work with interdisciplinary and intra-professional teams, but also with indigenous helper teams. Compton & Galaway (1989:605-607) explain that the social worker will work with indigenous helper teams within the agency, such as child care workers and foster parents, and also with self-help groups. Working with these teams may be difficult for the social worker as it involves the sharing of power and authority often vested with the social worker, with other team members. The recognition of joint and differing expertise, an openness to a variety of suggestions and input, recognition that differences must be resolved through negotiation rather than arbitrary decision making by the social worker, and an expectation of responsible behavior from all team members are important principles in working cooperatively with indigenous helper teams.

2.6.6 Mediator/Arbitrator

Hepworth & Larsen (1990:25) state that occasionally breakdowns occur between clients and service providers and that clients then do not receive needed services to which they are entitled. In such instances social workers may serve as mediators with the goal of eliminating obstacles to service delivery. It is important that the social worker shall act as a mediator when people find it difficult to negotiate.

2.6.7 Advocate

Advocating for a client represents, according to Austin (1981:23) and Farley *et al*, (1982:49-50) another worker role in getting the services to people in need. The knowledge and skill requirements include the techniques of persuading and pressuring, using current information on the legal rights of clients, recognizing and promoting human rights, and

acquiring the relevant attitudes necessary for effective advocacy. Experience in rural communities suggests the need for awareness, understanding, sensitivity, and special skills for shaping the advocacy role of the rural social worker. Successful advocacy in the rural community requires a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the varied value base of community members and thoughtful tailoring of the position being advocated to recognize and accommodate the variety of opinions and differences that will exist in that community to the highest degree possible. The rural social worker must therefore have a clear idea of the power structure of the community and determine how to use it as a sounding board to assist in tempering and modifying the advocacy position, as well as receiving support for the finalized position. The advocacy role in rural communities requires a patient, persistent, and prolonged educational effort.

2.6.8 Ombudsman

Farley *et al* (1982:50) suggest that the role of ombudsman is closely related to the role of advocate. The rural social worker is never free of the responsibility for finding effective ways to sell social work and to sell the programmes in which social workers are involved. The existence of the social worker in many of the new programmes with which he or she is associated represents a change in the status quo in many rural communities. Rugged individualism and "do-it yourself" philosophy require a conscientious and careful ombudsman role. Nothing should be done to hinder the individual or communities from going as far as they can in continuing to meet their own needs, but everything possible should be done to help them define the needs clearly and to consider other approaches to meeting those needs. The same authors (1982:51) warn that one of the greatest stumbling blocks to being effective ombudsmen is the social work vocabulary or jargon. Social workers must work with great care and consideration to find words and phrases and to find analogies in the rural world which will allow them to present their position in more understandable and acceptable ways.

According to Farley *et al* (1982:52) another dimension of the ombudsman role is the continual requirement to assist client populations who are recipients of service to be in compliance with the policies and procedures of the agency. Since what service clients receive from an agency and how they receive it is so visible in the rural community, there is an even greater demand upon the social worker to be clear and accurate in his/her interpretation of policy. It is important for the worker to resolve his/her own feelings about that policy in order that he/she may present it comfortably and administer it conscientiously. This does not imply that the social worker is not engaged in trying to strengthen or to change policy and programme to meet client needs more effectively, but it does mean that he/she must be absolutely honest and accurate in doing whatever the

programme allows.

2.6.9 Administrative Assistant

Since rural social work service resources are generally in short supply, it is essential that the social worker assume the responsibility for the careful and conscientious utilization of financial and human resources. Farley *et al.* (1982:53) mention that the rural social worker requires a knowledge and awareness of agency finances and policy in order to make appropriate interpretations to those who may question it. All rural social workers must be alert and on the lookout for alternative sources of funding and support and not assume that the responsibilities for raising funds and generating new sources of support are viewed as the total responsibility of the management committee.

2.6.10 Friend and Confidant

According to Farley *et al.* (1982:59-60) the rural social worker is a visible, involved member of the rural community. In the rural setting, many traditional boundaries which have separated professions and which separate the professional from his/her community are broken down. The social worker becomes a good friend both on and off the job with many members of the community as he/she engages in social, recreational, service and religious activities with them. The trust and comfort developed in outside activities often serve as a means of breaking down barriers and allowing people to approach the social worker with personal problems and difficulties which require his/hers professional competencies. Successful rural practice is enhanced in this regard by the social worker's genuineness, openness, comfort in relating to people as human being to human being in whatever situation in which they find themselves. The rural social worker's effectiveness increases with the comfortable ability to relate to individuals as a professional friend.

It is also stressed (Farley *et al.* 1982:60) that trust and confidence in the rural social worker requires a unique and special understanding, consideration, and work with clients in the area of confidentiality. The social worker role must assume that of a confidant, as this is perhaps the most important of all the roles of the rural social worker.

2.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

According to Siporin (1975:182) many role responsibilities and forms of authority are delegated to the social worker, who thus serves as a representative and an accountable agent for the client, the employing agency, the community, and the social work profession. This means serving in several roles, at the same time or at different times, in the same case or programme. Gumbi (1992:14) suggests that the effective rural social worker should be equipped with a basic understanding of professional knowledge, expertise, attitudes, and

communities. It is further important to have an understanding of most of the key socio-political and economic problems facing rural communities, and an understanding of the social variables that condition the behavior of rural organizations. The rural social worker must be acquainted with the forces and variables with which he/she must deal with, in designing meaningful strategies for social change at personal, organizational and community level.

Gumbi (1992:15), and the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta (Gingsberg, 1976:13-14) declare that the effective rural social worker has a liking for, and an ability to participate creatively in an interdisciplinary group process. The rural social worker should be skillful in working with a variety of helping persons who are not social workers, or who may not be related to the profession of social work, as well as with peers and colleagues.

Another characteristic of the effective rural social worker is according to Gingsberg (1976:13-14) and Gumbi (1992:15) the ability to utilize knowledge of the customs, traditions, heritage and contemporary culture of the rural people with whom they are working. Services should be provided with a special awareness and sensitivity to the customs and traditions of the community. A sensitivity in individual, group and community relations, tact and good judgement are also necessary. The worker should further have the ability to understand and accept that conflict is a normal aspect of group relations, democracy and social growth.

Gumbi, (1992:15) and the Southern Regional Education Board (Gingsberg, 1976:13-14) suggest that effective rural social workers are able to identify and mobilize a broad range of resources which are applicable to problem resolution in rural areas. These include existing and potential resources on the local and regional levels. They are able to assist communities in developing new resources or ways in which already existing resources may be better or more fully utilized to benefit the community. Imagination, inventiveness, resourcefulness and the capacity to plan creatively are therefore important characteristics of the rural social worker.

The importance of the social worker's ability to have a perceptiveness towards change, decisiveness, determination and self confidence are stressed by Gingsberg (1976:13-14), and Gumbi (1992:14-15). The worker must be able to identify and analyze the strengths and/or shortcomings in social policies as they affect the needs of people in rural communities. The worker must be able to accept their professional responsibility to develop appropriate measures to promote more responsiveness to the needs of people in rural areas from governmental and non-governmental organizations. Effective rural social workers are able to identify with, and practice in accordance with the values of the profession. They also grow in their ability and effectiveness as professional social workers in situations and

settings where they may be the only professional social worker. The ability to work under pressure is a further important characteristic.

Effective rural social workers are able to practice as generalist, carrying out a wide range of roles, to solve a wide range of problems of individuals, groups, and the community. Martinez-Brawley (1982:89-90) declares that the rural generalist is a worker who will utilize knowledge and understanding of the rural reality in political ways, to ensure that rural clientele gets its rightful share of resources.

Gingsberg (1976:9) and The Southern Regional Education Board (Gingsberg, 1976:14) conclude that effective rural social workers are able to communicate and interact appropriately with people in the rural community, and adapt their personal life style to the professional tasks to be done. Furthermore, the effective rural social worker is self-motivated and self-directed. Rural practice is often on a smaller scale than urban practice, the structure of supervision, colleague consultation, and professional organization stimulation are often unavailable to the worker. Therefore, the worker must often depend on his/her own resources, infrequent workshops or regional meetings. The rural worker must be prepared to assume responsibility for his/her work, and it is probably useful if the rural worker enjoys reading, because much of the professional stimulation may come from literature, rather than from the suggestions of supervisors and colleagues. Finally, the rural social worker must be able to evaluate his/her own performance, and constantly be aware of learning needs that could be addressed through a continuing education programme.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher focussed on the characteristics of rural areas, rural social work, the rural agency and the contribution of the social worker in rural areas. From the theory it was clear that the social worker who practices in rural areas encounters unique problems, such as the lack of resources and services, geographic and personnel isolation, the fact that many activities are voluntary and depend on the good will and interest of their supporters, rather than upon professional staff, and the complexity of a smaller scale of living. Rural people suffer from educational, economic, health, housing and other deprivations.

The rural agency is unique in the social welfare system because it is small and has a direct linkage with the community it serves. The successful rural agency requires both operational and attitudinal attributes. The operational attributes include: strong leadership, strong management, support of community leaders, effective communication and strong intra-agency support. Attitudinal attributes include: respecting the community value base and continually reaffirming the high standards of professional practice. Rural agencies will

continue to play an important role in the delivery of services to rural areas.

There is a basic social work methodology that prepares social workers for work in either urban or rural areas, but specialists in rural social work agree that rural social workers should function as generalists, possessing knowledge and skills in a variety of practice methodologies, and being able to work effectively with individuals, groups and communities. The social worker must also be particularly skillful in management, and administration. The rural social worker must also be capable of working with and through the established institutions of the community. It is also important that the rural social worker understand, and demonstrate competence in various professional roles. These roles include: direct service, organizer, educator, resource specialist, facilitator of interdisciplinary co-operation, advocate, ombudsman, administrative assistant, friend and confidant.

The rural social worker must recognize that practice in the small community is often lonely. Rural social workers must be able to function in the absence of supervision, and the support of colleagues. The rural social worker must remain aware of the concepts of sound practice and the precepts of social work ethics and stay alert to his successes and errors. It is therefore important that the rural social workers accept responsibility for their own professional development, so that they will have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to render an effective service.

In chapter three the focuss will be on the personal and professional development of social workers, with specific reference to the rural social worker's own responsibility in this regard.

CHAPTER 3

THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work is a difficult, demanding and a contemporary discipline. Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi (1988:57) declare that the very nature of helping people interact more effectively with their environments requires that the social worker be in tune with the world. A social worker cannot be empathic and creative in working with a wide range of clients while holding a narrow and uninformed view of life. The social worker must continuously seek growth and development both professionally and personally. To become a knowledgeable and skillful social worker, who is deeply committed to social work values, is according to the authors (Sheafor, et al, 1988:150) a lifelong endeavor.

Goldstein (1974:15-16) points out that a viable knowledge of and identification with the essential values, principles and sanctions of the profession will ensure the probability that modes of practice will complement the purposes and objectives of the profession. In addition, professional identity carries with it the responsibility and the ability to critically evaluate whether the intent and structure of the profession is consonant with the profession's place in society in response to changing social needs and problems. Goldstein (1974:17) also stresses the importance of the personality of the social worker. It is the composite of values, life experiences, exposure to particular events, literature, relationships and the like which, when expressed in the personal style of the worker, provide the colorations, sentiments, and features of a distinctive practice. Competent practice will express the unique style of the social worker - notably, professional behavior that is spontaneous rather than ritualized, an authentic responsiveness to the human condition, and a blending of professional skill with professional attributes. Who the social worker is, then is as significant as what he/she knows and what he/she does.

Siporin (1975:344-347) notes that social work and other professions are required to be more directly accountable to the users and consumers of their services, while also being accountable to the general public, the supportive community, the academic and helping professional communities, and the employing agency. Social work services should meet the standards of scientific, professional, ethical competence, and also be efficient and effective in their results.

In view of the above, the demands and special characteristics of rural social work, and the

rapid growth and change in the knowledge relevant to social work, continuous professional development is essential in order to render the most effective and efficient service to clients. In this chapter the focus will be on the knowledge and skills of the social worker, with special reference to personal and professional development.

3.2 SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE

Siporin (1975:93) explains that social work knowledge is knowledge that is known, or needs to be known by social workers for their use in effective social work practice. It is essentially knowledge about the world, man, and society. Such knowledge is selected, developed, and applied because it is believed that it can help achieve social work purposes and realize social work functions. The formulation of such knowledge is guided by social work values, and by feedback from practice experience and research.

3.2.1 Informal Knowledge

Social work has placed according to Johnson (1989:48-49) increasing emphasis on knowledge that is scientific as opposed to beliefs in unconfirmed ideas. Social work knowledge is what is known about people and their social systems. It is relative to the situation in which it was developed, it is descriptive of the phenomena of persons in situations, and it explains the functioning of people in their social systems. It is used to gain understanding of persons in situations and of larger social systems, and to guide the actions of social workers as they seek to enhance people's social functioning. It includes knowledge of human development, human diversity, and social systems. According to Siporin (1975:94) relevant and applicable knowledge about these systems in terms of their task functions, structural development, maturation, mal-development or immaturity, well-functioning or dysfunctioning is included. It contains knowledge about the self-corrective, natural, problem-solving, and adaptive change processes, particularly those that take place between individuals and their social systems. Also included are theories about the social welfare institution, about welfare laws, policies, and legislative processes and legal rights, benefits, and obligations of people and organizations in regard to social welfare arrangements and services. Here also is information about social welfare agencies, their development and administration, their policies and operating procedures, their coordination in providing needed services to individuals or service systems to communities.

Siporin (1975:95) notes that it is helpful to distinguish this kind of foundation knowledge from that of social work practice theory. This is concerned with planned intervention and change activities in regard to personality and social systems. It deals with what social workers do in interacting with and helping clients with their social problems. Other distinguishing content of social work knowledge is in the concepts and aspects of natural

and planned helping processes. There is, for example, a focus on helping to modify or strengthen the social identities, role behavior and functioning, and social relationships of people within their life situations, and to do so through the use of situational interventions. Siporin (1975:96) continues that a particular concern of social workers is to understand and hold on to gestalts and configurations and wholes of systems while working with their parts, or subsystems, so that they all operate well together.

3.2.2 A Broad Liberal Arts Base

Social work knowledge is by its very nature interdisciplinary. Johnson (1989:49) and Siporin (1975:91) mention that social work has sought much of its knowledge from the foundation sciences, particularly psychology and sociology, though some is borrowed from political science, economics, history, as well as from the natural sciences of biology and physiology. McKendrick (1990b:245) confirms that it is necessary for social work to incorporate in its knowledge base for example economics, development theory, social anthropology and African studies, as social work in a post-apartheid South Africa is likely to differ from what it was before.

Johnson (1989:51) agrees that a broad knowledge base should include a broad liberal arts base. This includes a knowledge of social sciences (sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, political science and economics) to provide explanations about the nature of human society and the human condition. Study of the natural sciences provides tools for scientific thinking and an understanding of the physical aspects of the human condition. Study of the humanities aids in the development of the creative and critical thought processes; it provides an understanding of the nature of the human condition through the examination of creative endeavors and of the cultures of human society. A social worker is a person with a developed and expanded personal capacity gained by exposure to a broad liberal educational experience.

3.2.3 Knowledge of Persons, Their Interactions and Social Situations

According to Johnson (1989:51) the social work knowledge base should include a sound foundation knowledge about people, their interactions, and the social situation within which they function. This includes knowledge about people from emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and development points of view. Such knowledge must consider the diversity of the human condition and the effect of diversity on functioning and development. An in depth understanding of human interaction is also essential. This includes knowledge on one-to-one relationships, family relationships, small group relationships and an understanding of the societal organizations and institutions that are a part of contemporary society and of the social problems that affect human functioning. McKendrick (1990:247) agrees that social

workers need to develop a critical, analytical approach and an ability to link individual social problems with circumstances in the larger society. In a post-apartheid developing South Africa, the needs of development are likely to predicate a focus on large-scale improvement in the quality of life, and this will force social workers to go beyond micro-adjustment to issues of macro-causation.

Banerjee (1975:311) also stresses the importance of the social worker's ability to explore scientifically the causative factors and to attack problems at the root. A dynamic social worker whose commitment to the profession is deep and genuine would not remain content with carrying out the routines of the job. Work without vision is mere drudgery, and vision without work is wasteful idleness. The professional social worker is expected to combine scientific vision with constructive work. He/she needs to give support to the attack on the causative factors of the various social problems.

Cronje (1994:250) says that due to the changes in the South African society knowledge about the values, norms, traditions and behavior patterns of the different cultures and ethnic groups is more readily available than in the apartheid era. Knowledge of the various ethnic groups, and a knowledge awareness of all the forces of change will be necessary to manage the change process in South Africa, and to develop a legitimate and generally accepted welfare system will.

3.2.4 Knowledge of Practice Theory

Johnson (1989:51) mentions the importance of practice theory, with concern for the nature of helping interactions, of the process of helping, and of a variety of intervention strategies appropriate for a variety of situations and systems. The social worker needs specialized knowledge to work with particular groups of clients and, in particular situations. The choice of knowledge each worker includes in this area is dependent on the practice situation and on the worker's career aspirations.

According to Siporin (1975:96) the body of knowledge that is used by social workers is first of all a professional knowledge. Goode, as cited in Siporin (1975:96-97) says that the knowledge is formulated at a theoretical, abstract level and organized into principles. It is applicable to problems of living and considered by society to be potent for problem solving. Furthermore, it is a basis for society turning over to a profession certain problems for problem solving. It is so recognized by society that disputes over the validity of solutions about these problems are turned over to the profession to be settled by it as a final arbiter. Goode's criteria help us to recognize that the professional knowledge of social work derives from the profession's common model of practice, its definition of its scientific knowledge base as interrelated with its value system, its practice theory, and its intervention repertoire.

Mastery of this professional knowledge therefore gives to the practitioner a professional as well as societal sanction and authority.

There is sometimes an assumption that social work knowledge is mostly practice wisdom and therefore a subjective knowledge. Siporin (1975:99) stresses that it is important to recognize that social workers have much objective, factual knowledge, and they seek continuously to extend it. The personal, tacit understanding so highly valued by social workers is, or is capable of being, as objective as scientifically tested theories and as close to the truth of actuality.

From the above it is clear that social work is complex, requiring a breadth of knowledge in various disciplines as well as a depth necessary for more than superficial understanding. Compton & Galaway (1979:38) and Johnson (1989:50) therefore stress the importance of the social worker's ability to evaluate the knowledge available, to use judgement in the choice of knowledge to apply to specific situations, to organize the knowledge, and to keep an open mind as to the tentativeness of the knowledge base, and the knowledge about the client in the situation. For knowledge to be of value, it must not only be generalized and systematic, but it must be available for use in unique human situations, congruent with the central values of the profession. It is therefore important that the social worker will be able to think theoretically, systematically, critically, and creatively.

These skills are particularly important as the social work knowledge is according to Compton & Galaway (1989:111), often not very well related or integrated. Some of the knowledge is supported by empirical evidence, and some of it is assumptive and supported, if at all, by only the roughest of evidence. Sometimes knowledge and values are all mixed up and yet, there never seems to be the appropriate inter-relationships between bits of knowledge. Compton & Galaway (1989:111) continue to say that the amount of knowledge needed is so great and some of it is so uncertain that social workers are faced with the uncomfortable fact that they are constantly intervening in people's lives on the basis of incomplete knowledge. However, cognizance must also be taken of Compton & Galaway (1979:38) well known statement that the skills of a professional social worker are always based upon a fund of knowledge that has been organized into an internally consistent body of theory, and that this theory plus values and ethics then directs the differential application of skill. The skills that are used in a profession are therefore not directed by a set of rules, but by the practitioner's theoretical knowledge and their judgment in selecting from among the available theories one that is appropriate to the problem to be solved. Sheafor *et al* (1988:57-58) support this view and stress that clients are not well served unless the social worker brings the latest and most appropriate knowledge to the helping process.

Compton & Galaway (1989:112) warn that some social workers handle their incomplete

knowledge by trying to forget what they do not know, and they become dogmatic people, certain of their own knowledge, but unable to grow because one cannot learn if one already knows. Other social workers try to handle their lack of knowledge by emphasizing what they do not know, and how helpless they are. They often run around looking for authorities while their clients suffer from the lack of a secure helper. The authors (Compton & Galaway, 1989:112) also warn against social workers who try to handle their incomplete knowledge by blaming the profession for their discomfort. They then find themselves in the bind of representing a profession in which they have no confidence, and with which they have no identification. Such social workers have neither read, nor considered enough literature of other professions to understand that all professions are woefully lacking in knowledge of human beings and their interaction. The authors (Compton & Galaway, 1989:112) conclude that these workers never come to grips with their need to know.

In compiling a professional profile of the social worker, the Committee on Professional Questions Regarding Social Work (1987:33-35) summarizes the knowledge base of a social worker as follows:

- 1 "Knowledge of and insight into the position and the role of social work in society.
- 2 Knowledge of social-scientific theories that deal with opinions about the human behavior.
- 3 Knowledge of and insight into the economic and social structure of society.
- 4 Legal knowledge. Knowledge of existing laws and regulations related to assistance.
- 5 Knowledge of the various ideologies and cultures.
- 6 Knowledge of language and communication.
- 7 Knowledge of theories about conflicts and ways of dealing with conflicts.
- 8 Knowledge of theories about assistance, assistance processes and the methods based on them.
- 9 Knowledge of the social map, which means knowledge of the content and ways of working with existing facilities.
- 10 Knowledge of and insight into the position and problems of clients and client groups.
- 11 Knowledge in the field of organization and policy regarding the welfare organization, and other assisting institutions.
- 12 Knowledge on behalf of research-, report-, and signalling activities."

3.2.5 Improving the Knowledge Base

Professional practice is essentially cognitive. Bartlett as cited in Sheafor *et al* (1988:58) explains that it is through the conscious action of the social worker, who selects what is relevant for the particular situation before him/her, that the appropriate knowledge and values become integrated with the intervention. The social worker must therefore regularly ask what knowledge he/she can bring to each situation. Knowledge derived from life and practice experiences are valuable, but the social worker should also seek out and provide the most advanced theoretical knowledge and most fully tested knowledge available. The effective social worker must according to Compton & Galaway (1979:50), and Sheafor *et al* (1988:58) consciously build on existing knowledge and add to that knowledge base when possible. The demand that social workers act on uncertain knowledge goes along with being a helping person in complex, everchanging situations. Social workers must commit themselves to becoming active learners all the time. Social workers should be insistent questioners, rather than passive takers. They should remain identified with the profession, while vigorously questioning it.

Compton & Galaway (1979:45) warn that unless social workers are constantly alert, they will find themselves defining present problems in the light of yesterday's knowledge base. As the needs and demands of practice change, the appropriate knowledge base changes; and as the knowledge base changes, grows, and develops, the functions and the value system of the profession also change. The constantly changing functions of social work as dictated by the constantly changing and developing society, and the constantly expanding knowledge of mankind in interaction with social institutions and the physical world, demand a constantly expanding, reorganized and reformulated knowledge base so that social workers will need to be active learners for their entire professional lives. This view is further supported by Botha (1993:4) who says that it is the social worker's ongoing responsibility to identify, develop and fully utilise knowledge for professional practice, by basing their practice on recognised knowledge relevant to social work, and by continually contributing to the knowledge base of social work and sharing research knowledge with colleagues.

3.3 KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

Various authors (Banerjee, 1975; Brammer, 1979; Johnson, 1989; Siporin, 1975) have said that the most important tool a social worker possesses is him- or herself. In order to use this tool skillfully and knowledgeably, the worker must have considerable self-knowledge, and self-awareness of preferences, prejudices, strengths, and limitations. According to Siporin (1975:78) self-awareness and self-knowledge are necessary to guide helping behavior. It enables the use of one's own reactions to attain and maintain objectivity; to protect the client's integrity and avoid manipulation or indoctrination of the client; to use oneself in a

disciplined, purposeful, trustworthy way to meet the client's specific needs. It enables one to gain accurate feedback about one's performance and make possible necessary corrective action. Self-awareness also is a necessary condition for self-acceptance and self-criticism needed by the helper, the emotional neutrality and impartiality, empathy, and particularly self-disclosure that are essential to effective helping relationships and processes.

Sheafor *et al* (1988:55) stress that the ability to build and sustain productive helping relationships is a basic part of social work practice. Whether working with an individual, group or community the worker must be able to separate professional and personal motives. This self-awareness requires a continuing openness to evaluation and self-criticism. In order to prepare for this conscious use of the self, the social worker must not only develop a non-defensive stance about practice behaviors, but must also keep physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually prepared to use self as a positive instrument of change. According to Johnson (1989:103) the social worker develops this self-knowledge in a variety of ways. The process of supervision, or discussion of practice situations and problems with peers has always been an important means of developing self-knowledge. This is supported by Barette (1968:86) who says that supervised learning provides the key to the growth of the professional personality. A skill is often best learned from a person who already adept it.

Austin, Skelding & Smith (1977:45) claim that the key to beginning the process of self-understanding is accepting and recognizing that what you are will affect what you can do. Understanding yourself involves getting in touch with your feelings, attitudes, values, goals, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes and ways of behaving. According to Johnson (1989:104) social workers can also develop this self-understanding through the study of human behavior. Since as a person the worker is part of the human race, psychological, sociological, anthropological, and biological knowledge that explains human functioning is the source of considerable self-understanding. Social work students sometimes believe that the dysfunctional situations they are studying are operational in their own functioning. If this is realistic, it can be very helpful to self-understanding. However, care needs to be taken not to become overly introspective and to assume dysfunctioning that is not realistic. A balance needs to be reached so that introspection is sufficient to gain the needed self-knowledge but not so much as to become overwhelming. Self-knowledge cannot be developed all at once, it needs to grow over a period of time. It is also important to learn to deal with the recognition of imperfection in the self in a manner that supports one's own self-worth and dignity. A useful way for the beginning social worker to develop self-knowledge is to conduct an organized self-study. This would entail thinking about one's life experiences, personal needs, and personal functioning.

3.3.1 Moral Code and Value System

Johnson (1989:107) notes that people often operate from moral codes and value systems of which they are only partly aware. Sometimes persons' various beliefs are in contradiction to one another, and sometimes a person is not aware of the priorities of his or her value system. The self-knowledge needed by the social worker calls for specification and understanding of his/her moral code and value system. The understanding needed includes identification of the source of the moral code and the values held, as well as recognition of priorities and the degree of flexibility possible regarding those priority issues.

3.3.2 Family Background

In discussing the importance of a person's roots, Johnson (1989:107-108) says that as a person thinks about life style, philosophy of life, moral code, and value system, the importance of his or her roots - cultural and family background - should become clear. Persons have different reactions to their roots. Some feel very comfortable continuing the traditions and life style of past generations; other reject all or part of that way of life. Many persons become confused and are uncertain about what should be continued and what should be rejected; others find a balance of using that part of their roots that is useful in their present life situation but also make adaptations and changes as needed to be functional in their present life situation. The search for one's roots, can be a lifelong journey. It can yield many fascinating facts. It can also open many wounds, and thus be painful. Most of all, it can lead to greater knowledge and understanding of the uniqueness of the self.

3.3.3 Life Experience

The study of one's roots yields some understanding of important experiences in shaping the person. Johnson (1989:108) explains that in addition to experiences within the family, other experiences are important to each person. These include educational experience - the experience of learning, the knowledge that has been learned in the educational experience, and attitudes toward learning. Other meaningful experiences include those with peers, and those in the person's community and neighborhood with people of different age, race, ethnic background, and with mental or physical handicaps. Experiences in organized group situations, in religious activities, and experiences related to illness, disability, poverty, or abundance of economic resources are also important. The identification of life experiences that have significant impact upon a person is yet another way of developing self-knowledge. It is helpful to evaluate how each of these significant life experiences relate to other life experiences and how they affect ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

3.3.4 Personal Need and Functioning

Another area of self-knowledge is according to Johnson (1989:108) the understanding of one's needs and how they are dealt with. This includes the personal needs that are related to common human needs, needs that arise because of human diversity, and needs that arise from relationships with social systems. Self-knowledge includes not only identification of one's life style, philosophy of life, moral code, value system, knowledge of roots, and understanding of personal needs; it also includes an understanding of how these affect one's day-to-day functioning. Johnson (1989:111) states that this involves identification of how one learns, how one shares self with others, how one responds to a variety of situations, and identification of one's biases and prejudices. How one feels about the self, and how this affects day-to-day functioning are also important. Self-knowledge includes understanding of how one meets personal needs, deals with freedom and restrictions, accepts change, both in one's self and in the environment, and how one views responsibility toward the social systems of which one is a part, and what one's role is in those systems.

According to Siporin (1975:183) there is a particular need for social workers to be self-confident, and self-accepting, aside from the common-sense recognition that such qualities help clients feel more self-confident and self-accepting. As a trained professional, the social worker gains a professional identity and self. There is much ego investment in this professional self and it is expected to be consciously placed in the service of the client. Polansky, as cited in Siporin (1975:183) suggests that the professional self is internalized and integrated so as to contribute to adequate work performance, to enable participant observation and self-awareness, yet make it possible to avoid over-investment of self in the work life or in personal over-identification with clients. The pressure for authenticity which is sometimes misinterpreted to require personal self-disclosure, and to associate client growth with personal self-growth for the helper, makes these kinds of tasks more difficult in the use of self with the client.

Johnson (1989:112) concludes that it is a lifelong journey toward self-knowledge and self-acceptance. It is also a journey that is necessary if the social worker wish to utilize the self skillfully and with maximum results.

3.4 SKILLS

Zastrow (1992:27) explains that one of the most serious issues facing social work education is to clearly articulate the skills needed for social work practice, and to spell out the relationship between specific skills and service outcome. There is a lack of agreement as to the core skills needed by social workers. There has been a number of efforts to articulate the essential skills for entry-level social work practice positions, and there are a number of

similarities between these conceptualizations. However, there is still not full agreement on the core skills.

Skills are according to Johnson (1989:58) the practice component that brings knowledge and values together and converts them to action as a response to concern and need. Morales & Sheafor (1986:228) give the following definition of social work skill: "Social work skill is the social worker's capacity to set in motion, in a relationship with the client (individual, group or community) guided psychosocial intervention processes of change based on social work values and knowledge in a specific situation relevant to the client." This is supported by Goldstein (1974:7) who says that the professional competence of social work is in the ability to responsibly and knowledgeably enter into and become a part of a complex system of human interaction to effect changes in existing patterns of cognition and behavior. This defines the concept of social intervention; literally: the social worker enters into a system, thereby consciously altering its previous state and balance as a means of attaining explicit goals.

Loewenberg (1977:159) claims that a social worker must be proficient in two general types of skill - adaptive and functional skills. Adaptive skills are the skills needed to adjust to the organizational and interpersonal environment of the social agency. This author describes the functional skills under five large categories:

- 1 Interviewing, observing, and writing
- 2 Intervention activities (such as providing practical help, advice, information, and direction clarification, referral and linkages, emotional support, negotiating and bargaining, advocacy, setting limits)
- 3 Engagement skills (such as structuring, focusing, bridging gaps, timing, judgment, setting the tone, eye contact, facial gestures, body language, space).
- 4 Assessment skills (such as collecting information, analyzing and interpreting information, making decisions about information, developing a contract, and preparing an assessment statement).
- 5 Communication skills.

From the literature, it is clear that the social worker should have a wide variety of assessment, methodical, social and administrative skills. In the following paragraphs a few of the important skills will be discussed.

3.4.1 Skills in Problem-solving and Linking People with Resources

Authors such as Baer & Federico (1978:87), Compton & Galaway (1989:11), and Pincus &

Minahan (1973:15) agree that the social worker should be able to help people enhance and more effectively utilize their own problem-solving and coping capacities. Furthermore the social worker should link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities. This is a particularly important skill, as community resources are usually very scarce and inadequate, especially in rural areas. Siporin (1975:318) says this scarcity is compounded by endemic difficulties and inefficiencies, by fragmentation and disorganization in service delivery, and by lacks in manpower and funds.

According to Bernstein (1993:274) the social worker should be skillful in mediating between systems, ensuring that social resources are more equitably distributed. The social worker should focus on participation, and thus the empowerment of all parties in the process. The social worker should try to co-ordinate what resources there are, to increase the power of clients to make public organizations and institutions more responsive to their needs and to involve communities and people in communities in the process of developing new and needed resources. Challenging people's view of themselves as powerless becomes part of the social worker's role. The social worker should have a sense of what it means to use power and must be skillful in communicating this to the clients.

3.4.2 Skills in Intervening on Behalf of Populations Most Vulnerable

Van Wyk (1993:i) stresses the importance of primary social services. All human beings should have their basic needs met. Policies and practice must ensure adequate water, food shelter, clothing, security, education, work, health, energy and transport. Baer & Federico (1978:87), and Van Wyk (1993:i) say that social workers should be skillful in facilitating changes in policies and legislation that impede the provision of resources or services to vulnerable populations; advocating for needed resources and services. The social worker should be skillful in the use of professional standards and ethics when evaluating services, resources, opportunities provided to people. Compton & Galaway (1979:12) stress that the social worker should be skillful in working with others to eliminate those systems that are unjust, and should participate actively with others in creating new, modified, or improved services in order to ensure that people's basic needs are met.

According to Siporin (1975:18) the social worker needs to give emphasis to situational interventions that can influence and improve the social welfare agencies and the social welfare system from within. Weissman as cited in Siporin (1975:318) suggests that social workers need to assert their pyramided influence through effective leadership and accountability arrangements within the social agencies and service systems. They can utilize difficulties around administrative mismanagement, incompetent supervisors, unresponsive boards and intra-organizational tension, so as to redistribute organizational power and resources, to bring about constructive change. The social worker needs to maintain an

optimal balance between providing case and policy services, because both are necessary for advancing the social welfare system, and for meeting the immediate needs of people. There needs to be a concern to provide both "hard" services, such as financial assistance, and "soft" counselling services; to provide direct and advocacy social action services so that they do not have negative reciprocal effects within the same agency; to assure case integration within a social service network, as well as comprehensive and coordinated programmes and policies.

3.4.3 Skills in Formulating Policy

Pincus & Minahan (1973:26) state that the social worker should be skillful in contributing to the development and modification of social policy. In efforts to make changes in social policy, social workers are faced with constraints that limit and otherwise affect the specific objectives they may establish and their ability to achieve their objectives. Social workers who continually deal with problems of people, are painfully aware of needed changes in basic social policy at the national level. The problem of poverty requires a more equitable distribution of money; the answer to unemployment lies in the availability or creation of jobs. Problems of inadequate medical care require new forms of health-care delivery systems, and those of inadequate housing in urban slums require a greater proportion of resources to be allocated to the rehabilitation of housing and building of new housing. While social workers can and should work toward bringing about some of these changes, they must recognize the severe limitations they face in trying to do so.

One limitation, according to Pincus & Minahan (1973:27), is the fact that fundamental social change is brought about in the political area through political processes. The force that a profession can bring to bear on a problem is technical know-how and expertise. A second limitation is that issues of basic social policy changes are too important to be left solely in the hands of any profession. Democratic traditions dictate that special-interest groups and experts should not have the only right or the decisive right to determine public policy in their areas of technical competence. It must also be remembered that the value base of social work within the framework of democratic decision making restrains social workers who are tempted to impose their own views of social change on the people affected. A third limitation is the fact that social work is dependent on society for its sanction and support. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that society will not support any activity which has an objective of bringing about fundamental changes in the very fabric of social institutions. Awareness of these limitations should not be used as an excuse for ignoring fundamental policy issues; indeed social workers may support fundamental changes in basic policy. This awareness should caution social workers against promising more than it is possible to deliver. Neither should they accept the blame for the continuance

of social problems that have their roots in faulty social institutions.

Drower (1991:144) emphasizes that social workers should pay greater attention to the creative and innovative models transformation of existing services and models of practice, rather than to the initiation of new approaches. Realism implies not only taking cognizance of cost, person power and other resources, but also the likelihood of particular models attaining desired ends. Therefore realism is closely linked to effectiveness and the need for the incorporation of some kind of evaluative process in service provision. In a situation characterized by severe financial constraints, the relevance and effectiveness of different models of practice are likely to be increasingly challenged. Thus it is essential that innovative models include an evaluative component.

3.4.4 Skills in Working in a Bureaucracy

The procedures of bureaucracy as well as the limitations of policy may, according to Siporin (1975:489), be frustrating to both the client and the worker. It may be necessary to recognize that "red tape" was, and is developed to assure that people with equal problems receive equal help and resources. However, it must also be acknowledged that these processes often operate in a way that reduce the client's access to services or to make an already complex situation more difficult and confusing. The social worker should therefore be skillful in acting as the client's broker and advocate in dealing with the policies and procedures of the bureaucracy. If social workers are to help the client cope with the problems of access to services in the most helpful way possible, it is critically important that they know with accuracy and understanding the policies and procedures of their agency and the way they operate. Social workers are according to Siporin (1975:489) not always as careful and disciplined as they might be in getting a really workable grasp of this knowledge. The ability to handle paperwork efficiently, accurately, and with concern for deadlines, and the client's time, is an absolute requirement.

Germain & Gitterman (1980:337) also say that how an agency defines its purpose and service may create problems for the client. When agencies define their boundaries rigidly, people become lost in the service network, not eligible for services anywhere. When agencies' boundaries are ambiguous, people "fall between the cracks", because no agency is responsible for their service needs. A rigid authority structure stifles staff initiative and creativity in responding to need. In contrast, an authority structure may delegate too much decision-making, so that the social workers confront limited leadership and accountability. Service provision may also be inadequate or inaccessible - or available, but its methods and styles discourage its use. When organizational processes become problematic, the social worker should be skillful in seeking modification of the unresponsive practices, procedures, and programmes. Influencing the employing organization involves skills in preparation,

initial organizational analysis, implementation and institutionalization.

According to Germain & Gitterman (1980:337) preparation for influencing the organization begins with the identification of the problem. Having tentatively identified and documented an organizational problem, selected an objective and various means of achieving it, the social worker undertakes a formal organizational analysis to determine feasibility. The social worker should also be skillful in developing a climate receptive to the change effort. He/she may need to increase his/her informal prestige and respect based on professional competence and involvement in the interpersonal network. The worker must select a general engagement strategy from among demonstration, collaboration, persuasion, and conflict management before formally introducing the identified and/or proposed solution. A proposal for change that has been accepted, needs to be implemented. Acquiring and maintaining the commitment of executive participants is essential. The worker needs to connect the change effort with their self-interests. Similarly, the worker attempts to make necessary modifications in existing organizational structures to increase the innovation's chance of success. The worker should concern him-/herself with the primary task performers, being sensitive to, and empathic with the anxiety aroused by new role demands and expectations. The social worker should attempt to provide essential support to assure adequate role clarity and skills. When the change in an organization's purposes, structures, procedures or service arrangements is no longer perceived as change, the innovation has been institutionalized. To assure continuity, the social worker lodges the innovation with a stable status, and develops linking devices for support, such as a manual of procedures.

3.4.5 Skills in Assessment and Evaluation

The social worker should according to Compton & Galaway (1979:13) be skillful in identifying and assessing situations where the relationship between people and social institutions needs to be initiated, enhanced, restored, protected, or terminated. The social worker should also be able to develop and implement a plan for improving the well-being of people based on problem assessment and the exploration of obtainable goals, and available options. Skills in evaluating the extent to which the objectives of the intervention plan were achieved are essential. Furthermore, the social worker should be able to continually evaluate his/her own professional growth and development through assessment of practice behaviors and skills. Baer & Federico (1978:88-89) continue that the social worker should contribute to the improvement of service delivery by adding to the knowledge base of the profession as appropriate and by supporting and upholding the standards and ethics of the profession.

3.4.6 Creative use of Skills

Compton & Galaway (1989:18-19) note that thinking of social workers as possessing these competencies is much different than thinking of skills for working with groups, individuals, or communities. The worker is expected to focus attention on the totality of the person-situation interaction - to be able to broadly assess the nature of the interaction and the problems in living arising from it and to focus interventions in relation to the assessment which may involve efforts to change the person, the situation, and the interaction. Thus, skills can be classified in two broad areas - assessment or deciding what to do, and intervention, or doing the decided. In this approach, a social work generalist can be thought of as a person who is skillful in deciding what to do. Such practitioners will not be limited in their vision by any preferred relational system or prior methodological commitment and will be able to focus their attention on the totality of the person-situation interaction. In the process of deciding what to do, the practitioner is free to examine variables in the person, in the situation, and relate that to the interaction between the two. Abilities at data collection and assessment are essential for the social worker in order to both define the problem, and arrive at a practical and workable decision as to what needs to be done.

Compton & Galaway (1979:13) continue that at the second level of doing the decided, the profession needs to provide its clients with a wide range of intervention strategies. Some strategies may require highly skilled specialists. In some situations the generalists practitioner will possess skills in the necessary intervention strategies and may implement the change decision.

It is also important that the social worker is skillful in fulfilling many administrative functions. Siporin (1975:319) explains that the social worker can manage in several ways, for example, to focus on objectives; to use a planning-programme-budgetting system, or cost-benefit analysis; and to assert a personally determined mix of bureaucratic and human relations management styles. There is a necessary concern for efficiency and productivity. Essentially, the social worker, as manager of an intervention system, applies basic administrative knowledge and skills.

3.5 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In view of the above it is clear that the social worker should have expert knowledge and should be skillful in applying a wide variety of methods, theories and techniques. Wood as cited in Kemp (1985:95) says that it is impossible for any educational institution to teach a social worker all he/she will ever need to know. The onus for keeping abreast with social work knowledge thus rests on the practising social worker. Accountability to the profession demands it from social worker. It is therefore extremely important that the social worker

shall continuously seek to develop him-/herself personally and professionally. Rural social workers are faced with a wide variety of social work problems, and they work in relatively isolated circumstances with little or no support. This is another reason why the social worker must accept responsibility for his/her own personal and professional development.

Frey & Edinburg (1983:345-346) stress that a key professional attribute is engagement in continuous learning in order to ensure a high quality of work with clients. For some social workers there are many opportunities for continuous learning, while the choices for others, especially in rural areas, may be very limited. Where there is a lack of opportunities, the social worker is confronted with creating self-directed learning and mobilizing others to develop formal programmes in which all can participate. Whether there are abundant or limited options, the social worker must create a self-directed learning plan which indicates clearly that the social worker has accepted responsibility for an orderly process in his/her continuous growth and development as a member of a profession.

The following section will focus on guidance aimed at helping the social worker to develop his or her abilities further, and to cope with work-related frustrations. Attention will be given to setting clear personal goals, various aspects of supervision, consultation, student supervision and field instruction, staff development, building a professional library, developing a journal club, communities activities, professional membership, publication, research, coping with the bureaucracy coping with stress, and avoiding burnout.

3.5.1 Setting Clear Personal Goals

Woodcock & Francis (1982:62) state that setting goals makes it possible to establish criteria for judging whether what one is doing is important. Without clear goals, individuals tend to squander energy on irrelevant pursuits. They may become demoralized or frustrated and uncritically accept the influence of others. There are two factors that need to be assessed when a person reviews his/her career goals. First, the organization that employs the social worker may have charted various pathways by which it fills senior positions. These career routes may limit the social worker's choices, unless the worker chooses to change the organization. Second, personal desires, constraints, and talents are extremely relevant to the worker's career.

According to Woodcock & Francis (1982:63) the social worker needs to know what income level he/she wishes to achieve. when reviewing career goals. The worker should also have clarity on what professional standing he/she wishes to achieve, and on the importance of organizational power. The worker should decide on the importance of creativity and innovation in the employment situation, and whether he/she would like to be remembered in the future, and for what. Once these questions have been answered, the social worker

should find that choices become clearer. This will increase the amount of control that he/she has over the future. Unexpected opportunities may come along and alter the choices, but if the broad direction has been established it is easier to determine when to accept or reject these opportunities. In summary, clear personal goals will enable the social worker to recognize career options, and the relevance of actions and experiences can be better assessed. It will also help to increase a sense of order and calmness, to gain energy, and be strengthened in the process.

Terry (1978:115) is of the opinion that good self-management should lead to effective self-development. Success depends a great deal on the social worker's efforts to improve him-/herself. These efforts should have specific and clearly defined goals, and it must be related to the present, and probable future opportunities which are or will be available to the social worker. Personal development is according to Woodcock & Francis (1982:75,236) concerned with removing limitations and barriers, and adding new skills and knowledge. A personal development plan should be specific and realistic, it should stretch the person's abilities, and command commitment. When developing a personal development plan, the social worker should have clear and realistic personal goals, and should know how success will be judged. It is important to remember that development is basically self-regulated, and that ultimately individuals are responsible for their own development. At all stages of life, people can choose whether to learn and develop from their experience of life or to ignore lessons, concentrate on security and allow themselves to be defeated. Personal effectiveness demands the ability to develop the capacity to be responsible for the conduct of one's own life.

Woodcock & Francis (1982:238) warn that a person may disturb others as he/she changes. Increasing personal effectiveness results in more success and achievement. Priorities change, and others may feel envious or hostile toward increasing competence. It is therefore also important that the social worker will remain open to learning from others. Other people's approaches, attitudes and skills can be analyzed so that their success or failure can be explained. Although the social worker must take responsibility for his/her own actions, it is often fruitful to take counsel from others. Their feedback, impartiality and viewpoints offer valuable perspectives.

Volunteering for special assignments, committees, and service groups gives, according to Terry (1978:118), the social worker experience, the opportunity to assist, and it puts the worker in the spotlight and gives him/her favorable publicity. Promotion possibilities are enhanced at the same time that the worker develops himself. It may be helpful if the social worker adopts a somewhat aggressive attitude, and push for improvements and new ideas. The social worker should set high performance standards, and should not be satisfied with

average accomplishments. At all times the social worker should strive to be outstanding.

Finally, the social worker must remember that the search for effectiveness is continuous. Change requires constant attention and needs to be seen over a realistic time scale. Woodcock & Francis (1982:240) conclude that the learning is best accomplished when it is enjoyable and pleasurable. It is easy to become so concerned with meeting objectives that the spirit of adventure, excitement and stimulation is lost. The most productive climate for learning is one which offers genuine challenge and the opportunity for success.

3.5.2 Using Supervision

The role and responsibility of the supervisor in respect of the social worker's ^Ppersonal and professional development will be discussed in chapter four. In this section, attention will be given to self-supervision, peer-supervision, group supervision and the social worker's responsibility in the effective use of supervision.

(a) Self-supervision

Various authors such as Borders & Leddick (1987:26,28) and Hawkins & Shohet (1989:27) state that this is a form of supervision that is always relevant, even if the social worker is receiving good supervision elsewhere. Self supervision is an approach that may be taught to ^{social worker} ~~supervisees~~ for evaluating their performance toward achieving goals in each session. Incorporating both performance and cognitive counselling skills, the self-supervision model promotes professional autonomy. ^{also} ~~The self supervision~~ model includes self-observation, self-assessment, targeting behaviors or cognitions to change, and selecting a goal, planning for change, implementation of the plan, and finally the readjustment of the plan based on increasing self-knowledge. For self-supervision to be effective it is essential that the social worker should give him-/herself enough time to do self assessment. A willingness to confront his/her own ways of working is further necessary.

(b) Peer-supervision

Frey & Edinburg (1983:351), and Hawkins & Shohet (1989:106) explain that peer-supervision may be used when the social worker has reached a level of competence where regular monitoring is rarely necessary. Successful peer-supervision requires good morale and an atmosphere which supports interpersonal cooperation rather than competition. The peer group would function without an agency supervisor. The group should not consist of more than seven people. The group should have shared values, but a range of different approaches. The group should be clear about commitment, different expectations, and role expectations. Peer-supervision can also be more successful if there is a clear contract, feedback after each session and regular review sessions.

Peer-supervision and the advantages thereof, is not a new concept. Authors such as Fildale (1958:448) and Pettes (1979:84) have said that peer-supervision gives the social workers a sense of freedom from inhibiting authority and a sense of personal and professional responsibility. Peer-supervision stimulates and confirms professional growth. It is especially suitable in small agencies with a group of equally experienced and well qualified workers with similar or diversified specialities. For some social workers with wide-ranging skills and interests in both direct work with clients and administration, peer-supervision provides a satisfying challenge to their professional abilities.

Fildale (1958:448) and Pettes (1979:84) caution that the success of peer-supervision depends upon the ability of the group members to respect each other's practice, to have faith in each other's professional integrity, and desire to advance skills. There is a danger of a higher priority being given to group needs than to client service needs, especially when work pressure mounts. Kadushin (1992:483) also points out that another disadvantage concerns work demands. The supervisor has the positional authority to make demands regarding work, but the peer supervisor is not formally granted this authority, so peers are much more hesitant about enforcing necessary work demands on each other. This problem may be overcome by contracting, and the development of ways to evaluate services. Accountability to the board of management must also be maintained.

(c) Group Supervision

Group supervision has according to Frey & Edinburg (1983:351), Getzel & Salmon (1985:31), and Kadushin (1992:406-411) distinct advantages. It provides the opportunity for social workers to share their experiences with similar problems encountered in the work situation and possible solutions that each has formulated in response. Members of the group also act as a source of emotional support. They can console, sympathize with, and praise each other during the course of the group meeting. The group context permits a living experience with the supportive technique of universalization. The worker is given an appreciation of the fact that these are "our problems" rather than "my problems". The recognition that others feel the same way may provide relief from overwhelming and frightening feelings, and it may decrease the tendency to personalize problems, and increase the likelihood of objectifying them.

The opportunity for lateral help is according to Getzel & Salmon (1985:31) a distinct advantage. Workers are expected formally to help one another. This may give the experienced worker in particular the opportunity to use his/her expertise without feeling he/she is challenging the function of the supervisor. It also relieves the experienced worker of continued dependence, recognized his/her advanced skills and his/her ability to contribute and to teach.

The group situation is the most comfortable learning environment for some social workers, as they may find the relationship with the supervisor in individual supervision too intense. In the group situation they may feel more comfortable to devote all their energies to learning. The interpersonal interaction and the variations in ideas, knowledge and attitudes in the group can provide the stimulus to free the worker's thinking and enhance his/her creativity. It may also be easier for some social workers to accept criticism, suggestions and advice from peers than from the supervisor. Another advantage of group supervision is according to Kadushin (1992:408) the fact that the group context provides the safety in numbers that individual social workers may need in order to challenge and question the supervisor.

The question of dependency in supervision is a recurrent theme in the literature. Fildale (1958:443) has said: "We regard the long continuance of the worker-supervisor relationship as potentially detrimental to the professional maturation of the worker". Another author, Wax (1979:120) says: "If the profession wants to keep his professional, it must treat them as professionals. Lifelong supervision is a vestige of the subprofessional past". Kadushin (1992:412) suggests that group supervision provides a gradual step toward independence from supervision. The movement is from dependence on the supervisor, to a lesser measure of dependence on peers, to autonomous self-dependence. Group supervision offers an effective medium for power sharing and power equalization between supervisors and supervisees.

Frey & Edinburg (1983:351) say that the group members and the supervisor have the responsibility of blending individual interests into an agenda for the whole group. The plan for meeting the selected learning needs can include the use of publications, observation, tapes, field visits and theoretical presentations.

Although group supervision has many advantages, Getzel & Salmon (1985:33-34), and Kadushin (1992:413-416) warn against the possibility of competition among social workers - a kind of sibling rivalry. Each may be anxious about how well he/she compares with others in the group. Another disadvantage is that it may be difficult to include a newcomer in the group, especially if the group cohesion and interpersonal relationships in the group are very strong. The group context is complex and becomes more so as the number of participants increase. There may be a great deal of time spent on a subject area, or on a specific workers' cases that are not easily generalizable to the work and situation of the other group members. Therefore, some social workers or supervisors may not be comfortable with the group technique as it may not be meeting individual needs.

In the group situation it can also happen that an individual social worker may at times abdicate his own individual responsibility for decision-making to the group. If a group

offers a large pool of possible sources of insight and support, it also offers more sources of critical feedback. Some social workers will feel threatened and uncomfortable in this situation.

Kadushin (1992:417) states that individual and group supervision provide special advantages and disadvantages, and both are more or less appropriate in response to different conditions and different needs. To be effective, individual and group supervision should be combined, and used as complementary procedures.

(d) The Social Worker's Responsibility in the Effective use of Supervision

Middleman & Rhodes (1985:2) mention that in most occupations workers do not get such individualized job-development attention. Once hired, they are expected to take care of developing their knowledge and skills by learning outside the workplace. Occasionally, they may be sent by the organization to special training programmes. Competition for advancement based on demonstrated competence is the motivator for self-development on the job. Mainly, the organization sponsored staff-development is attended to through training programmes and informal collaboration and consultation among the workers. However, Kemp (1985:95-96), and Van Biljon (1970:425) have found in their research that social workers rely heavily on the knowledge, experience and support of their supervisors, and that only a small percentage of social workers expand their knowledge through self-study. The following reasons are given for these findings:

- 1 The supervisor is more available than theoretical resources.
- 2 Social workers value practical experience more than theoretical knowledge.
- 3 Social workers do not have sufficient time for self-study.
- 4 The wide variety of services that the social worker need to render, and the variety of social problems that the social worker need to address, seem to de-motivate the worker to undertake self-study.

In order for a social worker to learn job-related tasks and procedures and to develop as a skilled professional, he/she must make appropriate and effective use of supervision. Scherz (1958:441) stresses that the social worker is primarily responsible for his/her own continuing professional development. Personal growth cannot be set as a job requirement, nor is it an appropriate area for supervision. The social worker should therefore identifies his/her developmental needs, he/she should decide how much reading he/she needs to do, what further study he/she needs to undertake, and when to use supervisory help or other resources in the agency.

According to Hawkins & Shohet (1989:28) it is the social worker's responsibility to ensure that he/she gets the support that he/she needs, and to be pro-active within supervision. The same authors warn that it is all too easy to slide back into dependency and just accept the style and level of supervision that the supervisor provides. Therefore, the social worker should take full responsibility for his/her part in contracting and negotiating how the supervision will operate, what it will focus on and how the process will be monitored and reviewed.

Scherz (1958:442) warns that if the social worker views the supervisor as the major and in some instances the sole medium of continuing professional development, it will hamper the worker's achievement of professional maturity. The supervisor may then also tend to become over-controlling and protective. Austin *et al* (1977:412) claim that a good supervisor will therefore expect cooperation from the social worker. This cooperation will include a willingness to work and learn alongside with co-workers. A willingness to learn about the job, the agency and agency procedures, and a willingness to follow directions, are also expectations of the supervisor. The worker is also expected to show initiative and to accept criticism, as the latter is necessary since it is the supervisor's way of letting the social worker know how he/she expects the job to be done.

Evaluating the supervisor is very important. Hawkins & Shohet (1989:29) explain that evaluation and review should be a two-way process and needs to be regularly scheduled into the supervision arrangements. This ensures that there is a chance to give clear feedback and, when necessary to renegotiate the supervision contract.

3.5.3 Consultation

Westheimer (1977:160) declares that the professional social worker should continue to learn throughout his/her life, but the means of learning should be different and in accordance with the stage of professional development he/she has reached. According to Frey & Edinburg (1983:351) consultation gives the experienced, mature social worker who has reached a sufficient level of professional development, the opportunity to obtain an opinion from another social worker or other professional with special knowledge in an area of practice. Rapoport (1977:193) defines consultation in social work as: "...a professional method of problem-solving involving a time-limited, purposeful, contractual relationship between a knowledgeable expert, the consultant, and a less knowledgeable professional worker, the consultee." Frey & Edinburg (1983:351), and Kadushin (1977:39) further note that the consultant usually has no administrative responsibility for the social worker's performance or the use of the advice. As in supervision this requires the sanction of the agency.

Another form of consultation that is described by authors such as Chaiklin & Munson (1983:25), and Kadushin (1992:484-484) is peer consultation. Peer consultation is worker rather than agency based. It can be developed outside the agency by workers in any specialization at any stage of their career. The focus is on self-directed and self-paced learning. Other than the ethical requirement of safeguarding confidentiality, no administrative or case management considerations are relevant. The worker in an agency which does not provide supervision, or who is dissatisfied with the supervision he/she gets, will find that peer consultation provides help. Peer consultation provides the continuity, the temporal quality and quantity that clinical learning requires. To achieve beneficial learning, the group must go beyond what the case presenter should do to what each group member can gain from the discussion and apply in their practice. This is self-directed, self-selected learning that results in independent clinical competence.

Chaiklin & Munson (1983:33) conclude that peer consultation is a way for the worker to engage in the lifelong learning and demonstration of accountability, which is the mark of a professional. It enables social workers to take their own initiative and make their own investment of time and money. Financially, it is within any social worker's grasp. The confidence that comes from learning to trust oneself and others, from learning that it is possible to learn together, means not only that the social worker's professional skills increase, but also that he/she can take better advantage of agency supervision.

Cognizance must also be taken of the disadvantages of peer consultation as pointed out by Kadushin (1992:484-485). A system of peer consultation can only be successful with a group of peers of equal competence and status in the group who consult with one another. In such reciprocal consultation, while all members incur obligations as consultees, they repay these obligations when they act in the role of consultants. However, the less competent worker who is more frequently asking for advice, incurs an ever greater obligation to the other consultant-peers, which the worker finds difficult to discharge. The worker who consistently makes demands on peers for help and support without reciprocating soon develops the image of a quasi-client in the minds of peers, thus diminishing his/her status. It may become very painful to ask for help, and the worker may decide to rather go without help, or may turn to a less competent peer whom he/she had not previously consulted. Thus, at best, peer consultation is an adjunct, and supplement to traditional supervision, and it is not a substitute for it.

Supervision and consultation offer very meaningful learning experiences for the social worker. Frey & Edinburg (1983:352) suggest that learning can be increased by avoiding a tendency to spend supervisory or consultation time in elaborating on the details of the case, leaving little time for the exploration of deeper questions. The determined learner should

push the consultant for focused teaching and in-depth review.

3.5.4 Student Supervision and Field Instruction

According to Barette (1968:88) student training is a joint or shared responsibility and social workers can be motivated to become more interested in student training. The student-field instructor relationship can be very rewarding, mutually so as the student learns from the field instructor, so does the field instructor learn from the student. Weiner (1980:234) supports this idea and says that student-field placements present excellent staff-development opportunities in that students often bring a fresh and stimulating perspective. The cross-fertilization which occurs at interdisciplinary student-staff meetings often provides the impetus for a re-examination of existing programme policies and procedures.

Botha (1976:271) says that it is the field instructor's responsibility to broaden the student's knowledge base, to motivate the student to undertake self-study and research, and to encourage the student to function independently. It is therefore vitally important that the field instructor shall have a broad knowledge base, and that he/she will have knowledge about new approaches, techniques and methods in social work. Botha (1976:450) and Pettes (1979:92) stress that it is important that the field instructor attend courses or seminars on student supervision. It is also important to undertake self-study in order to keep abreast with new developments in the social work field.

3.5.5 Staff Development

According to Kaslow (1986:13) a high quality staff development is an important avenue for refreshing, updating and expanding the social worker's knowledge and skills. A carefully designed programme is essential if objectives are to be accomplished. Frey & Edinburg (1983:352) mention that staff members have an important role in developing the educational aspect of the staff development programme. An educational focus would include the statement of overall goals and specific objectives for each course and would attempt to have consistency and sequence among the different courses. An education committee of staff and administration can approach the planning task by assessing learning needs. Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:287) explain that the team can also work together to construct learning designs and to carry them through in a way that helps people make sense of the content. The subject of staff development will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

3.5.6 Building a Professional Library

Sheafor, et al (1988:167) say that in order to remain up-to-date on developments in his or her field of practice, the social worker must attend relevant conferences and workshops and read professional books and journals. In addition, intellectual stimulation can be an antidote

for job burnout. Every social worker should have easy access to at least two or three journals. If the social worker cannot afford the cost of more than one journal, he or she should consider making a sharing arrangement with others. If each worker in a small group of social workers agreed to subscribe to a different journal, and they all agreed to a regular exchange, the cost of having access to several journals will be sharply reduced. A similar book exchange arrangement will give the worker access to many more expensive hardbacks than he or she could afford to buy individually.

According to Sheafor *et al* (1988:167) the agency staff needs to request money for books and journals from those who control funds. A surprising number of supervisors and social workers never request library funds, which conveys a message that professional literature is not needed or wanted. It also gives an impression that the staff does not care about learning of developing better ways of providing services. It may also be worthwhile to approach the local library, as libraries are normally eager to obtain acquisition suggestions from local citizens. Library personnel will respond to reasonable requests, because many social work topics are of interest to the reading public as well. Furthermore, social workers should check to see if nearby college or university libraries contain books and journals useful to agency staff.

3.5.7 Developing a Journal Club

A common complaint among professionals is that they do not have time to keep up with professional literature in their field of practice. In order to address this problem, Sheafor *et al* (1988:166) suggest that a journal club be developed. Essentially a journal club is a small group of professionals from one or more agencies who agree to meet on a regular basis, weekly or monthly, to discuss professional literature. The participants take turns in leading the discussion. The leader is responsible for selecting the one or two articles on which they will focus their discussion. For a journal club to work, it is essential that it be a regularly scheduled meeting that all members are expected to attend. The meetings can be as short as thirty minutes. Belonging to a journal club can provide the structure and incentive many social workers need to give professional reading the attention it deserves. A well organized journal club can be an effective, inexpensive method of expanding the social worker's knowledge and skills.

Frey & Edinburg (1983:353) mention that the purpose of a journal club may be expanded to provide an opportunity to practice some teaching skills. Teaching about an article requires the leader to grasp the larger concepts and principles, relate these to the finer points, and think through the implications of the author's point of view. A peer learning and teaching group can set up learning objectives and measures for evaluation. All these methods will support the group's motivation, and maintain the educational level.

3.5.8 Community Activities

Frey & Edinburg (1983:353) are of the opinion that participating on a board, advisory committee or in a social action project provides opportunity for learning. Working with people who have different perspectives and value systems, or who are not in the social work profession can be most enlightening.

3.5.9 Membership of Professional Associations

According to Botha (1993:4) it remains of the highest priority that all social workers enroll as members of a professional association and participate in a meaningful manner in the activities thereof. Authors such as Frey & Edinburg (1983:354) and Gibelman & Humphreys (1979:405) are of the opinion that professional associations view continuing education as an important service to their members and as a requirement for maintaining professional status. Attending meetings of professional associations is a means of keeping informed and abreast of developments in the field. Participating in committees of these associations also affords opportunities for learning from members and from activities of the committees.

3.5.10 Publication

Frey & Edinburg (1983:353) say that submitting a paper for publication is an excellent way of learning, although it is usually not recognized as continuing education.

3.5.11 Research

Various authors (Farley *et al*, 1982; Grinnell, 1993; Skidmore & Thackeray, 1982) stress the importance of social work research. Farley *et al* (1982:185) say that regardless of the research orientation the rural social worker brings to practice, he should be committed to the notion that everything in practice should be researched. Professional practice demands that treatment techniques and intervention methods are constantly evaluated in the most objective way possible.

According to Grinnell (1993:9) professional social workers are competent practitioners who incorporate social work research findings into their practice. They augment their own experiences and intuitions by applying research findings, concepts, methods, and skills in their work. They also participate in research studies or actually carry them out. The social worker can utilize several methods and techniques in social work research. Skidmore & Thackeray (1982:143-144) suggest that the social worker can carry out experimental research that encompasses statistical methodology. A second approach that can be utilized by social workers is the case study method. This process is basically an intensive study of

one or a few cases, keeping in mind that an understanding of a specific case may be helpful in acquiring knowledge of human behavior and social functioning. The social survey is another method that the social worker can utilize, and is an attempt to study on a broad basis a given neighborhood or community and to attempt to understand the underlying foundations and principles related to social problems, the behavior of people within these localities and the total social milieu. The human ecological approach is also used in studying social phenomena, and emphasizes the spatial distribution of human behavior and attempt to explain why there are geographical differentials in regard to social conditions and problems. Evaluation research can be done to assess programme effectiveness in social work.

Farley *et al* (1982:186) stress that the emphasis on accountability in human service will continue to grow. The best rationale for accountability is the hope that each social worker will obtain firsthand information through research which in turn will make them more effective in helping clients.

3.5.12 Coping with the Bureaucracy

Authors such as Johnson (1989:259) and Zastrow (1992:323) mention that there are basic structural conflicts between helping professionals and the bureaucratic systems in which they work. They are confronted with the conflict between professional and bureaucratic expectations - with human need, human pain, and societal injustices and with agency policy, rules, and regulations. They are confronted with the slowness of change, the seeming unresponsiveness of the system, and demands for accountability of the bureaucratic agency. They are also confronted with the need to find ways to use the agency and its resources to meet the needs of clients. This calls for skills to function in a bureaucracy.

Toren (1972:58-59) refers to the positive functions of a bureaucratic system. It offers a structure where conflict and tension created by rules and regulations can be dealt with in a fair and just way. It also offers the opportunity to develop new structures through cooperation. Furthermore, it prevents the social worker from becoming emotionally too involved with the clients. It also ensures that service rendering will be reliable, just and impartial. Whether the latter is true from the South African welfare system, is a debatable question. Jacob, Joseph & Van Rooyen (1991:256) say that in South Africa criticism has been leveled at remedial, urban-centred welfare services as well as inappropriate practice concepts where much of the theory informing South African practice has its origins in America and Europe. De V Smit (1994:5-6) and Drower (1991:143) claim that there are several constraints in the present welfare system, especially fragmentation, divisiveness, unequal distribution and limited availability of resources. Also relevant are constraints relating to the diversity of the South African population, including language, cultural, class

and rural-urban divides; the competition between different interest groups within welfare and the relative popularity of various welfare concerns; and the different perceptions of the roles of services, practitioners and consumers. It is within these constraints that the catchwords of affordability, realism, accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness have become so prominent in the debates about the nature of future services.

According to Drower (1991:144) there is a gap between needs and resources. An equitable, accessible and efficient service depends on the availability of skilled personnel. At present whites tend to hold a monopoly of skills, for example in the social work profession 68% of the practitioners are white, while the majority of the potential service users are black. According to the Race Relations Survey (1993/94:153) the social worker-client ratios by race in South Africa, are as follows:

- 1 for the Coloured community the ratio is 1:8 560
- 2 for the Indian community the ratio is 1:10 298
- 3 for the White community the ratio is 1:12 174
- 4 for the ex-homelands the ratio is 1:25 000

Not only is South Africa running short of at least 3000 social workers, but there is as a result also major accessibility problems relating to language, culture, and class barriers exist. The second reality with regard to person power concerns the nature of training received and thus the kinds of skills personnel possess. One of the biggest concerns is according to De V Smit (1994:7) the scant emphasis that is placed on social work management training.

(a) Bureaucratic Skills

Pruger (1978:151-152) has pointed out the necessity for learning bureaucratic skills as most social workers are unprepared for organizational life. Bureaucratic skills are as much needed to capitalize on the possibilities of organizational life as they are to neutralize its stresses and dangers. Bureaucratic skills can lead not only to greater job satisfaction, but also to higher levels of professional accomplishment and to organizational improvement or change. Insight is needed to recognize just what those opportunities are, and skills are needed to develop them.

The first step in developing these skills, is according to Pruger (1978:157), the realization and acceptance of the reality that a career in social work will involve work in and with bureaucracies. The key to being effective in a bureaucracy is to maintain the greatest amount of discretion possible. To maintain this discretionary power a worker must be self-

directive. The worker who expects to be told every move to make soon loses this power. The worker must also know how to negotiate stresses, opportunities, and constraints. The social worker can do this by maintaining vitality and independence of thought, and by being responsible by understanding legitimate authority. Furthermore, the social worker must only work on some issues and must choose issues that are worth the effort.

According to Johnson (1989:260) the bureaucracy is meant to serve society's needs. The social worker who can help the social service bureaucracy meet the needs of people can become a valuable employee. This can give the worker leverage to obtain the needed discretion. Another means of gaining this leverage is to gain the competence the agency sees as important. It is also important that the social worker shall demonstrate good judgement. Part of this good judgement is the ability to make decisions that are in compliance with agency rules and regulations, that do not cause negative community reactions, and that lead to effective service to clients. Another part of good judgement is doing the right thing at the right time. The attributes of self-directedness and good judgement are possible when social workers have a realistic sense of their professional self, when they use a knowledge base in making decisions, and when they develop a repertoire of skills.

Johnson (1989:261) mentions a number of ways in which social workers can enhance their effectiveness. The author says that the worker should refrain from seeking blame, but should rather spend energy available on seeking solutions. The worker should also learn to do a lot with a little, and to be realistic about the resources available and make them stretch as far as possible. The worker should also learn to be comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, and inconsistency. It is when these are present that discretion is necessary. The social worker should also be self-confident, creative and responsible.

Social workers get into difficulty in a bureaucracy when they make unfounded decisions, or do not determine the feasibility of plans they make. Johnson (1989:261) further explains that problems also develop if their concerns are not focused but take the form of vague complaints. The expectation that change will take place overnight also can cause difficulty. An understanding of what the agency is trying to do, and what is expected of the social worker is a base upon which to develop effective services. A thorough understanding of the agency as a social system is a prerequisite. This view is also supported by Zastrow (1992:326), who stresses the importance of obtaining knowledge of how the agency is structured. A good understanding of the agency's history, legal base, funding, internal dynamics, office politics, office policy and procedures are important. This will enable the social worker to address job-related problems, and it will reduce fear of the unknown, and make the system more predictable.

The social worker needs to be constantly reminded and aware of the agency purpose and mission and what needs to be changed to improve services to the clients. In this regard De V Smit (1994:5) and Drower (1991:144) say that accessible and acceptable services emphasize the need to ensure that models of practice take serious account of the felt needs of the people they are designed to serve. In a non-racial South Africa and in order to readdress the present imbalance in service provision a much more concerted and serious attempt will have to be made to reach out to the majority of the population to help them to identify their felt needs, and plan the provision of services with them. More effective planning would better channel resources where they would have the greatest effect.

3.5.13 Coping with Stress and Avoiding Burnout

Sheafor *et al* (1988:170) make the statement that social work is a demanding profession, and that each social worker responds differently to the demands made upon them - some thrive on it, while others burn out. It is important to have a basic understanding of stress so that the potentially negative effects of prolonged and unrelieved stress reactions can be prevented or identified early.

(a) Sources of Stress

Austin (1981:293) and Kadushin (1992:235) explain that the manifestations of burnout include refusal to take part in staff-development programmes, use of considerable sick leave, failure to adapt to agency changes, avoidance of specific job tasks, overly critical comments about the agency and staff, display of considerable boredom, performance in a depressed manner on the job, and irritable behavior, a decline in work performance, constant search for a new job, refusal to share agency information with a new worker, and seeking to retire on the job. Overall, the worker's behavior suggests emotional withdrawal from the job and emotional distancing and detachment from clients. While any one of these factors by itself would not constitute burnout, several factors combined might lead to burnout.

Various authors such as Austin (1981:293), Daley, (1979:376), Harrison (1980:32), Kadushin (1992:236-260) and Ratliff (1988:147-154) describe several factors and sources of stress that can lead to staff burnout. These sources of stress can be divided in five broad categories: the social work profession, organizational environment, the individual, social, economic and political factors, and gender related stress.

- 1 The social work profession carries a variety of inherent stressors that are related to burnout. The relationship with clients that are often resistant, hostile and have complex problems, and the nature and context of the task can be sources of stress.

One of the most important factors that tends to provide satisfaction and hence counter negative feelings in most jobs is the recognition by oneself, confirmed by others, that the work has been well done and there is a desirable outcome. The work social workers do does not confirm itself. Social workers are not often rewarded by unmistakable indications that their interventions have made a difference. Other aspects in the field of social work that can prove stressful are low salaries, long working hours, extensive paperwork, and heavy client loads.

- 2 Organizational factors have a strong influence on the development of burnout. Supervision, the supervisor-supervisee relationship, loss of worker autonomy, the structure of the organization, lack of trust in top administration, and the physical quality of the work environment, for example, overcrowding, noise, poor lighting and inadequate ventilation are some of the stressors to which social workers are exposed.
- 3 Subject to the same stressful stimuli, some workers burn out and other do not. The attitudes, self-image and personalities of individual workers are therefore important factors in the occurrence of burnout. A frequently encountered and specific personal cause of burnout is inadequate training and/or education. In this regard, Harrison (1980:32) states that burnout can be thought of as an arrest or regression in the social worker's growth process. Rather than becoming better able to do an effective job, the workers find themselves feeling increasingly apathetic and beset by futility. A related course of burnout, concerns according to Van der Walt (1993:137) social workers with highly developed specialized skills who lack general skills such as writing, public speaking and assertiveness. Their skills and knowledge do not qualify them for promotion to higher positions - causing them to feel trapped in their current situation.
- 4 South Africa is an industrializing, urbanizing, developing society (McKendrick, 1990b:241). Among the economic, political and social stressors which seem particularly relevant to the South African context are recessions, inflation, poverty, unemployment, violence, overpopulation and housing shortages. In addition to these stressors, social workers are exposed to very rapid change. McKendrick (1992:1) notes that social workers are under tremendous stress and pressure to change, and to adapt their interventions in order to become more relevant and appropriate, and to render services that will have impact on the client system.
- 5 Ratliff (1981:151) reports on the issue of gender related stress that, when comparing professional men and women, the latter experience four times more work tedium, felt they had less freedom, autonomy, influence and challenge in their work. Women also reported fewer opportunities for self-expression and self-actualization, and experienced more environmental pressures. They also tended to overextend

themselves in response to the demands from others. Van der Walt (1993:138) concludes that gender differences require gender-specific interventions.

It must be remembered that one of these causes alone might not lead to burnout, but several of them combined may produce enough stress to lead to burnout of the worker. It is important that a personal stress management strategy should be an essential part of every social worker's professional life. Malherbe & Engelbrecht (1992:34) say that it is further important that the social worker should make a distinction between stress that originate in his/her private life, and stress that is work related. The worker must identify the stressors, and must further identify how often he/she experiences the stress. The worker must also assess to what extent he/she is responsible for increasing his/her own level of stress. The worker should prioritize the stressors according to the level of frequency and intensity.

(b) Strategies for Coping with and Preventing Burnout

Cournoyer (1991:263) points out that the number and nature of the coping skills available to the social worker can significantly help the worker to manage, reduce, or even eliminate the distress. According to Cournoyer (1991:263) coping skills that can reduce stress include positive self-talk, and positive imagery. Positive self-talk involves and developing and refining the ability to think about stressors in more functional ways. It might involve identifying whether current thinking is functional and helpful. If the worker determines that it is not productive, other ways of thinking may be developed. The process of positive imagery is similar to positive self-talk and may be used for both preventive and coping purposes. It involves the creation of mental pictures that calm, soothe, relax, or energize. Proper breathing, muscle relaxation, exercises, good nutritional habits and hobbies are also mentioned by the same author as ways to reduce stress.

Cognitive reframing is another way of dealing with staff burnout. In research done on counsellor burnout, Beck (1987:14) found that there was a need for more open communication between social workers and executives. Social workers blamed executives for unrealistic productivity expectations, not caring about staff stress levels, not communicating, not responding to staff suggestions, and being excessively authoritarian, unfair, and punitive. Executives denied that there was such a thing as burnout, and others attribute burnout to social workers' faulty work habits, failure to organize their time and so forth. Beck (1987:14): comes to the conclusion that cognitive reframing is needed for both social workers and executives. Executives need to share with staff their problems with reduced funding and their struggle to maintain services in the face of eroding resources. Social workers must let executives know what their irritants are as well as their desire to provide input into the planning process. Finally, executives must let staff know that they have listened and that they plan to seek staff help in working through these problems. In

agencies communication must be mutual and adequate so that new problem-solving methods can be initiated.

Beck (1987:14) also suggests self initiated coping strategies. These include being more assertive in voicing complaints, asking for clarification of expectations, maintaining a clear separation between office and home, fostering a better sense of humor and increased sharing of self with colleagues and friends. According to Ratliff (1988:152-153) self-awareness is a powerful asset in combatting burnout. The worker must become aware of personal strengths and limitations, and should learn to live within these boundaries by setting realistic goals. Self-scoring inventories can be helpful to promote self-awareness. These inventories are effective resources for life assessment and goal setting. It will hopefully provide answers to questions such as: "Why did I choose social work as profession? What needs am I satisfying? To what extent does my work reflect my individuality and uniqueness as a person? How concerned am I about recognition from others? How can I improve my own internal satisfaction, relying less on external rewards? Do I have a sense of how what I doing fits into a broader perspective?"

According to Courmoyer (1991:264) a worker who has a solid educational background, including real-life experience, a substantial orientation to the job, genuinely professional supervision, and ongoing continuing education, is less likely to be affected by work-related stressors. This view is supported by Austin (1981:293) who mentions that experienced supervisors have identified potential solutions to the problem of staff burnout, and that these solutions include regular supervisory sessions, developing a journal club to share new ideas, inviting guest speakers to meetings, planning continuing education with staff, conducting regular career-planning conferences, and encouraging the development of support groups for social workers. Daley (1979:379) and Harrison (1980:42) also stress the importance of continuing education and staff development programmes as a way to reduce the social worker's stress. Improving the competence and effectiveness of the social worker may prove to be the best way to reduce problems of low job satisfaction and therefore of turnover and burnout. It is suggested (Harrison, 1980:42) that the highest priority in agency staff development programmes should be on helping social workers to develop a sound understanding of basic practice theories and skills which allow for professional flexibility and judgment rather than relying on narrow role prescriptions. The need for new modalities is not nearly as pressing as the need for sound applications of social work's existing practice theories.

Courmoyer (1991:264) further states that support may take various forms and that it may come from diverse sources. Staff and supervisory meetings, coffee clubs, recreational groups, and formal support or therapy groups are potential contexts for support. Beck

(1987:15) also supports these ideas, and says time and opportunity for the attendance of professional meetings are not only helpful in reducing staff burnout and stress, but that it also improves the social workers self-image. Agency-level programmes to mitigate loneliness, another significant correlate of burnout, are very important. In conclusion, it is important to take note of Smither (1988:324) statement that if jobs allow workers to derive feelings of meaningfulness and responsibility, and if workers are given feedback on performances, then there will be high levels of satisfaction. In addition, workers will have high motivational levels, high quality work performance, and low absenteeism and turnover. The aforementioned can also help to reduce burnout and stress.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter attention was given to social work knowledge, skills, and the need for social workers to continuously seek professional and personal development.

Social work knowledge is essentially what is known about people and their social systems. It is important that this knowledge is relevant to the situation in which it was developed. It must also be descriptive of the phenomena of persons in situations, and explains the functioning of people in their social systems. The constantly changing functions of social work as dictated by the constantly changing and developing society, and the expanding knowledge of mankind in interaction with social institutions and the physical world, demand a constantly expanding, reorganized and reformulated knowledge base. The social worker must be able to think theoretically, systematically, critically and creatively. The social worker must continuously evaluate the knowledge available, and keep an open mind as to the tentativeness of the knowledge base. The social worker should contribute to the improvement of service delivery by adding to the knowledge base of the profession and by supporting and upholding the standards and ethics of the profession.

A skillful and knowledgeable social worker must also have considerable self-knowledge and self-awareness. Knowledge about the self can be developed through the process of supervision, in discussions of practice situations and problems with colleagues, through studying human behavior and organized self study. The latter would include thinking about one's life experiences, personal needs and personal functioning.

Social work is a demanding profession, and in order to render an effective service, the social worker needs a wide variety of skills. From the literature study, it appears that there is not consensus amongst the various authors about the core skills needed by a social worker. However, the most important skills are divided in five large categories: interviewing, intervention activities, engagement skills, assessment skills, and communication skills. Administrative and managerial skills are also very important. The

social worker should also be skillful in contributing to the development and modification of social policy, and be skillful in intervening on behalf of populations most vulnerable. It is also important that the social worker shall understand a bureaucracy, and shall develop appropriate skills to function within a bureaucratic system.

Accountability to the profession demands continues personal and professional development. The opportunities for continuous education and development go beyond enrollment in courses. The integration of knowledge and skills requires experiences which encompass theory, practice, and increased self-awareness. Among the opportunities for learning and development are the setting of clear personal goals, the effective use of supervision, consultation, student supervision and field instruction, staff development, through building a professional library, developing a journal club, community activities, professional membership, publications, and research. In order to achieve ultimate personal and professional development, it is important that the social worker will be able to cope with the bureaucracy, cope with stress and avoid burnout.

Ongoing personal and professional development is in the first instance the social worker's responsibility. However, this can not be done in isolation, and the effective use of supervision is an important tool in the social worker's development. In chapter four the role, task and responsibility of the supervisor in the social worker's personal and professional development will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR IN RESPECT OF THE SOCIAL WORKER'S PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, attention has been given to the social worker's personal and professional development. Although this is ultimately the social worker's own responsibility, the importance of supervision in this regard can never be overlooked. The focus for the supervisor, and the ultimate goal of supervision is to promote and ensure the quality of service provided to clients through the supervisor's use of administrative, educational and supportive functions (Abels, 1977; Guttman, Eisikovits, & Maluccio, 1988; Kadushin, 1992; Pettes, 1979). The supervisor is therefore concerned with the promotion of the social worker's competence. According to Guttman, *et al* (1988:278) competence is an expression of the norms of effective practice in social work, and it is also the profession's expectations from the worker. The same authors (1988:279) describe competence further as: "Learning to perform one's role and function effectively and efficiently. It is assumed that a worker's competence is promoted by a strong relationship with a supervisor who teaches workers to perform their professional roles, and who also fulfills the required administrative, educational and supportive functions well".

The importance of the social worker's ongoing personal and professional development places special demands on the supervisor. It requires that the supervisor will implement a growth-orientated supervision model that will enable the worker to acquire knowledge, skills, self-understanding and maturity (Guttman *et al*, 1988:279). This model will according to Webb (1983:50) also emphasize the social worker's strengths, and will stress progress and future goals, rather than weaknesses.

In this chapter attention will be given to the importance of supervisors as educators, worker competence and guidelines for competence-oriented supervision and the content of competence-oriented supervision. Furthermore, the characteristics of competent and effective supervisors will be looked at.

4.2 THE SUPERVISOR AS EDUCATOR

According to Gitterman & Miller (1977:104) the central teaching task is structuring the specifics of work demands in such a manner as to facilitate the engagement between the

worker's individual learning needs and the job to be done. The supervisor will therefore have to be skillful, not only in direct practice, but also in teaching methodology. Five important concepts in the teaching methodology will be discussed. Attention will also be given to the principles of adult learning.

(a) Operationalization

The first important concept that the supervisor needs to be knowledgeable about, is operationalization. Middleman & Rhodes (1985:145) and Austin (1981:242) describe this task as the ability to integrate the concern for what the social worker needs to know, with the concern for knowing how to apply the knowledge. In this regard Gitterman & Miller (1977:104) stress that teaching the social worker about job responsibilities and expectations is not the same as teaching how to carry out job responsibilities and expectations. The focus should be on turning knowledge into action. This view is supported by Shulman (1982:165) who says that the application of theory strengthens the worker's understanding of its structure.

(b) Generalization

A second important concept that the supervisor needs to be knowledgeable about, is generalization. Gitterman & Miller (1977:105) declare that: "Knowing how is not quite enough - professional competence, proficiency, and mastery require being able to comprehend the linkages and generalize about the knowledge on which actions are based." It is important that the social worker shall not only learn to deal with specific situations or content, but also acquire the ability to organize their learning conceptually or to transfer it appropriately to other situations or clients. According to Austin (1981:242) generalization also relates to the social worker's ability to use his or her intuition, and how well they can generalize their insights and intuitions either from one client to another or from one situation to another, or both.

(c) Recreating

Gitterman & Miller (1977:105) emphasize recreating as the third important concept. Supervisors must be careful of providing social workers with answers, insights and solutions to the problems they experience in practice. It is more important to encourage experiential learning. Experiential learning have been described by Eisikovits & Guttman (1983:54) as "...a process whereby the learner observes an action and/or takes self-action, generalizes the principles derived from it, then applies these principles to subsequent situations". Dewey as cited in Eisikovits & Guttman (1983:54) termed experiential learning as "...a continuous process of reconstruction of experience". The same author further

affirmed that education and actual experience are inseparable. In this regard, Austin (1981:242) also stresses that the workers "...must filter agency policies and realities through the personal screen of their own life experiences". The supervisor must therefore be able to assess the structure and function of these personal filters accurately.

(d) Peer Learning

The fourth important concept as describe by Gitterman & Miller (1977:106) is peer learning. Cognitive skills can be stimulated and reinforced through peer learning. It is important to generate a group learning climate conducive to the interactional processes of mutual problem solving, as workers will be better able to learn, and to venture into new practice or theoretical possibilities when they have been involved in an active, cooperative, educational process.

(e) Role Model

According to Gitterman & Miller (1977:106) the last concept is that of role model. The supervisor represents a critical professional role model for social workers. The supervisor's behavior will best demonstrate what he or she hopes will be learned by the supervisee. Social workers are particularly influenced by a supervisor who demonstrates skill in practice, maintains high standards, and shows excitement, curiosity, and openness to different perspectives and possibilities. The supervisor should demonstrate by his or her action that good professional practice and continuing professional development is worth all the effort it requires. Austin (1981:242) states that role modelling includes effective communication, the demonstration of values which reflects the dignity and worth of the individual, and an ethical stance on issues such as client confidentiality and self-determination.

Middleman & Rhodes (1985:149) state that it is important for a supervisor to encourage and support supervisees as active adult learners. This will require that the supervisor recognizes the social workers' ability to identify needs, resources, and approaches to teaching or learning requirements in their ongoing development. In order to do this effectively, it is a prerequisite that the supervisor shall be knowledgeable about the principles of adult learning and assumptions of andragogy.

4.2.1 Principles of Andragogy

Knowles (1971:38) defines andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. The author (1971:39) describes four basic assumptions for adult learning: "...as a person matures, 1) his self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directing human being; 2) he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience

that becomes an increasing resource of learning; 3) his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles; and 4) his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem-centeredness."

Each of these assumptions will be discussed briefly.

(a) Self Concept

According to Knowles (1971:39) the self concept of a child is that of a dependent person. This self concept changes from dependency to autonomy as the child moves into adulthood. Assuming that adults are self-directed learners means the learning climate must be supportive, cooperative, informal and must cause adults to feel accepted and respected. In andragogy great emphasis is placed on the involvement of the adult learner in a process of self-diagnosis of learning needs, self-evaluation, and the involvement of the adult learner in the process of planning his or her own learning. Furthermore, the learning-teaching transaction is treated as the mutual responsibility of the learner and teacher (Knowles, 1971:42-43).

(b) Experience

Knowles (1971:44) states that adults define themselves in terms of their accumulation of a unique set of life experiences. Adults have therefore more to contribute to their own development and learning, and the learning of others. They have a richer foundation of experience to which to relate new experiences, and they have acquired a larger number of fixed habits and patterns of thought, and therefore tend to be less open minded. Clancy (1985:77) says that andragogy proposes using the adult's experiences as resources for learning and suggests an emphasis on experiential participatory learning. The experiences of all participants are utilized as resources for learning.

(c) Readiness to Learn

Clancy (1985:77) explains that adults' readiness to learn is linked to developmental tasks that are unique to their particular stage in life. Adults will not learn what is not relevant to their stage in life. The adults' needs and interests give rise to an intrinsic motivation to learn. Kadushin (1992:183) supports this view and says that adults learn best if they are highly motivated to learn. It is important that the supervisor shall make learning meaningful in terms of the individual worker's motives and needs, and that he will act as a facilitator and helps the social workers to diagnose learning needs and attain goals.

(d) Time Perspective and Orientation to Learning

According to Knowles (1971:48) adults have a perspective of immediacy of application toward most of their learning. Learning is problem-centered instead of subject-centered. Clancy (1985:83) says that the andragogical approach promotes the supervisee's creativity, individuality and enhances his or her self-esteem. The andragogical process stresses the supervisee's responsibility for learning new skills to enhance his or her professional growth and development. It also provides an experiential component to learning and allows for immediate application of new learning. The use of a process that accepts sharing and negotiation enhances mutual trust, respect and helpfulness. It encourages freedom of expression between the supervisor and supervisee and can facilitate acceptance of differences.

Clancy (1985:84) sees the disadvantages of the andragogical approach that the supervisee may resent any responsibility for planning and negotiating in the supervisory process. The supervisor may lack training and/or experience in the andragogical model, and may feel threatened when asked to use this approach. Furthermore, the goals and objectives of the organization may not be flexible enough to accept the kind of growth and development of the supervisee that the andragogical process can provide. However, it is possible to overcome these disadvantages by applying the principles of andragogy.

4.2.2 Distance Education

The supervision of rural social workers is often done by a supervisor from the agency's regional or head office. This form of supervision can be described as distance supervision. McFarlane (1991:129) describes distance supervision as supervision that is characterized by a quasi-permanent separation between the supervisor and social worker for the duration of the supervision process, the involvement of the agency in the planning of the learning material, the use of the technical communication media, the provision of two-way communication, and a quasi-permanent absence of group supervision.

It is therefore very important that the supervisor will not only be knowledgeable about the principles of adult learning, but also know and understand the principles of distance education.

Keegan (1980:33) describes the main elements of a definition of distance education as:

- 1 the separation of teacher and learner which distinguishes it from face-to-face lecturing
- 2 the influence of an educational organization which distinguishes it from private study

- 3 the use of technical media usually print, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content
- 4 the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue
- 5 the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes
- 6 the participation in an industrialised form of education which, if accepted, contains the genus of radical separation of distance education from other forms.

Each of these characteristics will be described briefly:

(a) Separation of Teacher and Student

Rumble (1986:11) says that the separation in space and time of teaching and learning is a basic feature of distance education. However, this separation is not the exclusive prerogative of distance education systems, as distance education systems also include face-to-face contact with teachers. The overall design of a system for distance education is however based on this separation, and therefore the role of the teacher, the nature of the transactions between teacher and learner are completely changed.

(b) The Role of the Institution

According to Rumble (1986:11) distance education needs to be differentiated not only from conventional classroom based education, but also from private study at home. People learn a great deal through their own efforts. The distinguishing fact in distance education is that there is an institution that is consciously teaching its students.

(c) Use of Technical Media

Rumble (1986:11) states that the use of the technical media is an integrated manner to provide the basic teaching elements. The advantage is that people who are unable to benefit from traditional education because of physical, economic, or social barriers to access, can be reached. However, it is important that potential learners will be capable of studying independently and will know how best to use the technical media for learning.

(d) Two-way Communication between Teachers and Learners

Cropley & Kahl (1983:33) explain that the most obvious aspect of communication in distance education is that it is not face-to-face, and it can easily become depersonalized for the educator and learner. The educator and learner exchange information by written language, backed up by spoken language. According to the same authors (1983:33) communications are usually carefully planned by both parties, with emphasis on the

transmission of content. Learners may be in a position to stop reading, listening or looking when they want to, distance education does not readily offer teachers the opportunity to modify the flow of information on the basis of moment-to-moment feedback from learners as is the case in face-to-face education. Communication via body-language is also non-existent, as are spontaneous expressions or reactions to momentary situations. Communication processes in distance education are mainly dependent upon language, heavily structured, formal and largely impersonal.

(e) Group Learning

According to Rumble (1986:13) learning in groups is a feature of many distance education systems, although it does not compel students to join a group. New communications technologies such as telephone, telepicture and computer conferences can be used to allow group interactions at a distance.

(f) An Industrialized Form of Education

Keegan (1980:20) is of the opinion that management skills that are more akin to those found in industrialized enterprises are needed in distance education. The distance education system has daily preoccupation with lead times, deadlines, print runs, job schedules, delivery and dispatch, and planning decisions on educational priorities that must take place two, three or more years before teaching is to take place. Rumble (1986:14) says that it is not easy to match the creative activities of course development to a rigidly scheduled production system, and many educators resent the loss of autonomy that is implicit in such regularized and task differentiated systems.

The differences between face-to-face and distance education is described in figure 4.1

Face-to-face education	Distance education
Immediate, personal contact between learner and teacher	Contact through communications media
Teacher can readily adapt to learner's immediate behavior	Adaptation delayed
Learner's environment is primarily designed to support learning activities	Learner's environment is designed to serve other purposes
Metacommunication between teacher and learner is possible	Metacommunication is difficult

Personal relationships can moderate learning

Direct control of learner by teacher is possible

Learning materials can be of low didactic standard

Learners experience limited degree of freedom

Wide opportunities exist for imitation/identification

Communication need not be planned to last detail

Information is provided by a mixture of cues (personal, content-related, organization-mainly related)

A high degree of evaluation and feedback from the teacher is possible

Internal motivation, self-direction self-evaluation, planning can be low

Willingness and ability of learner to work without supervision may be low

Personal relationship is of little importance

Teacher's influence is indirect

Learning materials must be of high didactic standard

Learners experience a high degree of freedom

Few opportunities exist for imitation/learning identification learning

Communication is usually highly planned

Information is provided by content and organization

A comparatively low degree of evaluation and feedback from the teacher is possible

Internal motivation, self-direction, self-evaluation, planning ability must be high

Willingness and ability of learner to work without direct supervision must be high

Figure 4.1 The differences between face-to-face and distance education (Cropley & Kahl, 1983:37)

From the above, it is clear that the concept of the independence of the adult learner is very important in distance education. Cropley & Kahl (1983:36) further point out that psychological traits, such as internal motivation or skill in self-pacing, self-evaluation, and goal-setting are of special importance in distance education. It is also clear that distance education will demand more of the supervisor, in that learning material must be well organized, clear, and of a high didactic standard.

It would not be possible to provide guidelines for competence orientated supervision

without discussing the requirements for effective learning and the important components of the social worker's competence.

4.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Various authors such as Austin (1981:244-246), Kadushin (1992:183-200) and Shulman (1993:158-159) describe some of the principles and techniques that facilitate and maximise learning. The most important principles can be summarized as follows:

- 1 The first requirement for effective learning is that the worker must have a stake in the outcome. A worker who is to learn new skills or procedures must be highly motivated, and must be willing to invest some affect or feeling in the process. This can be achieved if the usefulness of the content to be taught is explained to the worker, if the learning is made useful in terms of the worker's motives and needs, and if areas of high motivation is tied to areas of low motivation. The worker should become co-partners with the supervisor so that by engaging in the activities together, they can have the same interest in its accomplishment and share in the ideas that result.
- 2 A second principle is that the worker learns best when he/she can devote most of the energies in the learning situation to learning. This can be achieved if rules regarding time, place, roles, limits expectations and objectives are clearly stated. Learning should take place in an accepting atmosphere that provides the worker with a sense of psychological safety and security. The supervisor should respect the worker's rights, within limits, to determine his or her own solutions. To apply this principle, the supervisor should acknowledge, and use what the worker already knows and can do, and should demonstrate confidence in the worker's ability to learn. In presenting learning content, the supervisor should always move from the familiar to the unfamiliar.
- 3 A further principle is that the worker learns best if learning is successful and rewarding. Praise through positive feedback, and preparation for failure are important. The probability of success is ensured if learning is partialized, and if the learning material is presented in graded sequences from simple to complex, from obvious to obscure.
- 4 A fourth requirement for effective learning is that the workers be actively involved in the investigation of ideas and in building their own models of reality. The supervisor must concentrate on the interaction between the learner and the ideas to be learned, placing a priority on continuous monitoring of the learning interaction,

and keeping in touch with the learner's progress in constructing the ideas. It is also important to provide the worker with explicit opportunities to utilize and apply the knowledge presented, and to practise new skills.

- 5 For successful learning to take place, it is important that the content is meaningfully presented. The content should be of interest and concern to the individual worker, and should fit into some general theoretical framework. Meaningful teaching should be planned in terms of continuity, sequence and integration. Imaginative repetition makes learning more meaningful.
- 6 Finally, workers learn best if their uniqueness as learners are taken into consideration. An individualized educational diagnosis for each worker, and knowledge of the worker's learning styles and learning abilities are a pre-requisite for successful learning.

Even with these requirements present, many obstacles can emerge to block the learning effort. Shulman (1993:159-160) states that the supervisor helps overcome these obstacles by mediating the learner's mastery of the skills needed for effective work in the helping profession. A positive relationship between the worker and supervisor will according to Kadushin (1992:201-202), intensifies the impact of the supervisor's educational efforts. The supervisory relationship itself, its nature and use, is an educational exemplification of what needs to be taught in developing social work competence. The supervisory relationship is both the context for learning, and a living learning experience in itself.

4.4 SOCIAL WORKER'S COMPETENCE

Guttman *et al* (1988:280) defined competence as: "...involving the capacities, skills and motivation of the worker, and the qualities of environment that lead to effective practice. Effectiveness, is viewed as harmony between the worker's activities and a working situation." Guttman *et al* (1988:280), Kadushin (1992:142-144), Middleman & Rhodes (1985:228) and Shulman (1993:160) see the requisite competence in terms of the following components of the work:

- 1 Task or intellectual competence: this refers to a general understanding of what to do, when and with whom. It is related to the specialized activities through which the core functions of a position are achieved. It can refer to the methodology for helping, and the nature of the helping processes. Competencies needed for delivering of services are related to the building of relationships, assessment, planning, treatment, making referrals, evaluation and termination. The social worker will also require skills that will enable him/her to contribute to the process

of social change.

- 2 Context or performance competence: this is related to the actions required by a particular organization, population or programme. Knowledge of the place or context includes knowledge about how the agency is organized and administered, and how it fits into the total network of community social services, what the objectives and policies of the agency are, and the nature of the agency's statutory authority. It also includes knowledge of the community that the agency will render services to. The social worker will require competencies in connecting with the community. This will include activities such as getting to know and understand the community, and interacting with various individuals and groups in the community. An ability to develop resources is also required and include activities such as determining what resources exist, planning, developing and creating new resources to address community needs. Context competencies further relate to the structuring of the work, and workload management.
- 3 Relationship competencies: Knowledge and skill in relationships is a primary social work concern. For social work, relationship competencies are also part of the value base and Code of Ethics. Relationship competencies are also linked to knowledge about individual and group development, human behavior, and human responses to the stress of social problems.
- 4 Personal competencies: this refers to self-understanding and self awareness, insight into own behavioral patterns, sensitivity and the desire to develop one's professionalism, through ongoing professional learning. Professional learning includes the skills required to work on professional problems, and to incorporate resources such as supervision and literature in a personal approach to problem-solving. This is basic to all competencies in any profession concerned with the human condition and direct involvement with people.
- 5 Consequence competence: The ability to determine the extent to which clients were helped, and to monitor the total system's impact on the intervention, and the outcome of the intervention process.

The assumption can be made that when social workers are motivated to heighten their competence, and when the environment is conducive to this process, the resulting supervisory practices have the potential of increasing effectiveness. Guttman *et al* (1988:281) explain that competent practice is likely to be facilitated by an objective-oriented approach to supervision which focuses on knowledge and performance, on personal and consequence competencies, and on measurable outcomes and accountability. Intellectual

and performance competencies, personal competence, and consequence competence may be viewed as the content categories of competence-oriented supervision.

4.5 GUIDELINES FOR COMPETENCE ORIENTED SUPERVISION

In facilitating effective practice, in promoting competence and the personal and professional development of social workers, there appear to be a number of guidelines that should be followed by the supervisor. Guttman *et al* (1988:280-281), Morton & Kurtz (1980:241), and Kadushin (1992:214) suggest the following guidelines:

4.5.1 Assessment

The development of educational strategies begins with the assessment of learning needs, and the formulation of an educational diagnosis. Authors such as Austin (1981:243-244), Kadushin (1992:196-200), and Morton & Kurtz (1980:241-243) emphasize the importance of assessing learning needs, and describe the content of the educational diagnosis in different ways. Kadushin (1992:197) and Morton & Kurtz (1980:242) stress that it is important that the needs assessment should be a negotiatory process between the supervisor and the worker in which the organization's needs are blended with the worker's needs.

A comprehensive educational diagnosis will not only include information about the worker's learning needs, but also information about several other aspects that will enable the supervisor to understand the worker, and to individualize the learning. Botha (1985:245) summarizes these aspects as information about the social worker's personal background, if applicable, information about the worker's academic training, aptitude, previous job experience, present standard of job performance, level of motivation, attitude towards supervision and the supervisor, the worker's ability to function independently, and his willingness to accept responsibility for his own learning needs. Information about the worker's personal preferences, interests, professional relationships, learning styles and ability to apply and use new knowledge should be included in the educational diagnosis.

Botha (1985:245) declares that all the information in the educational diagnosis should be motivated by examples from the social worker's written work, or conduct. Sources of information must be mentioned. The content of the educational diagnosis should be presented in a logical way, and should explain the learning patterns from the social worker. Information for the educational diagnosis can be obtained from interviews with the social worker, interviews with previous employers, observations, competency based measures, and from the worker's workload; i.e. case-, group-, community work and other files.

4.5.2 Planning

Having determined the educational needs of a worker, the supervisor begins to develop an educationally sound learning plan. It is important to involve the social worker in this process, especially in the process of establishing the learning goals and objectives. According to Fox (1983:37) & Granvold (1978:202) the process of implementing supervision by objectives provide the worker with an opportunity to participate in goal setting and in the establishment of criteria for performance appraisal, and it contributes to the quality of the interaction between the worker and supervisor. It further provides a mechanism for the definition of measurable outcome criteria for job tasks. A contract based upon goals offers a powerful tool for supervision.

(a) Developing a Contract with the Supervisee

Fox (1983:37) is of the opinion that a contract based upon goals promotes genuine collaboration in exploring needs and identifying goals between the supervisor and worker. A further advantage is that it is performance oriented. According to Fox (1983:38) there are nine assumptions that form the foundation for the goal focused contract approach for supervision. These assumptions arise from the principles for adult learning as described by Austin (1981), Kadushin (1992) and Knowles (1971). The nine assumptions as mentioned by Fox (1983:38) are that social workers:

- 1 "are mature and have a professional attitude;
- 2 already possess a firm knowledge base and an awareness of themselves which can be channelled into a supervisory contract;
- 3 know fundamentally what they want and need from supervision and can express these in the form of expectations and goals;
- 4 have the capacity to consider and evaluate the accuracy of their own needs and goals;
- 5 know how much they are willing to invest in learning and can make this explicit;
- 6 are capable of making decisions and choices based on knowledge;
- 7 can assume considerable responsibility for their part in the supervising enterprise;
- 8 already possess some measure of practice competence that can be enlisted and extended in supervision;
- 9 can be helped to become more aware of and then build upon knowledge and competence to foster independent practice competence."

Fox (1983:38) explains that these assumptions serve as guiding principles for designing an

effective supervisory programme where workers are actively involved in defining their needs, and suggesting ways of meeting them. Such participation increases motivation and is congruent with what is known about furthering adult and professional development. Fox (1983:43) reminds us that contracts are based on negotiation between equal parties, that is at any point in the negotiations either party can withdraw if the contract is unacceptable. Since supervision is organizationally mandated, the worker is in no position to withdraw from the contract negotiations. The same author (1983:43) cautions that the supervisor must be keenly aware of the subordinate position of the worker, and must ensure that the worker is genuinely accepting the various elements of the contract. The supervisor should consciously sustain and stimulate a climate of trust, respect, interest and support.

Hurlbert (1992:64) claims that concepts of empowerment, influence-sharing, and delegation can reflect a shift focus from the traditional supervisor-dominated view to a broader one of worker participation in expanding power. Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:53) firmly believe that only workers who are themselves self-directed can be effective in encouraging clients to experience themselves as responsible, and to join in planning and carrying out constructive behaviors. Therefore, one of the key functions of the supervisor is to foster empowerment of workers. It is important to grant the worker autonomy, and to encourage them to be self-reliant, but also to allow dependency so long as the worker does not possess the skill for successful performance (Fox, 1983:44).

The supervision contract should specify according to Fox (1983:46-47) the goals, mutual expectations, roles and responsibilities, the time frame and the criteria for step-by-step evaluation.

(b) Formulating Goals and Objectives

Authors such as Fox (1983:39), Granvold (1978:202), and Morton & Kurtz (1980:242) stress the importance of goals and objectives because they provide direction for the supervisory process, and also provide criteria against which to measure progress and performance. Guttman, *et al* (1988:280-281) explain that in competence-oriented supervision it is important to adhere to a specific and focused approach in which the goals are clearly stated. Furthermore, standards of performance, the criteria and the procedures of evaluating performance should be developed. An emphasis should be placed on the relationship between performance and its consequences, thus enhancing accountability.

Fox (1983:40) and Granvold (1978:205-206) state that it is necessary to specify an end result condition for every goal. Each goal should be translated into a statement of a behavior the worker will display, or task the worker will accomplish after a specified time. Optimum use of goal and objective setting in supervision will occur when goals and

objectives are specific, explicit, and feasible in regard to capacity, opportunity and resources. The objectives should further be realistic, attainable and should be seen in the light of possible constraints. Goals should be related to the task formulated, modifiable over time, ordered in priority, and above all, should be measurable.

(c) Determining the Strategies for Learning

Botha (1985:245) mentions that the supervisor should always be aware of the principles of adult learning, as well as learning and teaching styles. Two principles underlie according to Brannon (1985:30) adult learning and teaching. One is that adult learning is primarily experiential, the role of the instructor that of facilitator. The second principle is that methods of social reinforcement provide necessary and often sufficient building blocks in the creation of a practice-oriented learning environment. Woolfe (1992:5) explains that experiential learning is seen as actively challenging people at an emotional level. Without such challenge no change is possible. The same author (1992:1-2) further explains that experiential learning is concerned with the experience of individuals, not just their participation. The learner is regarded as an active participant, and through this process, power is shifted away from the teacher in the direction of the learner. The participant becomes responsible for his or her own learning.

Brannon (1985:31-32) says in respect of social reinforcement that it is the basic tool of a wide variety of educational and managerial practice styles which have grown out of the behaviorist school. Although there are few realistic tangible reinforcer options available to the supervisor, they can facilitate professional growth of workers through praise, approval, encouragement and attention. Brannon (1985:34-39) also mentions brainstorming, roleplay, modeling behavior, and guided reflection as possible supervision-appropriate teaching methods.

According to Kadushin (1992:155,157-158) most supervisors use a mix of expository, didactic teaching and dialectical-hypothetical teaching procedures. Didactic teaching involves "telling"; and dialectical-hypothetical teaching involves questions and comments which help the supervisee think things out for himself, and attempt to find his own answers. The approach of choice is based on the fit between the content to be taught and the learning preferences of the supervisee. It should also be appropriate to the ultimate aim of competent oriented/educational supervision, which is knowledge for use.

4.5.3 Initiating the Mutually Planned Supervisory Design

Kadushin (1992:154) states that the intent in educational supervision, and for the purpose of this study, in competence-oriented supervision, is to transform information into knowledge,

knowledge into understanding, and understanding into changed behavior. Theory is reformulated as practice principles, which are then adapted to the situational requirements of the tasks the supervisee is asked to perform. The supervisor can initiate the planned educational design through individual or group supervision.

(a) Individual Supervision

According to Kadushin (1992:149) individual supervision is essentially a dyadic interview to fulfill the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision. Kadushin (1992:149-168) describes four important phases of individual supervision, namely the preparation, beginning, middle, and termination phases. The supervisor and social worker contribute to each of these phases.

Botha (1985:246) mentions that the selection of learning material is very important, and that it must be applicable to the work situation, and the social worker's learning needs. Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:267) emphasize that supervisors can contribute to the professional development of social workers by encouraging purposeful professional dialogue, by structuring occasions for exchange and reflection on the work, and by promoting the acquisition and use of new skills. The supervisor should further create a climate in which the workers are supported in trying innovative approaches and learning from failures, as well as successes. The specific goals of personal competence and development should according to Guttman *et al* (1988:282) be determined in each supervisory process, along with the mechanisms for evaluating the worker's progress in attaining them.

(b) Group Supervision

Kadushin (1992:404) and Shulman (1993:225) describe group supervision as a variation of individual supervision. A central consideration is the professional development of the workers. All of the learning subject areas of supervision that have been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, can be appropriately addressed in group supervision. In group supervision there are the possibilities for mutual aid among peers, and opportunities for lateral learning. Staff members can make important contributions to each other's development.

Various authors such as Getzel & Salmon (1985:38-39) and Kadushin (1992:405) describe the supervisory conference group as a formed and structured group with a task and agenda. Maximum effectiveness of the group is based on the thoroughness of planning that accompanies the development of the group. The progress of the group will be strengthened if the supervisees have worked with each other, and have observed each other's

performance closely. Differences in levels of skill and organizational identification are important elements for spontaneity in the group. Too much homogeneity of members is to be avoided in convened supervisory groups. The power of the group is further enhanced when supervisees are directly communicating their understandings of each other. It is important to evaluate each supervisee's capacity to judge peers' work.

According to Getzel & Salmon (1985:40-41) group supervision works optimally when the supervisor is active and direct. The supervisor must feel free to make demands on supervisees to work on problems. Group process skills are balanced carefully with the supervisor's cognitive guidance. It is appropriate for the supervisor to teach, giving members content and value messages that respond to identified collective issues. Expertise from the supervisor should not be avoided or disguised out of misguided, slavish worship of the group process. The supervisor's authority in the group is maintained through helpfulness in allowing the group to handle problems, through the supervisor's expertise, and by functionally based intimacy established with supervisees as they cooperate together in a group.

Kadushin (1992:409) explains that a clear advantage of group supervision is that it provides the supervisor with the opportunity of observing the social worker in a different kind of relationship. Individual supervision permits the supervisor to understand how the social worker reacts in a dyadic relationship, and group supervision shows how the social worker functions in group situations. As a consequence the supervisor may be in a better position to provide more effective individual supervision.

The four phases of individual supervision, namely the preparation, beginning, middle and termination phases are also applicable in group supervision.

4.5.4 Providing Feedback

According to Morton & Kurtz (1980:246) the provision of feedback is an important but often neglected aspect of instructional designs. Feedback allows for confirmation of positive learning and correction of incorrect responses. Middleman & Rhodes (1985:286) stress that feedback should be provided regularly as part of the teaching. Kadushin (1992:165-166) suggests that specific and objective feedback should be given as soon as possible after the performance, as this will increase motivation and interest in learning that might have been improved. The effects of good performance should be highlighted. The feedback that is given should be descriptive rather than judgmental, and should focus on the behavior of the supervisee rather than on the supervisee as a person.

Another quality of good feedback involves, according to Kadushin (1992:166), the sharing

of ideas rather than giving advice, and exploring alternatives rather than giving answers. Feedback should be offered tentatively for consideration and discussion, rather than authoritatively for agreement, and acceptance. The supervisor should always be selective in terms of the amount of feedback that the social worker can absorb.

Kadushin (1992:166) concludes that feedback is important for the supervisor and the supervisee. What has been well taught is not necessarily well learned, and the communication of feedback about performance does not necessarily generate a change in performance. There needs to be motivation to change, and the problem needs to be perceived as susceptible to change.

4.6 SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

Middleman & Rhodes' (1985:119-121) description of the integrative function of supervision can be seen as similar to Kadushin's description of supportive supervision (1992:227-229). Supportive supervision is always primarily concerned with increasing effectiveness of the worker through decreasing stress that interferes with performance, and increasing motivation and intensifying commitment that enhances performance. In fulfilling the supportive or integrative function, the supervisor needs to be sensitive to isolation among social workers, burnout in some workers, and should also be sensitive to increased competitive attitudes and behaviors generated by concerns for turf and personal survival. Kadushin (1992:229) affirms that if social workers are to do their jobs effectively, they need to feel good about themselves and about the jobs they are doing. However, the reality is that they often for a variety of reasons, feel discouraged, powerless, frustrated, devalued and burdened with a sense of futility. Middleman & Rhodes (1985:121) declare that the supervisor can address the mentioned problems by engaging in the integrative functions of humanizing, managing stress and tension, and catalyzing.

4.6.1 Humanizing

According to Middleman & Rhodes (1985:121) humanizing is the supervisory function that is related to personal and interpersonal aspects of the work. This function is central to creating and maintaining the conditions for working that promote human dignity and contribute to organizational stability. The supervisor's aim is to help workers feel valued, needed, and central to the service delivery of the organization. The supervisor's activities and actions within the humanizing function are encouraging self-acceptance and interpersonal regard, and giving feedback.

Munson (1983:95) mentions that for reasons that are not always clear, social workers tend to block out positive feedback from the supervisor about their work. One reason for this,

may be an inconsistency between the worker's self-image, and the supervisor's feedback. The development of appropriate self-analysis, and self-awareness in the worker is therefore necessary.

Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:269) are also of the opinion that the supervisor's concern in promoting professional development spans the entire spectrum from personal qualities to technical skills, and professional knowledge. Aspects of human development that are fundamental to professional competence are according to the same authors (1988:270) self-awareness, assertiveness, and skills in integrative problem solving. The supervisor should use both the individual and group supervision sessions to advocate steps that the workers can take to deepen their own self-awareness, and to aid the process of self-understanding by helping the worker to clarify the effects of his own underlying feelings on clinical transactions. The purpose of this exploration of sensitive personal material, is according to Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:270) necessary to enable professional workers to develop a deeper comprehension of their own impact, and a new perspective on themselves in action.

4.6.2 Managing Tension

Authors such as Kadushin (1992:229), Middleman & Rhodes (1985:130) explain that managing tension is the supervisory function related to using the power of supervisors and supervisees as a means of coping with stress and conflict. This function is critical in combating the effects of unresolved stress and conflict, both on worker dignity and on organizational stability. The aim of this function will be to reinforce ego defenses and to strengthen the capacity of the ego to deal with job stresses and tensions. Further aims are to help the workers to maintain a sense of control over their work and interpersonal relations; to recognize and use their power potentials, working from the lower positions in the agency; and to express as well as recognize diverse perspectives on common issues concerning workers, service delivery, and or/the organization.

The cognitive restructuring approach to managing stress and tension, will according to Austin (1981:291) be most successful with workers who have the ability to use personal strength, and the insight needed to confront the factors which led to feelings of stress. Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:275) explain that a matter of shifting the locus of control from outside the workers to inside themselves.

The use of peer group support represents another method for managing stress. Austin (1981:292) explains that the goals of most support groups include the stimulation of new ideas, provision of practical help to group members, and the promotion of a sense of emotional support.

According to Kadushin (1992:262), and Middleman & Rhodes (1985:132) the supervisor's response to the development of stress and tension on the part of the worker involves a series of specific interventions. The supervisor can act to prevent stress and tension developing by, for example, the effective performance of the administrative supervisory function of hiring and inducting. This will enable the supervisor to select the most suitable person for the job. The supervisor can also remove the worker from the source of stress and tension, or reduce the impact of stressors by for example, the making of adjustments to the work environment. The supervisor can develop creative approaches to distributing workloads, to balancing quality and quantity, and to handling less pleasant tasks as this can reduce the tensions involved. The supervisor's ability to look for creative ways to get the job done within organizational constraints will provide a model for the workers in combating the negative effects of these tension producing organizational problems. Stress management workshops can be arranged to help the worker cope with developing tension.

The supervisor's actions to help the social worker to manage tension should, according to Kadushin (1992:273), take place in the context of a positive relationship characterized by respect, empathic understanding, acceptance, sympathetic interest in and concern for the worker as a person. It is also important that the supervisor shall communicate confidence in the worker.

4.6.3 Catalyzing

Middleman & Rhodes (1985:136) explain that catalyzing is the supervisory function that focuses on fostering interdependence or teamwork, and on building morale. The supervisor's aim will be to make practice more exhilarating, to counter the stagnation that can occur in the life course of the organization, and to counter frustrations that can result from the pressures for uniformity and predictability in delivering services that involve ambiguity and uncertainty.

Supervisory activities within the catalyzing function include according to Middleman & Rhodes (1985:136-137,143) the encouragement of supervisees to work together on common problems, and to take on special assignments or participate in opportunities for continuing education and staff development. As a catalyst it is important that the supervisor shall speed up creative responses to issues and slow down negative responses.¹ The supervisor can also within the catalyzing function to stimulate supervisees to assert themselves and determine their own actions in the organizational structures and processes. In this way, interdependence is fostered, and morale is enhanced.²

4.7 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISION

Kadushin (1992:227) describes administrative supervision as providing the organizational structure and access to agency resources that facilitate the worker's job. Administrative supervision is concerned with organizational barriers to effective services, and executive-managerial aspects. Administrative supervision is further responsible for relating effective workers to effective organizations, increasing the effectiveness of the organizational structure and the resources available to the worker. The supervisor is a link in the chain of administration - the administrator who is in direct contact with the worker (Kadushin, 1992:46).

The administrative function of supervision is according to Kadushin (1992:46) and Middleman & Rhodes (1985:169) related to activities of staff recruitment and selection, placing the worker, workload management, and the coordination, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of performance. Cronje (1985:177) reduces these functions to the four main components of administration, namely: planning, organizing, activating and controlling. In fulfilling the functions of administrative supervision, the supervisor assumes various roles:

4.7.1 The Role of Advocate

Various authors such as Kadushin (1992:69), Middleman & Rhodes (1985:174-175) define advocating as a supervisory function as the action to push issues of concern to supervisees and/or supervisors upward and/or outward the service delivery system. Advocacy is therefore tied to vertical and horizontal communication. The activities of the supervisor will include identifying issues of fairness, equity and justice, defining the forces involved, and developing strategic plans for pleading, defending, and espousing supervisee/supervisor causes.

If the supervisor wants to be effective in carrying out the role of advocate, he/she will have to be more than just a messenger (Kadushin, 1992:70-71; Middleman & Rhodes, 1985:179). The supervisor has to take a stand on behalf of the supervisee and the self, and actively press for the implementation of necessary changes. The supervisor will have to outline problems clearly, and suggest alternative solutions to the administrators. Since the balance of power rests with the administrators, the supervisor has to present rational arguments, and has to be skillful in negotiating solutions that will be acceptable to the administrators, and is in the best interest of the supervisees, and of course, the client system. It is therefore also important that the supervisor shall participate in community events to enlighten or influence attitudes about, and commitments to proposed changes in policy, regulations, and procedures.

4.7.2 The Role of Coach

According to Brody (1993:141-142) one of the most demanding roles of an administrator/manager is that of coaching the staff. As a coach, the manager's primary responsibility is to train staff to help attain the goals of both the organization and the unit. As the situation demands, the coach may provide support, counseling or confront staff with the consequences of their behavior. A combination of genuine concern for the employee and an expectation that tasks will be accomplished well must be conveyed throughout the process of coaching.

4.7.3 The Role of Change Agent

Middleman & Rhodes (1985:180) describe change as modifying agency structures and processes from the bottom up. Kadushin (1992:75) states that if a supervisor sees a need for change, he/she should encourage and collaborate with supervisees in seeking those changes, rather than being a mere mediator. The supervisor must collect and organize supporting information, help staff clearly identify what is it they want changed, and help staff articulate as clearly and honestly as possible why they want change. The supervisor has to mobilize allies in the agency that would support the change, maximize receptivity to the message, and minimize opposition and defensiveness on the part of the administration.

Change is, according to authors such as Kadushin (1992:76-77), Middleman & Rhodes (1985:184), best accomplished if supervisees are encouraged to review the standard of operating procedures, and participate actively in the planning of the change process. The desirability of the change should be communicated, expectations should be made clear and understandable, and the supervisor should have appreciation of, and empathy with, the difficulties that change generates for the staff. It is also important to incorporate useful suggestions of the staff in the change process, and to introduce change slowly.

4.7.4 The Role of Administrative Buffer

Lewis, Lewis & Soufl   (1991:222) suggest that as the mediator, or administrative buffer as described by Kadushin (1992:71), the supervisor is at the nexus between the two technologies found in a human service organization - the technologies of administration and direct practice. It is where the two technologies meet that service goals are operationalized into functional service objectives, and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to mediate between, and articulate the two technologies in a manner that satisfies the requirements of both in the efficient and effective delivery of services. The supervisor is the link between administration and direct services, between policy formulation and policy implementation.

A critical function of the mediator role involves, according to Lewis *et al* (1991:222), the

integration of vertical and horizontal interactions and interdependencies between the staff and other levels of the organization. The supervisor also serves as mediator between the supervisees and the organization's environment, including clients and other service providers. Kadushin (1992:72) mentions that the supervisor should be ready to accept appeals from clients who are dissatisfied with a worker's decisions and want to speak to higher authority. In doing so, the supervisor protects the worker from having to deal with clients' strong feelings about a negative decision, and from a possible arbitrary or incorrect decision.

According to Kadushin (1992:72) the supervisor should also protect the worker from imposition by administrators of unreasonable workload standards, and harassment. The supervisor can modify the environment, or act as a buffer in an agency that may be too bureaucratic, authoritarian, or undemocratic. Lewis *et al* (1991:222) conclude by saying that the role of mediator requires considerable skills in decision making, conflict management and a sensitivity to the needs of clients, staff and the organization.

4.7.5 The Role of Warrior

The term warrior is explained by Brody (1993:143) as a metaphor for the manager as a person of action. If, for example, productivity is decreasing, the alert supervisor will take action to improve it. To be an effective warrior, the supervisor must persevere in the face of obstacles. The warrior must continually, but gently guide staff to do better. If certain operations are inefficient, or unproductive, the supervisor may have to make the difficult decision to discontinue them, and if the organization experiences a crisis, the warrior must respond without hesitation.

4.7.6 Handling the Different Roles

Supervisors need to understand these different roles, assess their own ability to carry them out, and obtain guidance where they are deficient. Brody (1993:144) notes that because handling the various and complex roles is difficult, seeking guidance is not a sign of weakness, but demonstrates true commitment to addressing concerns.

4.8 THE CAPACITY AND SKILLS OF THE SUPERVISOR

Guttman *et al* (1988:283) are of the opinion that the various aspects of the competence of the worker are complemented by the supervisor's characteristics, capacity and skills which come to the forefront in competence oriented supervision. A brief description of the characteristics, capacity and skills of the supervisor will be given in the following paragraphs

4.8.1 Knowledge

Various authors such as Brody (1993:149), Skidmore (1983:217) and Westheimer (1977:27) suggest that competence derives from the fusion of theoretical knowledge, and practical application over some years of practice. Knowledgeability is an essential characteristic of an effective supervisor. Professional knowledge and knowledge about the agency in which practice is taking place, are essential. It is also important for the supervisor to take time to know the staff, and have knowledge about the abilities, strengths, and learning needs of the social worker. The supervisor must be acquainted with the normal anxiety that occurs in learning, the normal dependency that happens in new situations, and the different ways of behaving when people find themselves in learning situations.

The ability to impart knowledge, or direct a worker to the source of knowledge at an appropriate time is according to Westheimer (1977:30) very important. Supervisors should therefore be familiar with the current literature in order to refer their supervisees to further study.

4.8.2 Skills

Skidmore (1983:218) mentions that practice skills are essential for competent supervisors. However, Westheimer (1977:29) says that being a competent supervisor does not imply that mastery in all areas of social work skills could possibly be achieved. The supervisor should be clear on where her competence ends, so that whenever necessary, she can get help for the worker from another source. It takes a competent supervisor to know and declare her limits without apology.

Several important skills and abilities of the supervisor is mentioned by Reeves (1971:14-33). These skills will be discussed briefly:

- 1 Functional ability is the supervisor's ability to function effectively under any circumstances the supervisor has to face in his work. Functional ability can be measured by how well the supervisor applies his/her skills, intelligence, and experience to solving problems that confronts him.
- 2 Planning skills are required if a supervisor wants to run a productive and goal achieving department. The mastery of this skill will give the supervisor greater control over the direction and progress of activities.
- 3 Organizing is an essential skill if the supervisor wants to coordinate all the resources of the organization - manpower, money, materials, equipment and methods - to reach the goals of the organization.
- 4 Controlling is an important skill that the supervisor should apply if he/she wants to

ensure that goals and objectives are achieved. The skillful supervisor will not have unnecessarily elaborate systems of reports and controls, but will be able to wisely select the information he/she should know, and be willing to do without the information he/she really does not need to know.

- 5 Effective communication is a basic tool for managing. Skills in oral and written communication are essential skills of the competent supervisor.
- 6 The effective supervisor will continuously seek to develop his/her leadership skills, as he/she will realize that it would not be possible to delegate, solve problems, make sound decisions, communicate or motivate staff by intuition alone.
- 7 Skills in solving problems with decisions are necessary if the supervisor wants to succeed in his/her work. The supervisor should also improve creativeness skills, as new ideas and solutions to problems will enhance the ability to solve problems.
- 8 The supervisor must have the capacity and the willingness to take initiative, to act on his/her own responsibility without being prompted, urged, or directed.
- 9 Flexibility and receptivity to change are important skills, as this will ensure that services of the social worker and the organization remain relevant and effective.

4.8.3 Empathy for Colleagues and Clients

The supervisor needs to be genuinely interested in the welfare of the client and be able to convey this in the supervisory session. Westheimer (1977:32) claims that if the supervisor lacks this basic requirement, he/she may still be a useful adviser, may know about techniques of interviewing, and methods of intervention, but he/she will lack the vital part of human concern and caring so that much of the substance is missing. It is therefore unlikely that the supervisor will be able to motivate the worker in the total helping process. However, supervisors who are only interested in what happens to the clients, are also not effective supervisors. The supervisor's aim should always be to enable the social worker to help the clients in the most effective and efficient way.

4.8.4 Appropriate Use of Authority

According to Westheimer (1977:34) the supervisor needs to maintain dual focus; this requires the supervisor to consider the needs of the case and also the skills of the worker. As the supervisor cannot do the worker's learning for him, and has to allow him to experiment, and find his own way of dealing with a given situation. Social work competence, humility and wisdom are required of the supervisor to allow the worker to follow his own course when it appears appropriate.

Westheimer (1977:35) is of the opinion that firmness is often welcomed by workers,

particularly by those who feel insecure, and especially when this is given by a supervisor who normally is ready to let the worker discover his own way. The occasional demonstration of firmness will enable the worker to extend this to clients when this becomes necessary. Authority and firmness can also derive from the supervisor's personal competence to do the job which he/she has been assigned.

4.8.5 Showing Appreciation

The showing of appreciation and commendation can according to Skidmore (1983:218) reinforce, and increase motivation and professional development of the workers. Supervisors who fail to show appreciation limit their effectiveness, slow down professional development of the workers, and decrease the competency of the supervisees.

4.8.6 Development of the Worker

Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:88) describe the actual and reputed competence and reliability of the professional staff as the most valuable asset of an organization. The supervisor is the direct agent for the conservation, adaptation, and the enhancement of these resources. The same authors (1988:89) see the supervisor's role in fostering the individual worker's development as: "...unfolding opportunities, fitting development activities into the work process of the unit and the organization, coaching workers on the acquisition and use of new skills, facilitating the workers' own search for self-understanding, conferring on important choices related to particular cases, and supporting the development of team cooperation and group support."

4.8.7 Willingness to Develop the Self

The importance of the supervisor's believe in ongoing learning and progress is stressed by Westheimer (1977:36). If the supervisor does not enjoy learning, he/she is unlikely to make a good supervisor. A supervisor who is ready to explore further, and with the worker, is a stimulant and demonstrates that development goes on in and around us. The supervisor who believes in the acquiring of new knowledge and skills, will usually study independently, or take courses in, for example, supervision or social work administration, offered through a continuing education programme, or advanced degree courses.

4.8.8 Commitment to Supervision

Various authors such as Brody (1993:149), Skidmore (1983:218) and Westheimer (1977:37) suggest that a genuine conviction of the need for effective supervision is essential. These authors stress that capable supervisors have a dynamic interest in the agency, in themselves, and in their supervisees. The supervisor should be perceived as

someone who enjoys the work, and who genuinely believes that the more you know, the more there is still to be known. This enthusiasm and dedication can be contagious, and will contribute to the social workers' personal and professional development.

4.9 SUMMARY

The supervisor plays a vital role in human service organizations. The supervisor is mainly responsible for ensuring that key organizational tasks are carried out effectively, efficiently and in accordance with organizational standards. Furthermore, the supervisor has a responsibility to ensure the personal and professional development of the social worker. However, responsibility should be shared between the supervisor and the social worker in the supervisory process. The significance of supervision to social workers will depend on the goals the workers formulate for themselves, and their willingness to share responsibility for their personal and professional development. The supervisor fulfills an important role as educator and should have a thorough knowledge of the concepts in the teaching methodology, the principles of adult learning and the requirements for effective learning.

Supervision of rural social workers is often done by a supervisor from the agency's regional, or head office. Knowledge of distance education and distance supervision is necessary to ensure effective supervision. The supervisor should focus on developing the worker's competence in the expansion of knowledge, and should also develop the worker's performance, relationship, personal and consequence competencies in specific intervention related areas. Guidelines for competence oriented are based on the strategies of assessment, planning, contracting, the formulation of goals and objectives, instruction and feedback. These strategies are based on a learning theory that is grounded on concepts of experiential learning, modeling and reinforcement. The supervisor can initiate the planned educational design through the methods of individual or group supervision.

The various functions of supervision, namely educational, supportive and administrative functions are interrelated. Therefore, all three functions should be implemented in order to ensure the optimal personal and professional development of the social worker

The supportive function of supervision is necessary to prevent the development of potential stressful situations in the work situation, and to help the worker to develop the ego strength needed to deal with the difficulties and anxieties of the task at hand. The aim is to remove blocks to the personal development of the worker, and to enable the worker to function as an independent professional. The supervisor can offer support through activities such as humanizing, managing tension, and catalyzing. Effective administrative supervision will increase the worker's ability to perform his/her tasks in an effective manner. The principle functions of administrative supervision are related to activities of staffing, workload

management, coordination, monitoring, reviewing, and the evaluation of performance. In fulfilling the functions of administrative supervision the supervisor assumes various roles such as advocate, coach, change agent, administrative buffer and warrior.

The competent supervisor will possess professional knowledge, practice skills, will use authority appropriately, show appreciation and empathy for colleagues and clients. A competent supervisor will invest continuously in the development of the social worker, and will also be willing to invest in the development of his/her abilities and competencies as a supervisor. Enthusiasm, commitment to, and believe in the supervisory process are essential.

In chapter five attention will be given to the role employer plays in the personal and professional development of the social worker, as the employer or agency is one of the key participants in the delivering of effective services to clients and communities.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION IN THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In an era of accountability and limited resources, it is essential that every organization will strive to render quality services that are both effective and efficient. The organization is therefore much more than a place where the social worker practices. Loewenberg (1977:121) and Finch (1977:62) are both of the opinion that the organization is one of the key participants in the helping process, and that the social worker's productivity in the organizational setting can either be augmented or hindered by environmental influences.

In order for the organization to achieve its objectives and fulfill its mission, those conditions of the work environment that prevent adequate performance must be changed, and all staff members should be involved and informed. A primary function of the management is therefore the establishment and maintenance of the conditions under which social services can be effectively provided to clients. In this chapter attention will be given to situational pressures within the organization that can affect staff performance, and ways of creating a positive working environment. Attention will also be given to ongoing staff development, and ways to influence employee growth.

5.2 SITUATIONAL PRESSURES WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

There are an unlimited number of situations that can complicate the job of the social worker, and the management committee of the organization. Some of these are relatively unlikely to occur, whereas some occur so frequently that they seem almost part of the work life of employees. In the following section a closer look will be taken at a few of the most common situational factors that impact the work of the social worker and the management, and ways to deal with these situational pressures.

5.2.1 Fiscal Stress and Organizational Decline

Friesen & Frey (1983:33) and Weinbach (1994:285) say that in many human service organizations tight funding seems to be more the rule than the exception. These authors (1983:33) use the term "fiscal stress" to describe an objective condition (resource scarcity), the current or anticipated consequences of resource scarcity (organizational decline), and the accompanying reactions of organizational personnel to increased uncertainty and change

(organizational and personal stress). Fiscal stress may create a major organizational crisis when the resources of an organization are suddenly reduced, and when the environment is characterized by high degrees of uncertainty and change to the extent that the integrity or survival of the organization is threatened.

It is further suggested by Friesen & Frey (1983:34) that organizational decline can be viewed from three perspectives, namely: decline as stagnation, decline as inflation, and decline as cutback. Decline as stagnation means that there is a decline in the organization's rate of growth. Under decline as inflation the organization may increase the size of its budget, but grows at a slower rate, because the costs of providing the same services increase at a faster rate than its fiscal resources. The organization is therefore forced to reduce service levels in order to compensate for the gap between expenditures and revenues. Decline as cutback refers to an absolute reduction in the size of the organization, the budget, the number of employees, and/or the number of clients the organization can render services to.

Weinbach (1994:286) is of the opinion that management during a time of real and threatened reduction of funding is in a way different from managing during better times. The tasks and principles of management remain the same, but during economic austerity the need for good management is even greater and the margin for error is even smaller. Efficiency becomes critical, and waste of limited resources (personnel, funds, facilities and supplies) cannot be permitted. In this situation it is very important to maximize staff's potential value to the organization. Weinbach (1994:287) stresses that training and ongoing staff development, while costly, cannot be ignored. It is critical that staff must quickly learn to function in new roles, under new conditions, and with minimal errors. Whether staff will pull together to survive times of economic austerity or whether they will become acutely dissatisfied will depend, according to Weinbach (1994:287), on the management's ability to generate trust. Good leadership, group cohesiveness, as promoted by the management, and recognition of an awareness of the problems that exist as well as appreciation for staff efforts under stress, will contribute to improving the staff morale.

A careful balance between participatory management, centralization of authority, and additional control over the organization need to be maintained. Friesen & Frey (1983:35) are of the opinion that when organizational survival is at stake, or when stability seems threatened, errors in decision-making will be very costly, and management will therefore tend to assume more responsibility. Discretionary decisions will be limited, e.g., no travel without prior, written approval, new rules and policies will be instituted, and the boundaries of the organization are closed in order to control and coordinate the flow of information and to create a sense of a united front in the face of external threats. However,

this approach can affect staff morale negatively, as professional staff tend to value autonomy and prefer democratic forms of decision-making.

Friesen & Frey (1983:36) declare that since the processes of organizational growth are different from the processes of organizational decline, a number of new problems and priorities emerge. The most important priorities are criteria for cutbacks, resource development, productivity issues, and personnel management.

(a) Criteria for Cutbacks

According to Friesen & Frey (1983:36) the first need is for a thorough understanding of the immediate and long-range consequences of using different criteria for cutbacks. Management need to be aware of the consequences of cuts made on the basis of seniority, productivity indicators, hiring freezes, and percentages across-the-board, since each is likely to have a different impact on the organization.

(b) Resource Development

Hall (1993:354-355) says that management of welfare services in South Africa takes place in a situation of extreme resource scarcity. This factor, combined with the likelihood of excessive demands being placed on welfare organizations - particularly in situations of drought, famine and pervasive poverty - tends to lead to management styles that are defensive and protective of the agency concerned. However, managerial tasks will have to be widened to take into account the resources available in the community, and work at creating supportive relationships with these community resources.

The success of services depends, according to Lewis *et al* (1991:10,117), on the manager's ability to mobilize valuable human resources so that the immediate and long-term needs of the organization and its clients are met. Especially in times of retrenchment, when financial resources are limited, human service managers must plan carefully both to bring needed people into the organization and to enhance their development once they have begun to provide services. Friesen & Frey (1983:37) and Lewis *et al* (1991:11, 118-119) are of the opinion that the skillful utilization of volunteers and paraprofessionals is important in expanding the organization's human resources. Community members' participation in voluntarism and self-help increases the agency's service delivery capacity, but only if these contributions are respected as highly as those of paid personnel.

Friesen & Frey (1983:37) say that building relationships with policy makers, preparing testimony to support the work of an organization, and building organizational constituencies are all activities which are important to support and maintain the organization, and is therefore part of resource development. Managers need to develop both technical skills

(i.e., how to raise new funds) and interactional skills (i.e., how to build a constituency).

(c) Productivity

Productivity becomes an even more pressing matter because of the necessity to manage with less. Berliner (1979:230) states that managers and supervisors are responsible for the adequacy, appropriateness, implementation, and continued evolution of the methods and operation of the work in the organization. This requires their continued involvement in work improvement. Work improvement, according to Berliner (1979:230), enables people to do better work with less effort, to do it in less time without hurrying, and to do it with greater safety and at less cost.

Berliner (1979:230-231) and Friesen & Frey (1983:37) suggest that managers need to search for alternate ways to increase productivity such as streamlining of a process, and eliminating unnecessary and nonessential activities, or duplication of effort. Contracting out of a service, the development of joint programmes, the sharing of capital expenditure (e.g., sharing the cost of a copying machine) are methods that can be used to reduce costs without reducing quality, thereby increasing productivity. Waste of time, effort, materials, and improper equipment use should be eliminated or minimized. It is also very important to improve the work climate and to develop a positive receptivity to desirable changes.

(d) Personnel Management

According to Friesen & Frey (1983:38) conditions of high uncertainty, rapid change, and job insecurity are likely to increase job-related stress for staff. Demands on staff to do more with less, to learn new roles and perform multiple roles, and to respond to greater demands for accountability add to these pressures. Stress reduction programmes should therefore move forward at many levels of the organization, covering individual issues, job design, and organizational patterns. It is also important to remember that staff need support from each other, and opportunities for support need to be built into the ongoing operation of the organization.

5.2.2 Change

Mullins (1993:664-667) and Weinbach (1994:289) state that change, like economic austerity, is a common condition within human service organizations. As an organization can only perform effectively through interactions with the broader external environment of which it is part, it must reflect the nature of the environment in which it is operating. Factors such as uncertain economic conditions, fierce competition, the level of government intervention, scarcity of natural resources, the knowledge explosion, and rapid technological developments create an increasingly volatile environment. The increased

importance attached to the quality of working life has drawn attention to the satisfaction of people's needs and expectations at work; and to such factors as frustration and alienation, job design and work organization, styles of managerial behavior, and the relationships between the quality of working life and employee commitment, levels of work performance and productivity. The identification of new client groups, for example, HIV patients and their families, can also lead to the creation of new structures and programmes. In order to help ensure its survival and future success the organization must be readily adaptable to the external demands placed upon it. The organization must be responsive to change.

Change also originates within the organization itself. Mullins (1993:664) explains that much of this change is part of a natural process of ageing; for example, as material resources such as buildings, equipment or machinery deteriorate or lose efficiency; or as human resources get older, or as skills and abilities become outdated. However, the main pressure of change is from external forces. The organization must therefore be prepared properly to face the demands of a changing environment.

Weinbach (1994:289) claims that management during a time of rapid change requires an understanding of change itself, how people are likely to react to it, and how it is best facilitated by the manager. Organizational continuity and of preservation of the integrity of the organization as a system during times of change is stressed by the author. The basic character of the agency, and both its public and its internal identity, must not be altered to the point where critical relationships and linkages to other organizations and systems are jeopardized. If chaos is to be avoided, the manager must assure that change is incremental and implemented in tolerable amounts.

(a) Resistance to Change

Authors such as Mullins (1993:667-668), Smither (1988:263-264) and Weinbach (1994:291-294) all declare that despite the potential positive outcomes, change is almost certain to be resisted to some degree at both the individual and at the organizational level. Some of the reasons for resistance of change include:

- 1 Disruption of personal relationships. One of the most disturbing events that can occur in the workplace, is a change in the system of personal relationships. Disruption of social relations typically affects employee productivity and morale negatively, at least initially.
- 2 Changes can appear to violate professional values. Professionals can be expected to resist a change if they perceive it as a violation of client rights, and professional ethics.

- 3 Change results in uncertainty, fear of the unknown, and fear of loss. People may know from experience that they can succeed in the old way of doing things, but there is no such assurance after change. A person may resist promotion because of uncertainty over changes in responsibilities or the increased social demands of the higher position.
- 4 Perceived threats to status. When individuals feel changes may result in lowered status or new and undesired job duties, then change is likely to be resisted. Threats to status typically result in defensiveness and are not conducive to the introduction of change. Feared loss of employment is the most dramatic source of resistance, particularly among staff with little seniority.
- 5 Habit. People tend to respond to situations in an established and accustomed manner. Habits may serve as a means of comfort and security, and as a guide for easy decision making. Proposed changes to habits, especially if the habits are well established and require little effort, may well be resisted.
- 6 Inconvenience or loss of freedom. If the change is seen as likely to prove inconvenient, make life more difficult, and reduce freedom of action or result in increased control, there will be resistance.
- 7 Lack of confidence in the manager. A staff member may like the change, but resist change because of a lack of confidence in the manager's ability to implement it successfully.
- 8 Timing. Some changes, normally acceptable, may be resisted in time of over-work, interpersonal conflict, or when they come too soon after other changes. The tolerance for change of individuals has its limits.
- 9 Resistance because of one's basic personality. Some staff members are just negative and pessimistic by nature. They have taken on the role of resident foot-dragger and will resist any change because they think it is expected of them.

Many of the sources of resistance to change have one thing in common - they result from an individual's recognition or belief that change may depreciate one's value, particularly the value of one's experience. Staff must be convinced that their skills and knowledge will continue to be valued in the future.

(b) The Management of Organizational Change

The supervisor can play an important role in the management of change, as he/she is in a strategic position between the administration and the social workers. Kadushin (1992:77) suggests that change will be best accomplished if the social workers participate from the start in planning the change; if they are informed early of the nature of the planned change;

if the change is introduced slowly and if expectations are made clear and understandable. It is important that the change will be in line with perceived agency norms and objectives. In this regard Mullins (1993:671) also says that it is an important priority to create an environment of trust and shared commitment, and to involve the staff in decisions and actions which affect them.

Tact, as Weinbach (1994:295) claims, is imperative in all areas of interpersonal management behavior, but especially in presentation of change. Change should be presented in such a way that it does not suggest a criticism of staff, or management, but as a process worked out together by intelligent and dedicated people. The manager should also review with staff what the profession has learned about clients, and their likely reactions to change. This will help to reinforce the perception that the needs of clients remain the first priority.

According to Weinbach (1994:297) problems relating to change, including resistance, can be avoided or at least lessened through prevention. The difficulties inherent in the task of change implementation can be greatly reduced if the manager has been successful in creating and maintaining a managerial climate conducive to change. To do this, Smither (1988:264) and Weinbach (1994: 297) suggest that the inevitability of change should be communicated constantly. Change must be portrayed as inevitable and desirable, given the nature of social work services and the changing service needs of members of society.

Finally, Kadushin (1992:77), Mullins (1993:671), and Weinbach (1994:297) suggest that support during times of change is important. Appreciation of, and empathy with the difficulties that change generate for the staff are necessary. Information about proposed change, its implications and potential benefits should be communicated clearly to all interested parties, and staff should be actively encouraged to voice openly their worries or concerns. Managers should discuss problems directly with staff and handle any foreseen difficulties in working practices or relationships by attempting to solutions agreed with them.

5.2.3 Organizational Practices

Organizational practises, and the organizational culture can also be causative factors of situational pressures, and can affect the organizational climate. Larger organizations will have more formalised structures, but even small rural organizations will, as Lewis *et al* (1991:99-100) suggest, have to decide how to identify individual roles within the organization, how to divide activities among groups, and how to coordinate efforts both within the organization and at interfaces with the environment. Failure to do this, can result, according to Mullins (1993:651,661-662) in role conflict, violation of territory, and can affect the prevailing atmosphere surrounding the organization, the level of morale, and

the strength of feelings or belonging, care and goodwill among members.

In order to identify individual roles within the organization, and to divide activities among groups, it may be helpful to consider the five subsystems of a generic welfare organization as described by Martin & O'Connor (1989:212). The five subsystems are: the production -, maintenance -, support -, adaptation -, and leadership subsystems. These subsystems are fluid in structure and are identified, as all subsystems, by their activities. Martin & O'Connor (1989:212) also note that over a period of time, an individual may perform work associated with two, three, or all five subsystems. A short description of each of the subsystems is given:

(a) Production Subsystem

The production subsystem performs core work activities, and provide direct services to clients. Service effectiveness, proficiency, productivity and efficiency are goals of this subsystem. The goals are accomplished through the establishment of a division of labor, job specifications, standards, tasks, and the setting of admissions or acceptance criteria for clients.

(b) Maintenance Subsystem

The maintenance subsystem undergirds the production subsystem by assuring sufficient and proper staff to conduct core work activities, and mediates between the core work demands of the production system, and the human needs of workers to keep the structure in operation. Job titles of employees who operate mainly in this subsystem are personnel directors, receptionists, typists, and bookkeepers.

(c) Support Subsystem

This subsystem supports the production subsystem, by identifying and providing material resources (finances and facilities), qualified personnel, and appropriate clients for the successful functioning of the production subsystem. It also promotes legitimacy for the organization among external constituents. It strives to create and sustain a favorable image in the eyes of significant reference groups outside the organization.

(d) Adaptation Subsystem

The adaptation subsystem tries to anticipate the future so that the organization's leaders can be responsive to developments in the organization's institutional, task, and resource environments. It's goal is to assure a stable present, a promising future and to avoid costly errors. This subsystem identifies possible changes in direction, emphasis, programmes and

funding that will affect the organization's well-being. In small organizations, staff and management normally perform these activities on ad hoc and informal basis.

(e) Leadership Subsystem

The leadership subsystem is concerned with the integration, coordination, and control of internal processes and with assuring organizational survival and well-being. This subsystem monitors and integrates activities of the other four subsystems and uses hierarchical authority to make and enforce decisions that affect the total organization. This subsystem also represents the organization to the outside world, build linkages with external constituents, and attempt to manipulate the environment to assure long-term survival and prosperity.

Lewis *et al* (1991:100) and Mullins (1993:649,662) say that organizational structures that allows for responsiveness to the need for change, must be built as it is important that the organization will be able to respond to environmental changes. However, the organization's history, the reason, and manner in which the organization was originally formed, its age, and the philosophy and values of its owners will affect the organization's climate and its ability to respond to, for example, change.

The coordination function both within the organization and between the agency and its environment is emphasized by Lewis *et al* (1991:100,107). The agency is an open system, and it can maintain its life only when this factor is recognized. The fact that agencies are interdependent with other systems can be seen as a problem, but it can also be seen as an opportunity for growth and efficient use of resources. Effective coordination will require that consumers, as well as providers of services recognize the connections among departments, and separate agencies. Organizing for linkage will involve the development of procedures that will overcome fragmentation in service delivery so that clients do not become lost in a tangle of agencies and programmes. The skills of organizing, coordinating and networking must be used to enhance client development.

5.2.4 Time Pressures

Another situational pressure is according to Weinbach (1994:288) time pressures. Staff in human service organizations often find themselves facing nearly impossible deadlines. For example, senior administrators within bureaucracies may impose deadlines for procedural changes that leave little time to prepare and to learn new methods of performing tasks. Or, little warning may precede the submission deadline of a grant proposal that can assure the financial survival of the organization. As in times of economic austerity, good management practices will go a long way toward successful management under time pressures.

Weinbach (1994:288) notes that the kind of leadership needed by the work group operating under time pressures may be different from that which is otherwise effective. An authoritarian style of leadership may be preferable and is more likely to be tolerated when staff are working against time, but the acceptance of authoritarian leadership is dependent on staff acceptance of the value of successful meeting of deadlines, of the completion of the task itself and of its potential rewards. There must be a common, desired goal. Confidence in the manager's ability to help the group to succeed in meeting the time deadline is further critical. Reasonable people will work toward a desired goal if they perceive a likelihood of success. Trust is also a critical factor to successful management during time pressure, especially trust in the motives of the manager in committing resources to the task and trust that work expectations for individual staff will not be excessive.

5.2.5 The Task Environment

Situational pressures can also be caused by the task environment. Weinbach (1994:21-22) reasons that an organization is successful or unsuccessful in goal achievement based largely on its capacity to interact successfully with its task environment. Many of the activities of management involve efforts to negotiate support from the task environment, or at least to minimize its potential for resistance to achievement of the organization's goals. A hostile task environment promotes a sense of uncertainty within an organization. A limited amount of uncertainty is inevitable and possibly even desirable, too much of it is stressful and debilitating. No one can work well in an organization whose task environment is constantly watching, waiting for a mistake, or a sign of weakness.

Weinbach (1994:25-28) suggests that a hostile task environment can be dealt with through acquiring prestige. The organization that can become recognized for its first-class products or services has an easier time dealing with its task environment. A reputation of being the best will diminish environmental resistance. A well-managed, efficient organization that does a good job of demonstrating accountability will face less hostility from the task environment than one that has a reputation of slack management. Acquiring prestige, particularly for organizations offering services valued by the general public, is a relatively inexpensive way of negotiating with the task environment. First-rate, professional services are in the best interest of client and the agency alike, and can result in increased prestige. In delivering services that are less popular with the general public, management that emphasizes efficiency and accountability can positively influence an organization's reputation."

Contracting and co-opting are also ways in dealing with the task environment. Weinbach (1994:26) says that contracting can be thought of as cooperation with the task environment in such a way that interaction with it becomes more predictable and, therefore, less

potentially threatening. Co-opting can provide a fresh perspective to the organization that may not be available among its natural "friends", while it generally increases control over the task environment. Co-opting involves bringing a portion of the task environment into the organization.

5.2.6 Computerization

Van der Watt & Cronje (1995:169) claim that effective management of service delivery programmes could be enhanced by the introduction and utilization of computer technology in welfare organizations. However, according to Weinbach (1994:297-298), computerization is one type of change that is both universal and potentially problematic for the human service organization.

The creation and stabilization of a computer milieu and culture must be approached in a planned and cautious way. According to Van der Watt & Cronje (1995:169), and Weinbach (1994:298) the social work manager will have to do short- and long term planning, and perform specific tasks in relation to the change to and the utilization of personal computers, the implementation of networks, the operation of systems and the development and maintenance of a data base. It is also important to ensure the applicability of software acquired by the organization. The needs of the users, the functions to be performed, and the financial and personnel implications have to be determined before it will be possible to identify and procure suitable programmes, and develop a training programme for the personnel in the agency.

5.3 PERSONNEL POLICIES

Mullins (1993:574) claims that whatever the nature of the work organization, a manager achieves results through the performance of other people. Recognition of the needs and wants of staff, and the nature of their grievances is a positive step in motivating them to perform well. The efficiency of staff, their commitment to the aims of the organization, and the skills and attitudes they bring to bear on the quality of service offered is fostered by good human relationships. It is therefore necessary that the management of even small rural welfare organizations shall have an understanding of what people want from their jobs. Sound personnel policies and the implementation of personnel practices and procedures will play an important role in creating the right climate for ongoing personal and professional development, and will enhance the quality of services rendered to clients and communities.

There is no shortage of studies of human motivation in the literature. Authors such as Berliner (1979:310-331), Crow & Odewahn (1987:63--67), Lewis *et al* (1991:200-206), Mullins (1993:449-475), Smither (1988:313-316) and Weinbach (1994:182-192) all discuss

the well known conceptualizations of motivation. These include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's modified need hierarchy model, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, McClelland's achievement motivation theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Porter and Lawler's expectancy theory, Lawler's revised expectancy model, the equity theory of motivation, the goal theory, or management by objectives. However, for the purpose of this study, all the different motivation theories will be combined in a discussion of what people want from their jobs.

Berliner (1979:332) suggests that supervisors and managers have different perceptions of what their employees want than do the employees themselves. It is also important to remember that not all employees are satisfied by the same factors, and that it remains difficult to describe job satisfaction simply. However, the most common things that people want from their jobs include: security, work that is meaningful, opportunity for advancement, recognition and respect for the individual, competent leadership, justice in treatment, fair wages, democratic functioning of the organization, congenial associates, and satisfactory working conditions (Berliner, 1979:331; Mullins, 1993:574).

5.3.1 Security

According to Berliner (1979:333) an employee's need for security is often expressed in terms of steady work and steady wages. The lack of job security plays havoc with people. The resultant worry interferes with learning a job and performing it. People who are insecure in their work situation will try to protect themselves in a variety of ways. They will, for example, resist change, refuse to take initiative or responsibilities, or will spread rumors about the organization. People need security and approval in their relationship with the employer and supervisors before they can develop their abilities and give their best performance.

5.3.2 Work that is Meaningful

Berliner (1979:333) and Smither (1988:323-324) suggest that wherever possible, the supervisor should find ways of making work more meaningful so that employees can get some kind of satisfaction from mastery of the job. Five key aspects are identified in job enrichment: the different skills necessary to accomplish the work, the degree to which an individual completes a "whole" product or piece of work, rather than just a small part of it, the impact that the work has on the lives of others, and the significance of the task, the independence and autonomy that the employee has in planning and doing the work, and lastly, the manner in which the job provides feedback about employee performance.

Smither (1988:324-325) also claims that if jobs allow workers to derive feelings of

meaningfulness and responsibility, and workers are given feedback of performances, then there will be high levels of satisfaction. However, when applying a job enrichment strategy, the supervisor must be careful about simply adding more work without increase compensation of some kind. It must also be remembered that employees have differing levels of need for growth and challenge, and some workers may be happy to fulfill their duties and look for satisfaction and growth outside the work environment.

5.3.3 Opportunity for Advancement

Opportunities for personal development and career progression are according to Berliner (1979:333-334) and Mullins (1993:574) important, even if the employees don't take advantage of the opportunities. Employees simply like to know that there are opportunities to advance. Ambitious, upward-striving people certainly need to see an opportunity to advance, and they are willing to prepare themselves for higher level jobs and to make present sacrifices for future gains. Advancement, when it is received, is a spur to still higher effort. Professional employees are highly motivated to advance, as they seek status not only in the organization, but also in the professional society and in their group of professional friends. If there are no opportunities for advancement, employees may lose interest in their work, reduce their efforts, become embittered, or look elsewhere for another opportunity.

5.3.4 Recognition and Respect

The desire for recognition - for praise, appreciation, importance, prestige and esteem - is a powerful drive in some people. Berliner (1979:334) declares that even if people do not have a high drive for achievement, they still desire recognition and appreciation as individuals, and all people want to be treated with the necessary respect. It is therefore important that the supervisor should try to help workers achieve something worthwhile, and then see that they get the credit for it. The supervisor should also help them to get recognition outside the organization.

5.3.5 Competent Leadership and Management

Berliner (1979:335) claims that workers have to rely on the organization's leadership and management to maintain a productive, stable work environment that will survive and be able to provide steady work and an ongoing income for the staff. The organization's leadership sets up the environment, the policies, the leadership climate, and the spirit of the organization within employees and their immediate supervisors have to function. According to Mullins (1993:372) competent managers require a combination of analytical ability, synthesizing ability, integrity, human perception and insight, and social skills.

5.3.6 Justice in Treatment

Authors such as Berliner (1979:336), Lewis *et al* (1991:123-124) and Mullins (1993:574) all stress the importance of justice in treatment and equal opportunities for staff. Justice in treatment implies that there is no favoritism, no discrimination, no prejudice, no preferential treatment for the in-group, no insiders or outsiders. If employees feel they are victims of discrimination, they are in a frame of mind to put an unfavorable interpretation on every management action and communication.

Equal opportunity for staff is extremely important in a human service organization. Lewis *et al* (1991:124) claim that an organization's services will be limited in effectiveness if the makeup of its professional staff differs significantly from that of its clientele. This may be especially true for rural welfare organizations. Programme effectiveness can be improved through the employment of staff members who share the cultural world view of the clients served. Affirmative action programmes recognize that equal opportunity affects the agency's services as much as it benefits the target group of employees. People involved in making decisions about the allocation of human resources therefore need to understand how the intent and effects of their practices might tend to discriminate against people. Equal employment opportunity must be understood by everyone with decision-making power.

5.3.7 Fair Wages

Smither (1988:322) states that no discussion of job satisfaction or motivation is complete without looking at the role of salaries. The safest generalization that can be made about salaries is that it means different things to different people, and that it is often not the most important motivator for many people. According to Berliner (1979:335), Kadushin (1992:254) and Mullins (1993:495) the most important issue is fairness in the remuneration of staff. Salaries need to be in line with the status of the job, and should be equal to what other groups are getting for work of the same class, difficulty, effort and achievement. It is important that the organization shall have a clear policy on the remuneration of staff, for example, policy on annual salary increases, merit increases, monetary rewards for outstanding work performance.

5.3.8 Democratic Functioning of the Organization

Mullins (1993:422,574) explains that democratic functioning of an organization is an important philosophy underlying sound managerial behavior and employee relationships. The starting point of effective service rendering, and consumer satisfaction is good manager-subordinate relationships. Managers need to adopt a positive attitude towards staff, and to develop a spirit of mutual co-operation. The staff should feel that they are working with the manager rather than for the manager. It is important that staff shall have the

opportunity to participate in decisions affecting them.

5.3.9 Congenial Associates

According to Berliner (1979:337) people in an organization form a community, and since they have to be together for so much of their lives, they don't want to be annoyed by one another all the time. Mullins (1993:652) supports this view and states that there should be a sense of group pride and self-esteem, a high level of human interactions and good relations with co-workers, team effort and the support of other staff, including the supervisor and management.

5.3.10 Satisfactory Working Conditions

A good working environment, adequate resources (equipment, information, training), and good service conditions are also important in motivating staff. Berliner (1979:337), and Brody (1993:23) say that attention should be given to uncomfortable working environments created, for example, by conditions such as poor heating in winter, and poor air-conditioning in summer. Staff are distracted from their tasks if they are forced to work under poor environmental conditions. Money spent on refurbishing gloomy surroundings can be a good investment. A supervisor and management can further show concern for employees by making the work environment clean, orderly, and safe. Staff ought to feel good about coming to work.

In conclusion, it can be said that the objective of personnel policies and activities is to develop and maintain a level of morale and human relationships which evoke willing and full co-operation of all persons in the organization in order to attain optimum operational performance (Mullins, 1993:575). It is also of extreme importance that effective personnel functions be carried out even in very small organizations.

5.4 INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Authors such as Doueck & Austin (1986:27), Lewis et al (1991:139) Mullins (1993:579-580), Weinbach (1994:121) and Weiner (1980:230-231) all agree that one major area of personnel work of particular relevance to the effective use of human resources is staff development and training. Staff are a crucial, but expensive resource, and in times of limited funding, it is imperative to optimise the contributions of employees to the aims and goals of the organization. Supervision and continuing education form a source of support and of learning for workers in human service organizations. By providing it, managers are telling workers that they value them, and that they are willing to commit necessary time and other resources to promote more effective work performance. They are communicating a message that emphasizes the importance of learning to do more, to do it better, and to do it

more autonomously. Supervision and continuing education can provide the knowledge necessary for workers to do their job within a climate of reasonable certainty.

In view of the above, the results of research done by De V Smit (1994:10) are therefore alarming. The author says that the in-service training and development of social workers is cause for concern. An analysis of financial forecasts for 1993/4 of expenditure on staff and their development based on 10 private Western Cape welfare organizations employing more than 10 social workers, revealed that staff costs account for 74 percent of overall expenditure with a high of 87 percent and a low of 60 percent. This supports the view of an author like Mullins (1993:579) who claims that staff are an expensive resource. However, De V Smit (1994:10) found that on average only R401 was spent per capita on staff training and development with a high of R1 114 and a low of R32. In total, 0.45 percent of the overall expenditure was budgeted for staff training and development as opposed to 1.23 percent of overall expenditure budgeted for maintenance of equipment. Thus, almost three times as much was allocated to looking after equipment as opposed to looking after staff.

Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:477-478) stress that supervisors and managers continuously have to ask how they can make the best use of limited funds and personnel, and provide training, staff development and education that will generate benefits for the staff, organization and clients. In the following sections, attention will be given to the various ways in which employee growth can be influenced and stimulated. Specific attention will be given to supervision, staff training, continuing education, staff development, and consultation.

5.4.1 Supervision

Abels (1977:15) and Kadushin (1992:xvii) state that supervision, staff development and in-service training share responsibility for helping the worker learn what he needs to know in order to effectively do his job. Cuts in agency budgets have frequently required cuts in in-service training and staff development programmes. As a consequence, supervision becomes increasingly more important as a source of training, and it is often the only resource available to help workers enhance their skills, as all agencies - large and small, wealthy or poor - have some supervisory procedure. Supervision permits an individualized approach to the learning needs of the social worker.

Supervision is according to Abels (1977:16) part of the helping profession, and it would be natural to assume that any interactive process demanding such a degree of time and energy, would entail carefully thought-out processes and procedures on the part of the agency. Special training is also necessary to assure that the energies, funds, and time devoted to the improvement of agency practice are well spent. It is important to remember that the

importance of supervision is not who does it, but whether it is achieving the purpose for which it was developed. The purpose of supervision is to insure quality control by helping people learn the tasks they need to know in order to serve the clients effectively, and to promote the social worker's professional growth.

Weinbach (1994:126-127) says that the administrative supervision components should be fair and objective, and should be consistent with appropriate personnel standards and practices. Good supervision constantly stresses the need for high-quality and ethical client services. To this end, social workers are encouraged to acquire the knowledge and skills to become ever-more competent in their work by, for example, attending professional workshops. The supervisor should also recognize and accept the social workers as competent professionals who may, in fact, know more about some areas of practice than does the supervisor.

According to Abels (1977:18) and Weinbach (1994:127) good supervision provides both practical assistance and a role model for the social worker. It also provides a perspective not available to the supervisee who is frequently immersed in the everyday requirements of his or her job. Good supervision will also serve as a reminder to social workers that they have a responsibility, not only for their own growth, but for the development of knowledge for others who work in the field. It can stress the need for employees to base their work on available knowledge, and to be active in the regular, ongoing evaluation of their practice effectiveness. If supervision is to be effective in promoting employee growth, it should create a climate for problem-solving in which errors can be freely discussed in a candid manner.

Abels (1977:19) warns that since supervision is everywhere around us, it may suffer by not being seen as something requiring exceptional skills, or in fact, exceptional people. The criteria for a good supervisor is often described as being a good practitioner. This is necessary, but it is essential that the supervisor is also a good teacher. Good supervision cannot be founded on poor practice, but one must also have skill in transmitting what one has learned in order to qualify for the label "good supervisor".

Various forms of supervision, for example, self -, peer -, individual -, and group supervision were discussed in the previous chapters, and will therefore not be further explored. In conclusion, it is important to take note of Kadushin's (1992:xviii) statement that social work needs to be concerned with increasing the effectiveness of its own managerial practices, and that organizations should be concerned with improving the practice of supervision.

5.4.2 Staff Training

Lewis et al (1991:139) are of the opinion that the effective use of limited human resources requires that human service workers receive ongoing training to meet the changing needs of the community and clients. According to the authors, a major shortcoming of human service programmes has been the tendency of service providers to continue performing activities for which they have been prepared, and with which they feel comfortable even when client needs dictate different approaches. If human service workers are to be effective, they need to develop new knowledge and skills when changing services are mandated. If helpers are asked to change, they must receive the training that can help them maintain a level of competence.

Weinbach (1994:128-129) describes training as a form of continuing education that is designed to provoke a standardized and correct response from staff. Training is appropriate when the manager knows what must be done and wish to make sure that there is no deviation in the way it is done. It usually involves hands-on experience in performing a task in the approved way. Training imparts knowledge and provides experience in use of skills that are of immediate value in the work situation, thus helping the employee to meet role expectations.

(a) Assessing Learning and Training Needs

Various authors such as Lewis et al (1991:141), Pecora, Schinke, and Whittaker (1983:103), and Weiner (1980:243) say effective training programmes are dependent upon accurate assessments of real needs, and must also take into account a staff member's previous training, current work demands, and ideas concerning what needs to be learnt in order to function more effectively. Needs assessment has two phases: applying measurement tools to define problem or programme areas; and judging the significance of information gathered to determine priorities for programme planning. The latter phase leads to broad training programme goals, selection and operationalization of specific training activities, and evaluation.

Pecora et al (1983:102) state that needs assessment for staff training uses concepts and methods from three basic areas. One area is worker performance appraisal which is concerned with determining the casual factors of a discrepancy between actual and desired job performance. This method requires a priori criteria that are specified and communicated to the workers and supervisors. Training needs assessments using this approach analyze worker performance problems to determine if they are due to gaps in knowledge or skill. Techniques developed for programme evaluation and organizational analysis are also used to assess staff training needs. Nonattainment of organizational objectives, large numbers of

consumer complaints, high staff turnover, and other information provide clues to the existence of worker training needs. A third area is needs assessment for community service planning. Consumer surveys, key informant interviews and social indicator analyses are used to assess the need for community services and planning.

(b) Developing Training Objectives

According to Lewis *et al* (1991:142) all of the approaches to needs assessments lead to the developing of training objectives. Once learning needs have been clearly identified, they can be stated in terms of objectives. It is expected that trainees will be different after the educational intervention, and the specific nature of the desired change in knowledge, skills and learned new attitudes should be clearly stated before the training programme is designed.

(c) Designing and Implementing the Training Programme

In designing and implementing the training programme it is important to remember that staff training is a continuous process. Lewis *et al* (1991:143) also note that it is important to remember that intervention methods should be appropriate to adult learners' needs. Their motivation depends on their ability to recognize the importance of the training programme to their own work effectiveness. They must have been actively involved in selecting training goals. They should also be assured that the skills and knowledge they are gaining will be recognized and reinforced in the context of their posttraining work. The training programme to use is the programme that is a natural outgrowth of the needs that have been identified through the appraisal process, and are recognized by all involved.

(d) Training: A Systems Approach

Berliner (1979:355) offers strong support for applying systems thinking to the training process. If the organization is a total system, one of the ways of keeping that system functioning effectively is by having capable, well trained employees with the updated skills and knowledge necessary for efficient job performance on all levels of the organization. Weinbach (1994:129) supports this idea and says that well- trained workers will feel better about their work performance. They will be less likely to engage in absenteeism, complain less, and are less likely to resign from their jobs. Well-trained workers also need less supervision, and can function with more autonomy and feel certain that their handling of a situation is correct. The supervisor in turn, may be able to devote more time to supervising other workers. Well-trained workers assure the highest possible quality and quantity of service rendering.

5.4.3 Continuing Education

Education is designed for learning needs that are almost directly opposite those addressed through training. Weinbach (1994:130) explains that education is the communication of a body of general knowledge. It is designed to equip the learner to be able to act competently in some future situation, the specifics of which cannot be clearly envisioned. The idea is to provide the general knowledge necessary to make a decision and/or to act appropriately in unique situations. Education hopes to provide an individual with the knowledge resources necessary to act competently, despite the specific and unique requirements of the situation.

Weinbach (1994:131) is of the opinion that managers are generally supportive of continuing education for their employees, but they may not choose to, or be able to provide the continuing education. Staff usually receive this form of continuing education by enrolling in short courses, individual formal courses, or in advanced degree courses. If resources are available, released time and even tuition support are much appreciated by staff. In this way, the manager can communicate a belief in the value of continued worker growth. If possible, the better educated employee should also be rewarded with more or different responsibilities, promotion or a salary increase. If these cannot be offered, at the very least it should be communicated to the employee why the organization is unable to do so before any such expectations are allowed to develop.

5.4.4 Staff Development

Doueck & Austin (1986:28) describe staff development as those activities which relate to planning and/or providing training to enhance staff functioning as well as to improving the decision-making and problem-solving processes of management in order to enhance agency functioning by bridging the gap between managements' and staffs' perceptions of organizational performance. Weinbach (1994:132) notes that staff development can be especially useful to the manager in addressing problem situations or in providing staff with the new or updated learning required to function in their changing work environment. Kadushin (1992:136) and Weinbach (1994:132) say that staff development contains some elements of training, education and all the other procedures an agency might employ to enhance the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of its total staff. It provides the manager with a useful and well-received vehicle for influencing employee growth.

(a) Principles of Staff Development

Various authors such as Abels (1977:12-13), Doelker & Lynett (1983:380), Mullins (1993:582-583) and Weiner (1980:232-233) offer a discussion on some of the most important principles underlying an organization's staff development programme:

- 1 If the agency is to be successful, conditions must support staff development, and good administration is therefore essential. A good staff development programme depends on sound administrative procedures, such as clear lines of authority, responsibility, accountability, clear, open channels of communication, adequate job descriptions and personnel policies.
- 2 An essential structural component involves vesting responsibility for staff development coordination in a well defined position in the agency hierarchy. This is important as it will symbolizes the level of administrative sanction attached to staff development and the agency's willingness to make provisions for staff development. There must be a clear commitment to staff development throughout all levels of the organization.
- 3 It is also important that staff themselves should also feel a sense of involvement and know how they can play their part in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. It is therefore important to involve administrative and professional staff in the staff development programme.
- 4 The organization should also have a climate which promote independence, autonomy, and a desire to seek knowledge, thus a positive milieu for staff development. The learning climate also includes, according to Bunker & Wijnberg (1988:88) congruent signals of respect and commitment to the staff, as well as messages that reinforce high standards of performance. Since professional development must be individually motivated, individuals must experience the situation as one in which they can count on supervisory and peer support for the risk taking and personal costs that developmental experiences may entail.
- 5 It must also be remembered that effective staff development programmes do not just happen, they are carefully planned, and staggered over a reasonable period of time. An objective assessment of the staff's learning needs is essential. In designing the staff development programme, consideration should be given to the priority, loading and pacing of information, timing and sequence, common or related items, variety of subject matter and methods of presentation and evaluation of the programme.

(b) The Organization's Responsibility

According to Wax (1979:117-118) one of the requisites for termination of individual supervision should be the presence of an adequate staff development programme. However, the scope and quality of the staff development programme will vary with agency philosophy, budget, personnel, location and function. The real challenge in staff development, especially if there is limited funds available, is the imaginative use of agency

staff in such a way as to develop not only expert practitioners, but leaders, teachers, and consultants as well.

Wax (1979:118) and Weiner (1980:233) state the organization's responsibility for staff development obligates it to make available a broad range of learning possibilities. Some of these include establishing a professional library, providing leave time (and reimbursement, if possible) for professional conferences and courses, guest speakers at, for example, staff meetings, and providing space and supervisory time for the placement and training of students. To make this meaningful, the agency must provide a climate which genuinely encourages workers to avail themselves of these opportunities. The agency that has a fine staff development programme on paper, but assigns case loads which make it impossible for workers to participate in staff development programmes will not fool its staff for very long. It may be helpful to alter administrative practices so that workers have the maximum time and energy available for professional purposes. An option will be to employ social auxiliary workers or to make more use of indigenous workers, para-professionals and volunteers.

The mandate to the agency for staff development goes according to Wax (1979:118) beyond supporting the growing expertness of its workers. There must also be a systematic effort to help workers become skillful in imparting their knowledge. They must learn to move from the case to the concept and the other skills involved in being a good supervisor and/or teacher. A programme of individual and/or group supervision or consultation gets work problems solved, expands the expertise of the supervisee and supervisor, and facilitates the emergence of professional leaders for the agency in particular and for the profession in general. It opens new opportunities for practitioners, giving them added status and recognition, making it less necessary for them to leave the practitioner ranks.

Weiner (1980:235) notes that since one of the primary intents of staff development is to improve staff knowledge and skill through exposure to new techniques and ideas, the managers should be prepared for a possible request for changes in service delivery content and/or format. Abels (1977:22,78) supports this view, and explains that learning is a process that leads to change, new ideas, values, knowledge, an understanding that can help people act differently. It will be helpful if the organization's management, and the supervisor adopt an approach that permits innovations in the organization. It is the ability to take in new ideas and build on them which provides variation in approach and eventually in the nature of the staff. It will also improve the organization's ability to respond to external pressures and changes.

5.4.5 Providers of Continuing Education

Weinbach (1994:132-133), and Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:479) say that the selection of

the best provider for continuing education is a critical decision. It should be based upon a clear understanding of continuing education needs, the available options; accepted areas of expertise; the advantages, disadvantages and the costs involved in the use of available providers. Figure 5.1 gives a summary of continuing education providers, options, advantages and disadvantages to administrators.

<u>Provider</u>	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Agency employees	Agency loyalty Knowledge of agency Accountability for performance Simplicity of agreements Control over content Low cost	Lack of full-time availability Inbreeding of ideas Questions of credibility Professional training
Established Social work Continuing Education, Organizations or Private Contractors	Monetary incentive Experience Full-time involvement Control over content through purchase Credibility of "outside experts" Identification with practise values, methods	Cost to agency Coordination/distance factors Unreceptivity to smaller contracts/agreements
New Continuing Education Programmes in Social work Schools	Monetary incentive Receptivity to smaller contracts/agreements Local availability Identification with practice values, methods	Orientation costs Inexperience leading to misunder-standing Product flaws Inappropriateness for changing roles
Other College/University Units	Specialized knowledge Monetary incentive Aura of the "other discipline"	Lack of knowledge of social agencies Lack of identification with practice values, methods Orientation costs
Professional Organizations	Identification with practice values Knowledge of issues topics, and development in the field Credibility of "outside experts"	Limited resources (time, personnel) Cost to agency

Figure 5.1 Continuing Education Providers: Advantages and Disadvantages (Weinbach, 1994:133).

In the next few paragraphs, these different options will be discussed in more detail.

(a) Agency Staff

According to Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:479), and Weinbach (1994:134) some of the best providers of continuing education are agency staff. Trainers, and supervisors are obvious possibilities, but employees at the same level as the trainees should not be ignored, particularly because they are probably better suited for such tasks as orientation and first-level training than are trainers and supervisors. They can relate to the concerns, bewilderment, or anxieties of new employees. Agency employees are also less costly to use, although subtle costs exist in the form of time taken from other activities. Persons already employed by the organization are also more committed to the organization, a certain level of loyalty can be assumed. Weiner (1980:244) also says that a training programme can be more successfully implemented if staff are aware that they are able to teach each other and are mutually responsible for the success of their professional development.

Weinbach (1994:134) mentions that managers who opt for in-house continuing education usually have good control over the content. If agency training staff are used, accountability pressures are present. Trainers' job performance is judged by the success of their efforts. They cannot walk away without knowing the results of their work, or without being held accountable for its quality.

One of the disadvantages of using agency staff as providers of continuing education can result in fragmented and short-sighted approaches to addressing continuing education needs (Weinbach & Kuehner, 1985:481; Weinbach, 1994:134). The same authors also warn that a too heavy reliance on the organization's own employees can result in a shortage of new ideas or creative approaches to situations. The employee may lack familiarity with the theoretical knowledge in a given subject area. They may also lack the time for adequate preparation of the subject, as well as experience and skills in the use of teaching methods. The usefulness of employees as providers of continuing education may be limited to activities where suspicion and doubts about competence and loyalties are least likely to exist.

(b) Peer Trainers

Weinbach & Kuehner (1987:222) offer the concept of peer training as another option for providing continuing education. Peer training refers to the planned, structured use of a more experienced fellow worker to teach specific knowledge and skills to a newer employee of the same level and job description. It involves the full- or part-time assignment of the more experienced employee to training functions on a time-limited basis, under the

direction of permanent agency training staff, or the supervisor. In addition, it entails the administrator's use of functional authority delegated to a particular employee.

The advantages of peer training are according to Weinbach & Kuehner (1987:222-223), and Weinbach (1994:135-136) the following:

- 1 Accessibility. Local peer trainers, based at the organization are more accessible than for example, the supervisor who may be located at another office in another town, and who must contend with the complexities of providing training with limited on-site interaction. Peer trainers may also be more available than the local supervisor, whose time is consumed by programme management and the many needs of other employees.
- 2 Individualized attention. Peer trainers who may have recently experienced the same anxieties and learning needs of the new employee may be able to identify with and clarify potential problem areas. They may be able to relate better to learning difficulties as they occur than the full-time continuing education staff.
- 3 Greater choice. With several workers in the same office identified as peer trainers, new employees can be encouraged to engage in a certain amount of approved natural selection. The trainee and the supervisor can select the employee who may be the most suitable peer trainer. Trainee input can be used to at the best match of personality, and teaching and learning styles.
- 4 Trust. The new employee may find it easier to trust and to be open with a peer. They will be less inhibited about asking what they fear may be "dumb" questions.

Disadvantages of peer training lie, according to Weinbach & Kuehner (1987:222), and Weinbach (1994:136), primarily in the way in which they can threaten the role and authority of the supervisor. Peer trainers should only be used in a way that is clear to all concerned that ultimate responsibility for the socialization, job preparation, and performance evaluation of a staff member remains with the supervisor. The value of peer training is limited to objectives that relate to system maintenance and control. Peer training is also not a desirable method for promoting creative or innovative approaches to the trainee's responsibilities because of its potential for maintaining a closed-system way of thinking about and performing tasks. It should be viewed as only one component of a comprehensive, agency-based continuing education system.

Weinbach & Kuehner (1987:224) note that for a peer training programme to be effective, it must remain the responsibility of the organization's training component or the supervisor. The management of the programme should include (1) coordinating recruitment and selection of peer trainers; (2) preparing supervisors for their roles in the process; (3)

defining content to be taught in a way that assures adequate coverage, consistency, and accuracy of information communicated to trainees, and avoids duplication of material taught through other training modalities; (4) and providing ongoing training support through the development and provision of instructional material.

As with all other programmes, peer training must also have an evaluation component. Weinbach & Kuehner (1987:224) explain that evaluation of the programme must enable the supervisor to clarify on an ongoing basis whether the programme is effective or not. Adequate evaluation assumes that clear goals and objectives have been identified from the outset, so that progress toward their accomplishment can be measured. The evaluation of peer training should also include cost-benefit assessments of such areas as time savings for professional trainers, and supervisors relative to time required for programme management, and work time lost by peer trainers versus stimulation received through the teaching activity. Evaluation should focus on the programme's impact on peer trainers' own job performance, on the eventual performance of trainees, and on role structure and relationships within the organization.

(c) Private Contractors and Larger Continuing Education Programmes

Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:482-483), and Weinbach (1994:136) say that the manager who seeks continuing education from private contractors or the larger continuing education programmes within, for example, universities, is buying economic motivation and experience. These organizations want and need the work; their livelihoods are at stake. They have many years of experience in offering continuing education and have learned what sells and works. They have developed attractive, copyrighted packages that do not require time for development or major modifications. These packages include learning material such as workbooks, transparencies, videotapes, and other aids that are both well liked by participants and have a record for effectiveness. Established continuing programmes generally will allow the consumer to specify what is needed, but will take responsibility for the more specific development and packaging phases.

One of the disadvantages of using private contractors, is according to Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:483), and Weinbach (1994:137) that it can be too expensive, especially for smaller, and poorer rural organizations. Distance may also contribute to the unavailability of large continuing education programmes for other cost-related reasons. These potential providers must set priorities that may lead to their being most interested in those agreements involving the greatest compensation. It is only natural that they would actively seek large, long-term contracts that offer large amounts of money. Administrators seeking a single half-day workshop or other low-cost continuing education may better seek local providers, or be prepared to wait until the organization has met other commitments and has small blocks of

time available.

(c) Other Social Work Academic Programmes

Weinbach (1994:137) states that less established local continuing education programmes in social work academic programmes may offer continuing education at relatively low cost, particularly in the case of short-term requirements. Universities often operate under expectations that their faculty members will provide community services. Social work educators also may need to maintain contact with the practice environment. Inexpensive agreements for small continuing education requirements may be possible. Many of the disadvantages of agreements with social work education programmes stem from inexperience. Confusion about rights and responsibilities involved may result in dangerous misunderstandings. The provider must therefore be very clear about the organization's expectations for content and format. Another disadvantage is that the manager may have little control over what is presented when contracting with academicians who are accustomed to exercising a good deal of autonomy in curriculum development.

(d) Other College/University Units

If administrators of human service organizations seek continuing education services from college or university units other than programmes in social work, they have, according to Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:486), and Weinbach (1994:141), a wide variety of choice. Some of the specialized knowledge and expertise needed within social agencies is only minimal taught in social work programmes. Study of such knowledge areas as adult learning or organizational behavior may be viewed as desirable for the continued growth of staff members. The social work manager may decide to seek continuing education that is delivered by people who are knowledgeable in these areas. Staff may also find it refreshing to be taught by those from other disciplines. A lack of identification and knowledge about social work values and methods can be a disadvantage, and social work managers should, before choosing a provider for continuing education programmes, ascertain whether the providers are likely to perceive clients and services in a way that commensurate with social work values. These specialized academic units may be more appropriately used as continuing education providers for the administrative or management staff.

(e) Professional Organizations

According to Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:486), and Weinbach (1994:142) social work managers should also consider professional organizations to provide continuing education. These providers can form a link between the practice community, and the knowledge base of the profession. They are likely to be employed practitioners who are knowledgeable

about new developments and practice methods, and they can serve as good role models for employees who need more professional identification and responsibility. The biggest disadvantage in the use of professional organizations for continuing education is their limited staff resources. Membership of professional organizations is voluntarily, and members will only be able to provide continuing education programmes once they have met their own job responsibilities.

5.4.6 Consultation

Westheimer (1977:161) declares that consultation can be an appropriate method for ongoing staff development. However, before this practise can be put into effect, careful working out of criteria for work competence is required. Consultation should be offered to experienced workers who have acquired a sufficient range of knowledge and skills, who are able to function independently, but have sufficient self-awareness to know when consultation is needed, and have enough motivation to ask for consultation, and to use it. The workers should be a responsible, participating member of the organization, with sufficient understanding of the organization's aims and functions, and his/her own role and responsibilities in the organization.

The agency can choose to employ an internal or external consultant. Kaslow (1986:10) explains that an internal consultant will be a staff member of the employer organization, and will have the best opportunity to become conversant with the interpersonal relationship patterns, the formal and informal network of communications, the specific pressures and conflicts, management style and employee frustrations. It may be relatively easy for the consultant to develop a relationship with the workers. However, the consultant may also be treated with suspicion if he/she is perceived as too closely allied with management and personnel may be concerned about violation of confidentiality. If the supervisor performs the role of an internal consultant, he/she will have administrative authority vested in him/her, and some staff members may respond with resistance and hostility to the consultant/supervisor. Kadushin (1992:479) also notes that the supervisor will have to continue to perform the functions of administrative supervision as long as the workers were employees of the organization.

According to Kaslow (1986:10) the external consultant is usually hired for a specific task on a fee for service basis. The consultant does not become an employee of the organization. Gaining access to the requisite data necessary for the consultation to proceed may be more difficult than for the internal consultant, but the trust is likely to be greater since the consultant can be perceived as more neutral and objective. If the external consultant does not have an authoritarian personality, he/she is not likely to engender resistance and hostility.

Although consultation often leads to the development of training or learner-choice continuing education activities, the consultation process can serve as an educational activity in its own right (Lauffer, 1978:51). While engaged in the process, the organization seeking help learns to identify its problems, to select from among alternative solutions, to test them out, and to evaluate progress toward goal achievement. Consultation can be a productive process for all involved.

Kaslow (1986:11-12) and Weinbach (1994:143) state that it is important to negotiate a clear consultation contract and agreement. Actual written agreements for consultation can be quite formal, but they frequently involve little more than a letter of agreement outlining the purpose, duties and compensation involved. It is also important to state what final report is expected from the consultant and who will have access to the report. Because the consultant is assumed to be the expert, the specific nature of the consulting services may not be detailed; these are left to the judgment of the consultant, who should be in the best position to know how to do the job. However, Lauffer (1978:52) says that it is advisable to be in agreement on the type or style of consultation needed. The consultant should be clear on the organization's expectations.

According to Kaslow (1986:13) good consultants usually are accorded high status. They are not always accessible, especially if they are external consultants, their visits may become special events which provide time out for reflection, self study, growth and implementation of change processes. Consultants may make a valuable contribution to the personal and professional development of the social workers, and the growth of the organization.

5.4.7 Evaluating Continuing Education Programmes

Berliner (1979:378) and Mullins (1993:583) stress that any continuing education and training programme, no matter how elaborate, well-prepared, and effectively presented, is only as good as the results it achieves. The value of the programme can be best demonstrated by its evaluation against related, objective, measurable factors such as: increased output, fewer errors or consumer complaints. Other measurable factors may include reduced staff turnover, absenteeism or sickness. The ultimate evaluation of training and continuing education is the extent to which it contributes to improved organizational performance, effectiveness, and to the quality, job satisfaction and prospects of employees.

Mullins (1993:584) states that if organizations are to pursue a positive policy of investing in people, it demands that they demonstrate a continuous commitment to training and continuous education standards. It should be an integral part of the organization's strategy. Employees, for their part, should receive positive recognition for good training achievements. Successful training offers potential benefits to the organization and to

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5.5 PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Millar (1990:66) and Mullins (1993:584) suggest that performance appraisal is crucial to the effective management of a human service organization, and the proper management of human resources is a critical variable affecting an organization's productivity. It is important that members of the organization know exactly what is expected of them, and the criteria by which their performance and results will be measured. A formalized and systematic appraisal scheme will enable a regular assessment of the individual's performance, highlight potential, and identifying training and development needs. Most importantly, an effective appraisal scheme can improve the future performance of staff. The appraisal scheme can also form the basis of a review of financial rewards and planned career progression.

Evaluation and performance appraisals are often view in a negative light by staff. However, Weinbach (1994:150) states that for a social worker, evaluation should not be simply a necessary evil. It is consistent with social work knowledge, skills, and values. If it is performed correctly by persons who recognize its value to all concerned, it can, and should be viewed as a valuable opportunity and an essential contribution to both employee growth and organizational goal attainment.

5.5.1 Value to the Employee

Various authors such as Kadushin (1992:343-344), Mullins (1993:585) and Weinbach (1994:150-151) all claim that employees who are being evaluated have the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses, and indicate how such strength may best be utilised, and the weaknesses overcome. Evaluation is an opportunity for the worker to obtain explicit approval of his/her work from somebody who is thought to have the information, ability, and experience to make such a judgement. Evaluations also help motivate, direct and integrate learning. The standards by which a worker is evaluated help to clarify the specific kinds of activities on which the worker has to focus. Evaluation makes learning conscious, because it requires an explicit assessment of performance. It points to how much the worker

work. Evaluation increases self-awareness to further self-improvement.

Weinbach (1994:151) declares that staff are likely to learn more about the evaluator in one annual evaluation session than in hours of staff meetings, casual conversations, and sharing tasks. Evaluations expose the evaluator's values, identifications, priorities, and biases. These are important for workers to understand. This will enable the workers to be able to operate with more certainty, knowing what future reactions and evaluations they can expect.

5.5.2 Value to the Organization

Kadushin (1992:345) and Weinbach (1994:151) are of the opinion that evaluations provide a vehicle to call staff attention to individual and organizational goals, and the degree to which the worker's performance is meeting the agency standards. Just as the agency is accountable to the community, so is the worker accountable to the agency. Periodic, systematic evaluation of worker performance may point to needed changes in agency administration. Workers sometimes become immersed in keeping paperwork up to date, or in compliance with the many rules and procedures that exist. A formal evaluation provides both the manager and the employee with the opportunity to stop, and assess just how well each worker's daily activities contribute to the organization's client service goals and objectives. Administrative procedures that are adversely affecting worker performance can be identified, and steps to eliminate these can be initiated.

According to Kadushin (1992:345) and Mullins (1993:585) evaluation can provide information for manpower planning, it assist with succession planning, and determine suitability for promotion, merit increases, and dismissals. Evaluation also provide necessary information for the planning of continuing education programmes. Evaluation of performance for administrative decision becomes more important in the context of diminishing agency budgets and cutting back agency programmes. If staff has to be cut, retaining the best workers depends on the accuracy and objectivity of performance appraisals.

5.5.3 Criteria for Performance Appraisal

A good appraisal instrument should meet according to Millar (1990:66) and Weinbach (1994:157-158) four criteria: it should be valid; reliable; practical and fair.

- 1 Validity refers to the degree to which the measuring instrument is measuring what it is supposed to measure. In performance appraisals the concern is mostly with content validity. High content validity indicates that the appraisal instrument provides an adequate sample of items that represent the job dimension under study.

- 2 Reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement gives consistent numerical descriptions of individuals from one time to another, from one evaluation to another.
- 3 Practicality refers first to the instrument's acceptance by management and employees. Second, it should be readily accessible, easily administered, easy to interpret and not require too much time to complete.
- 4 Fairness implies that the evaluation of an employee will be based on upon standards that are predetermined by the manager, usually with input from the employee being evaluated. It means that rules, and standards will not be changed between evaluations. It is also fair to evaluate workers using objectives and standards previously set for them. It will be unfair to evaluate them using another employee as a reference point. For an evaluation to be perceived as fair it must also include an assessment of what is a realistic expectation of each worker, taking into account factors such as the worker's stage of career development, professional background, previous work experience and stated career objectives. The nature of the job itself must also be considered for an appraisal to be fair. A fair evaluation should reflect whether or not there is consensus on what is the desirable outcome of an employee's work activities, and whether this has been clearly stated.

Berliner (1979:396) and Kadushin (1992:353) state that appraisals should be a continuous, systematic process, rather than an occasional event. The formal, periodic evaluation should be a summary recapitulation of familiar, previously encountered assessments rather than an unexpected, unanticipated critique for which the worker is unprepared. The appraisal procedure should be discussed with the worker in advance, and the evaluation should be communicated in the context of a positive relationship. The evaluation procedure should be a mutual, shared process, with maximum participation from the worker. It is also of extreme importance that the focus of the evaluation should be the work performance of the employee, and not of the employee as a person. The only social role of concern to evaluation is that of the supervisee as an employee of the organization, specifically, as the person assigned to do a particular job in the organization. None of the other aspects of the worker's life are legitimate areas for review.

5.5.4 Methods of Appraisal

Authors such as Brody (1993:160-166), Lewis *et al* (1991:135-138), Millar (1990:71), and Mullins (1993:588-589) note that any appraisal system depends on the use of some kind of mechanism to form the basis of rating employee performance. Appraisal systems can be used to measure attitudes, behavior and performance. Measurement may be a combination of quantitative measures using some form of rating scale, such as, for example, excellent,

good, average, below average, unsatisfactory; and qualitative measures involving an unstructured, narrative report on specific factors and/or overall level of behavior and work performance. Appraisal instruments can include, for example, behaviorally anchored rating scales, graphic rating scales, performance tests, critical incident techniques, and management by objectives.

(a) Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS)

Brody (1993:161-162), Lewis *et al* (1991:138), Millar (1990:72-73), and Mullins (1993:588) explain that the use of BARS is an attempt to provide measurement scales that are directly related to the job being appraised. A sample group of people with knowledge of the job are asked to identify, independently several incidents that would illustrate effective and ineffective performance. These incidents are then clustered into groups or performance dimensions. In order to provide for accuracy and objectivity, a second group of people familiar with the work matches incidents with performance dimensions, and the work of the two groups is matched. Once incidents and performance dimensions have been selected, the incidents are scaled and a final scale is developed. Those examples which are consistently rated at the same point on the scale can then serve as anchors and provide behavioral examples for each point on the scale.

The advantage of BARS, is according to Brody (1993:162) and Mullins (1993:588), that it reduces bias among evaluators because the ratings are related to behaviors established by the organization. Lewis *et al* (1991:138), and Mullins (1993:588) are of the opinion that the disadvantages of BARS are that it is time consuming to develop the instrument, it is costly to construct, and it require careful and detailed training in the correct use. BARS are more likely to be appropriate only in larger organizations.

(b) Graphic Rating Scales

Brody (1993:160) describes this appraisal method as one that is used most frequently in evaluating performance. Key characteristics are selected and defined. Ratings can be discrete, such as outstanding, good, acceptable or unacceptable, or they can be scaled along a continuum from 1 (poor) to 10 (outstanding). Scores are often given without precise definitions provided so that evaluators rely on their own subjective judgement in their ratings. Other disadvantages are that inappropriate characteristics can be selected and that they are incorrectly scaled. The advantage of graphic rating scales is their convenience and simplicity. If numerical values are given, they can be easily scored and are subject to statistical computations.

(c) Performance Tests

According to Lewis *et al* (191:137) tests of job-related skills are most often based on simulations or demonstrations. Employees are asked to show they have competencies related to effective job performance. However, this can only be appropriate if the process designers have validated the methods used, and if the skills being tested lend themselves to objective measurement. Videotapes or audiotapes of therapy sessions or other work with clients can, for example, be used. The performance method might be useful in determining the learning needs of an employee, and may thus be used for the purpose of professional development.

(d) Critical Incident Techniques

Brody (1993:161) and Lewis *et al* (1991:137) explain that critical incidents are descriptions by supervisors or other qualified observers of important incidents that demonstrate employees' strengths or weaknesses. Such records provide data that can be used to give feedback to employees. The concreteness of the critical incident approach makes it somewhat less subject to rater bias than are ratings of personal characteristics. However, supervisors using this method do need training in order to be as objective as possible in the selection and recording of incidents. The value of this method is that it can be used to supplement existing scales to highlight outstanding or poor performance.

(e) Management by Objectives

The approach use in management by objectives can be used to guide individual staff performance and accountability. Brody (1993: 162) and Mullins (1993:588-589) explain that performance objectives and standards are developed by staff and their supervisors so that both will have a clear idea of how the staff will work to achieve the organization's mission and goals. The advantages of management by objectives are flexibility and adaptability in responding to different agency situations and individual staff circumstances. This method provides for participation by staff and also allows for some degree of self-appraisal. A mayor consideration with this method is the extent to which circumstances beyond the control of the individual, such as changes in environmental influences, make the achievement of objectives unrealistic. Objectives need to be continually reviewed and revised in accordance with changing circumstances. Comparison with achieving objectives may not be, by itself, provide a detailed assessment of performance. Therefore, this method can be combined with the use of, for example, rating scales.

Millar (1990:67) states that whatever performance appraisal instrument is chosen, it should be based on key job behaviors that serve as standards, it should enable the manager to specify what the employee must start doing, continue doing, and stop doing, It should be a

combination of performance feedback and the setting of specific goals based on this feedback. Finally it should enable the appraisal to fulfill its two most important functions, namely the motivation and the development of the employee.

According to Kadushin (1992:357) and Lewis *et al* (1991:139) it is important that supervisors should receive ongoing training so that they can use the rating mechanisms fairly and confidently. It is also important to remember that appraisal procedures are integrated with other aspects of the organization, administration should support performance appraisal, and periodically review and revise the appraisal procedures. If supervisors and employees agree that the strengths and weaknesses being measured are the ones that matter, appraisal can provide guidelines for meeting the training and development needs of the human service workers.

5.5.5 Self Evaluation

Kadushin (1992:344) notes that every worker has the responsibility for self-evaluation and self-regulation. The worker's continuous, critical assessment of his/her own performance is the best guarantee of effective and efficient service delivery. However, Elridge (1982:491) cautions that the worker could be in danger of superficiality in self-evaluation if the tasks are not solidly supported through individual loyalty and acceptance of the philosophical foundation. The supervisor should expect each worker to understand his/her values about self-assessment, and should help each worker to develop positive and conflict free personal philosophies, which facilitate the use of specific techniques as significant role expectations.

According to Elridge (1982:492) components of a self-evaluation model include:

- 1 Recurrent themes and specific behavioral objective, including definite time lines for adult learning and knowledge building, for example, continuing education, and reading.
- 2 Systematic processes for identifying and collecting relevant information related to work performance, and organized procedures to record and store information for subsequent evaluative decisions, for example, case notes and personal statistics about case outcomes.
- 3 Identifiable decision-making points throughout all level of intervention activities and evidence of supporting facts or case information used for decisions, including a logical rationale, conclusions, and clearly defined goals for evaluating actions which flow from each decision.
- 4 Planned opportunities to receive feedback from qualified professional colleagues or supervisors concerning personal defensiveness, bias, fear or ambivalence in

social worker and the organization. If these situational pressures are not dealt with, it can have a negative impact on the personal and professional development of the social worker, and ultimately on the service delivery to clients and communities. Situational factors that can impact the work of the social worker are, for example fiscal stress and organizational decline, change in the human service organization, organizational practise and the organizational climate, time pressures, the task environment, and computerization. Good management practises are essential to deal with the various situational pressures. If it is successfully dealt with, the organization can become known as a well managed, efficient organization. The atmosphere surrounding the organization will be positive, the morale of the staff will be high, and feelings of goodwill among members will be strong.

The efficiency of staff, their commitment to the achievement of the aims of the organization, and the skills and attitudes they bring to bear on the quality of services offered is further fostered by good human relationships and an understanding of what the staff want from their jobs. People normally want security, work that is meaningful, opportunities for advancement, recognition, respect for the individual, competent leadership, justice in treatment, fair wages, democratic functioning of the organization, congenial associates, and satisfactory working conditions. Sound personnel policies and personnel practises can play an important role in creating the right climate for ongoing personal and professional development, and will enhance the quality of service rendering.

It must always be remembered that staff are a crucial, but expensive resource. It is imperative to optimise the workers' contributions to the achievement of the aims and goals of the organization. Supervision and continuing education are sources of support and learning for workers in human service organizations. It is important to understand the traditional supervisory tasks, and to remember that supervision permits an individualized approach to addressing the learning needs of the social worker. It offers both practical assistance and a role model for the social worker. In the examination of continuing education, distinctions were made in the important differences in the purpose, content, and process that are present in training, education, and staff development. The task of selecting a provider of continuing education was also given consideration. Options proposed for consideration included agency staff; peer trainers; private contractors and larger continuing education programmes; social work academic programmes; other college/university units; and professional organizations. It must be remembered that it is unlikely that one source can offer all that is needed. Therefore, a dynamic continuing education programme that uses the best attributes of several providers in appropriate situations is recommended.

Consultation is another method of staff development. However, consultation should only be offered to social workers who have reached a satisfactory level of competence, and are able

to function independently. Clearly defined criteria for moving a social worker to consultation level, and a written policy on consultation is advisable. All the programmes for continuing education need to be evaluated regularly.

Performance appraisals are crucial to effective management of the human service organization, and the proper management of human resources. It will highlight the training and development needs of the staff, and it can assist in improving the future performance of staff. Performance appraisals are of value to the staff and the organization. A variety of methods can be used for performance appraisals. These methods include behaviorally anchored rating scales; graphic rating scales; performance tests; critical incident techniques; and management by objectives. The advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods were discussed. Finally, it was noted that self-evaluation and self-regulation are every social worker's responsibility. The social worker's continuous critical assessment of own performance is the best guarantee for effective and efficient service delivery and should be encouraged. The efforts of the supervisor and organization to promote the personal and professional development of the social worker, will not be successful if the social worker is not self-motivated.

The results of the empirical study will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

SECTION B:

RESEARCH FINDINGS; CONCLUSIONS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 6

THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIAL WORK AND THE SOCIAL WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of rural social work, the social worker's responsibility towards his/her own personal and professional development, and the important role that the supervisor and the organization can play in the social worker's development were described in the preceding chapters. The literature study served as background for the questionnaires that were drafted to determine the personal and professional development of rural social workers at family welfare organizations and state departments in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape.

The results of the empirical study will be presented in chapters six and seven. In chapter six the following sections will receive attention: Firstly, a profile of the respondents will be discussed. This profile will include information regarding sex, age, work experience and qualifications. The information for social workers and supervisors will be given separately. Secondly, the social workers' and supervisors' perception of rural social work will be discussed and compared, with specific reference to the difference between rural and urban social work, the roles of rural social workers, and the knowledge and skills that rural social workers need. Thirdly, an analysis of the methods and techniques that rural social workers use for their own personal and professional development will be given. The supervisor's contribution to the rural social worker's personal and professional development will be discussed in chapter seven. The role of the organization in the personal and professional development of the rural social worker will also be described in chapter seven. Specific attention will be given to continuing education, consultation and performance appraisals. In all instances, comparisons will be drawn between the responses and perceptions of the social workers and supervisors.

6.2 PROFILE OF THE NON-IDENTIFYING PARTICULARS OF THE RESPONDENTS

6.2.1 Sex

Table 6.1 Sex distribution of the respondents

	Social worker		Supervisor		Total	
Sex	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	3	7.9	1	12.5	4	8.7
Female	35	92.1	7	87.5	42	91.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

It is clear from table 6.1 that the majority (92.1% [35], 87.5% [7]) of the respondents are female. This is due to the fact that social work is a profession that is largely practised by females. According to information from the South African Council for Social Work, 7572 females and 879 males were registered as social workers on 30 June 1995. This information affirms the statement that more females than males practise social work.

6.2.2 Age

Table 6.2 reflects the age distribution of the social workers and supervisors who participated in the research.

Table 6.2 Age distribution of the respondents

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
20-24	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	4.3
25-29	13	34.2	0	0.0	13	28.2
30-34	9	23.7	0	0.0	9	19.6
35-39	7	18.4	1	12.5	8	17.4
40-44	4	10.5	1	12.5	5	10.9
45-49	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
50-54	2	5.3	4	50.0	6	13.0
55-59	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	2.2
60-65	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	2.2
Unknown	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

According to the information in table 6.2 the age of the social workers were between 20 and 54 years. The largest response group (34.2% [13]) of the social workers were between the age of 25 and 29 years. The smallest concentration (5.3% [2]) of social workers were

between the age of 50 and 54 years. However, the largest concentration (50% [4]) of supervisors were in this age category. There was an even (12.5% [1]) distribution of supervisors in the age categories 35-39; 40-44; 55-59; and 60-65. This could be due to the fact that welfare organizations still consider the number of working years and experience as criteria for promotion, rather than career competence. In research done by Botha (1971:167-169), it was also found that the tendency at welfare organizations was to use the number of working years and experience as criteria in the appointment of supervisors. It appears that this is after 24 years still the tendency at rural welfare organizations.

6.2.3 Work Experience

The social workers and supervisors' work experience, and the number of years in the current employment situation are reflected in table 6.3 and table 6.4.

Table 6.3 Work experience of the social workers

Years experience	N	%	Current employment	N	%
0-3	10	26.4	0-3	17	44.8
4-6	7	18.4	4-6	14	36.8
7-9	7	18.4	7-9	2	5.3
10-12	7	18.4	10-12	1	2.6
13-15	3	7.9	13-15	2	5.3
16-18	1	2.6	16-18	0	0.0
19-21	1	2.6	19-21	1	2.6
22-24	2	5.3	22-24	1	2.6
25 > ..	0	0.0	25 > ..	0	0.0
Total	38	100.0	Total	38	100.0

Table 6.3 shows that the largest group (26.4% [10]) of the respondents have between 0-3 years social work experience. There is an even distribution (18.4% [7]) of the number of social workers who have 4-6; 7-9; and 10-12 years social work experience. Only 5.3% (2) social workers have between 22-24 years social work experience. This tendency is also reflected in the figures for the number of years in the current employment situation. The majority (81.6% [31]) of the social workers have been in their current employment situation for between 0-6 years. Only 10.5% (4) of the social workers have been in their current employment situation for between 13-24 years. The information in this table correlates with the figures in table 6.2, and it appears that the majority of the rural social workers (63.2% [24]) who participated in this research project are younger than 34 years, and thus, the majority of the rural social workers (63.2% [24]) also have less than 10 years social work experience. It further appears that there has not been a high turnover rate of social workers in the rural agencies, as the majority of the respondents (81.6% [31]) have been in their current employment situation for between 0-6 years. Of the 7.9% (3) of the social workers

who have indicated that they have more than 19 years experience in social work, 2.6% (2) have also indicated that have been in their current employment situation for more than 19 years. This again gives the impression that these particular rural agencies did not have a turnover in social work staff. This could be due to the fact that there are a small number of agencies in the rural areas (Gingsberg, 1976:7), and that the social workers have remained in their current employment situations due to a lack of other opportunities and choices.

Table 6.4 Work experience of supervisors

Years experience	N	%	Current employment	N	%
0-3	0	0.0	0-3	1	12.5
4-6	1	12.5	4-6	0	0.0
7-9	4	50.0	7-9	3	37.5
10-12	0	0.0	10-12	2	25.0
13-15	2	25.0	13-15	0	0.0
16-18	0	0.0	16-18	0	0.0
19-21	0	0.0	19-21	1	12.5
22-24	0	0.0	22-24	0	0.0
25 > ..	1	12.5	25 > ..	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0	Total	8	100.0

Table 6.4 shows that 62.5% (5) supervisors have between 4-9 years experience as supervisors, while 12.5% (1) has more than 25 years experience as a supervisor. Table 6.4 further reflects that 25% (2) of the supervisors have been in their current employment situation for more than 19 years, while 50% (4) have been in their current employment for between 0-9 years. There is a correlation between the number of years (> seven) that the supervisors have been in their current employment situation (87.5% [7]), and the number of years (> seven) that they have experience as a supervisor. It appears that there has also not been a high turnover rate of supervisors at the rural agencies which participated in this research project. This could also be due to the fact that there are a small number of agencies (Gingsberg, 1976:7) in the rural areas, and that due to a lack of opportunities and choices, the supervisors have remained in their current employment situations.

6.2.4 Qualifications in Social Work

The social workers and supervisors' highest qualifications in social work are reflected in table 6.5.

Table 6.5 Highest qualifications in social work

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Highest qualification	N	%	N	%	N	%
Diploma	13	34.2	5	62.5	18	39.1
BA Social Work (3 years)	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	8.7
BA Social Work (4 years)	15	39.5	0	0.0	15	32.7
Hons B A Social Work	5	13.2	2	25.0	7	15.2
M A Social Work	1	2.6	1	12.5	2	4.3
D Phil	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

The majority (80.5% [37]) of the respondents have no higher degree qualifications, while 19.5% (9) have a post graduate qualification. Of this figure, 15.8% (6) are social workers, and 3 (37.5%) are supervisors. It is interesting to note that the majority of the supervisors (62.5% [5]) have a diploma in social work, while an almost equal number of social workers have a four year B A degree (39.5% [15]) and a diploma (34.2% [13]) in social work.

From the gathered data, it also appears that only 10.9% (5) of the respondents have acquired other social work related qualifications. The nature of these qualifications are reflected in table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Other related social work qualifications

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Other related qualifications	N	%	N	%	N	%
Diploma in marriage guidance and counselling	2	66.7	1	50.0	3	60.0
Certificate course in alcoholism	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	20.0
B A degree in public administration	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	20.0
Total	3	100.0	2	100.0	5	100.0

Table 6.6 shows that only 7.9% (3) of the social workers, and 25% (2) of the supervisors have acquired other social work related qualifications. The isolated circumstances in which the rural social workers often work, could make it more difficult for the workers to obtain post graduate qualifications.

6.3 RURAL SOCIAL WORK

In order to determine the nature of rural social work, the social workers and supervisors were asked to describe their working area. Three descriptions of rural areas from Wijnberg & Colca (1981:92) were offered to the respondents. Figure 6.1 reflects the responses.

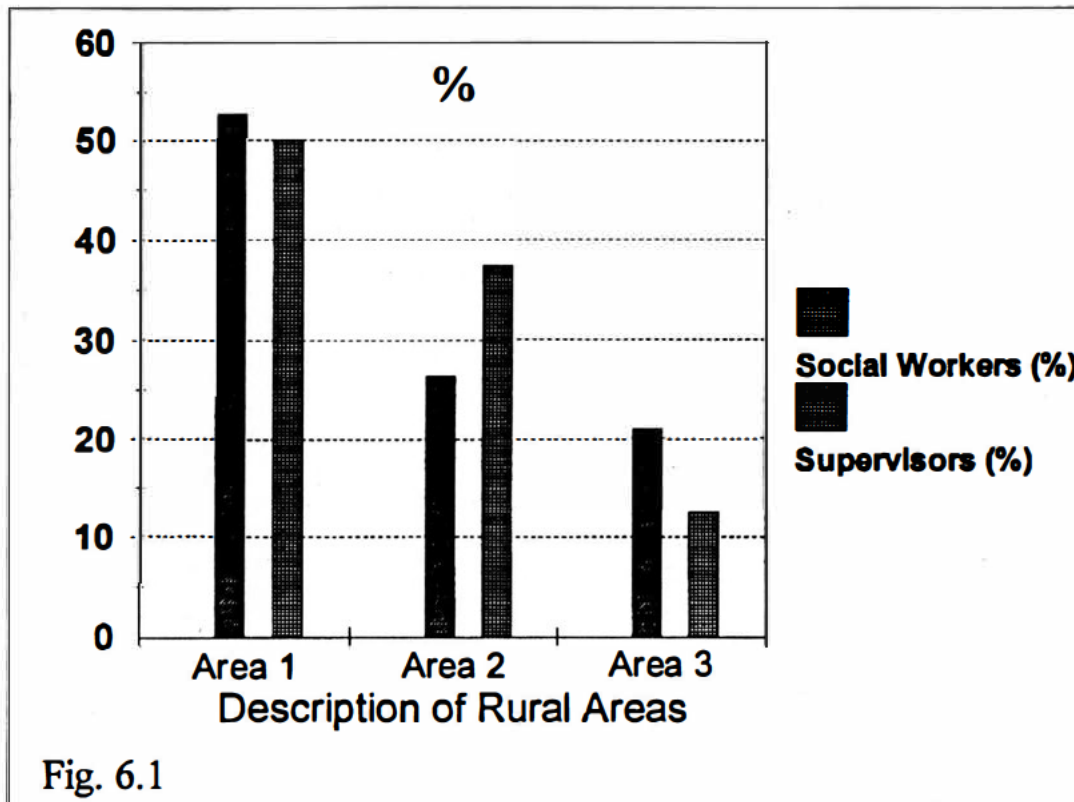


Figure 6.1 Descriptions of rural areas

It appears from the above that the majority 52.6% (20) of the social workers, and 50.0% (4) of the supervisors render services in rural area one which is a well developed rural area with a highly organized service delivery system and an adequate number of workers to deliver services. According to the respondents, 26.3% (10) of the social workers, and 37.5% (3) of the supervisors are working in rural areas which have minimal service delivery systems that are less visible, less comprehensive, and less professionalized, thus rural area two. Of the respondents, 21.1% (8) of the social workers, and 12.5% (1) of the supervisors work in the third category of rural areas which are characterized by wide geographic dispersion. These rural areas have virtually no formal helping systems, and the informal systems are sporadic and undependable. The periodic visits of a social worker who is covering an extensive geographic region may be the only semblance of a service delivery system.

6.3.1 Rural Welfare Agencies

The size of the rural welfare agencies was determined by asking the social workers to indicate the number of social workers employed at the agencies. Furthermore, supervisors were asked to indicate the number of rural social workers that they give supervision to. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 reflect these figures.

Table 6.7 Number of social workers employed at the rural welfare organization

Number of social workers	N	%
1	14	36.8
2	12	31.6
3	0	0.0
4	5	13.2
5	0	0.0
6	0	0.0
7	0	0.0
8 >	7	18.4
Total	38	100.0

Table 6.7 indicates clearly that the majority (68.4% [26]) of the rural agencies employ one or two social workers. It must be noted that 18.4% (7) of the agencies employed eight, or more social workers. It is important to mention that the state departments also participated in the research project. According to information received from the Provincial Administrations: Department of Social Services, the department normally employ between eight and twelve social workers at a regional offices who are then responsible for service delivery in a wide geographical area. However, the results are consistent with the descriptions that have been found in the literature. Various authors such as Farley *et al* (1992:191-193), Gingsberg (1976:7), Horejsi & Deaton (1977:199) and Webster & Campbell (1977:6) noted that rural agencies normally employ between one and three social workers.

Table 6.8 Number of rural social workers per supervisor

Number of social workers	N	%
1-3	1	12.5
4-6	3	37.5
7-9	3	37.5
10-12	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Table 6.8 shows that 75% (6) of the supervisors supervise between four and nine social workers. Only 12.5% (1) of the supervisors supervise respectively between one and three, and ten and twelve social workers. The number of social workers per supervisor is consistent with the ratio of between four and eight social workers per supervisor as suggested by the Department of Welfare. It could also be due to the fact that there are a limited number of welfare organizations and thus also social workers in the rural areas.

6.3.2 The Differences between Social Work in Rural and Urban Areas.

An author like Buxton (1976:29) declares that to an extent urban and rural areas have similar social problems, and much in social work practice is applicable to urban and rural areas. However, there is also merit in attempts to point out key differences in urban and rural social work practice so that social workers who practice in rural areas can develop special skills and put them to use. The responses of the respondents in the research project can be categorized in 12 descriptions. Comparisons between the responses of the social workers and supervisors will be given in figure 6.2.

Descriptions of the differences between social work in rural and urban areas:

- 01 Rural social workers are forced to adopt a generalist approach, and there is no opportunity for specialization
- 02 Resources, facilities and other professional helping networks are more scarce in rural than in urban areas.
- 03 Rural social workers have higher workloads than their urban counterparts, and have to carry out a wide range of different tasks.
- 04 Rural social workers render services in areas that are characterized by wide geographic dispersion. Social work in these areas is physically more demanding.
- 05 Social workers in rural areas are more isolated, receive less frequent supervision and have fewer opportunities for professional development. Therefore, the rural social workers are also more self-reliant and independent.
- 06 Social workers in rural areas are more visible and well-known in the community. The rural social worker is often more appreciated and respected in the community. A negative aspect of being so well known is that the community expect the social workers to be available for 24 hours every day.
- 07 There are fewer welfare agencies in the rural areas, and rural social workers perceive social work in the urban areas to be more competitive.
- 08 Rural social workers believe that their urban colleagues have better working conditions, and receive better remuneration and fringe benefits.
- 09 Clients in rural areas are often unskilled, illiterate, and there is greater educational differences between the social worker and the client system.
- 10 Social problems in the rural areas are often more poverty related, but rural social workers believe that the intensity of the different social problems are more in urban areas.
- 11 Volunteers are more readily available in rural than in urban areas.
- 12 There is no difference between rural and urban social work.

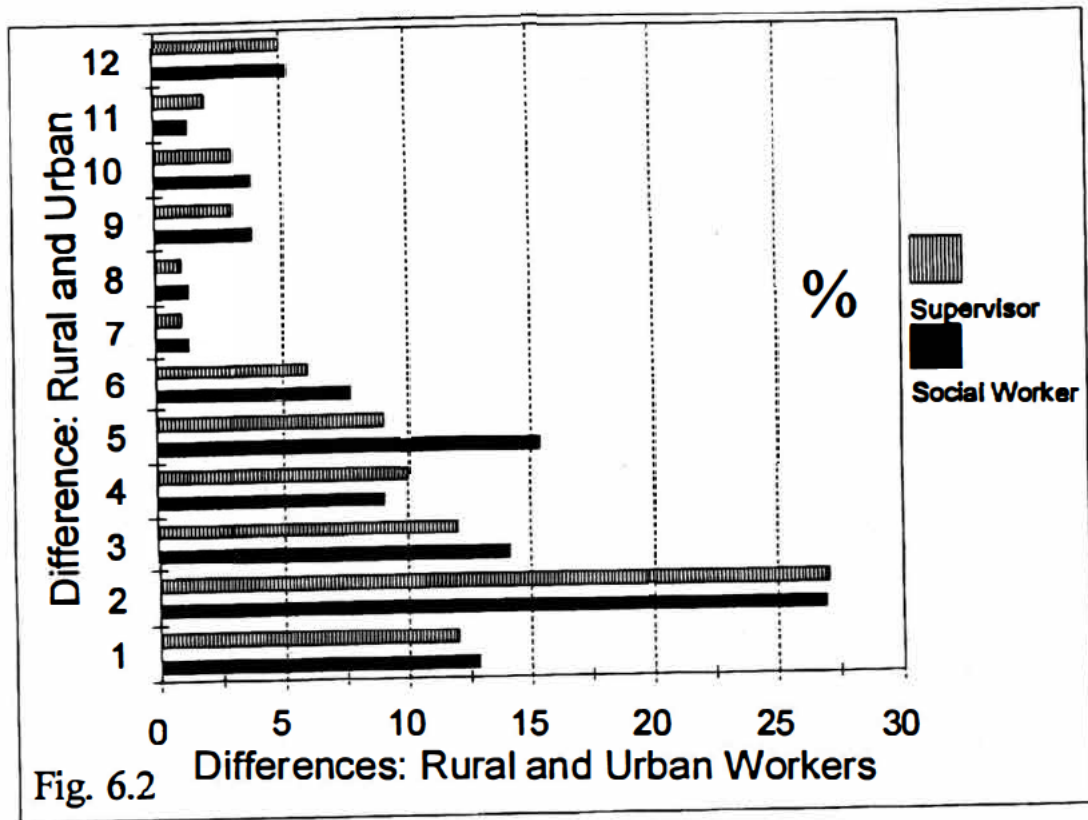


Figure 6.2 Differences between social work in rural and urban areas

Comparisons between the responses from the social workers and supervisors indicate that the social workers described more differences between rural and urban social work than did the supervisors. The largest group (26.9% [21]) of the social workers consider the scarce resources and facilities as the most important difference between rural and urban social work, while the largest group (40.9% [9]) of the supervisors consider the isolation of the social workers and the fewer opportunities for professional development and less frequent supervision as the most important difference. It appears from the majority (82.0%) of the responses that the social workers and supervisors consider the most important differences between rural and urban social work to be: the generalist approach, and no opportunities for specialization; scarce resources and facilities; the higher workloads and wide range of tasks that rural social workers have to carry out; the areas that are characterized by wide geographic dispersion; and the isolation of the rural social workers. It must be noted that only 2.6% (2) of the social workers indicated that there is no difference between rural and urban social work. Although the majority 52.1% (24) of the respondents indicated that the social workers render services in a well developed rural area, it appears that there is agreement on the different aspects that not only differ from social work in urban areas, but also characterize rural social work in general.

The responses of the social workers and supervisors are consistent with the literature study. Authors such as Collier (1984:60-62), Horejsi & Deaton (1977:199), and Martinez-Brawley (1982:89-90) state that the majority of rural social workers, regardless of their educational preparation or personal preferences, are forced to adopt a generalist approach. Due to the lack of resources, that are described by authors such as Gingsberg (1976:3), Malaka (1992:1,14) and Stoffregen (1991:12-13), rural social workers are also required to carry out a wide range of different tasks, and this often result in high workloads. Although various authors agree on the scarce resources and facilities, authors such as Farley *et al* (1982:9) and Vice Irey (1980:41) mention that volunteers are often one of the greatest untapped resources in the rural community. The lack of formal helping networks, and smaller scale of living in the rural areas contribute to the higher visibility of the social worker, and the expectations that the community have of the social worker to be available at all times. Wide geographical dispersion are described by authors such as Farley *et al* (1982:10), Webster & Campbell (1977:7), and Wijnberg & Colca (1981:92). Personnel isolation and the importance of the fact that the rural social worker should be self-directed and self-reliant are described by Farley *et al* (1982:10), Gingsberg (1976:9) and Webster & Campbell (1977:6). Various authors (ANC, 1994:14; Derman, 1992:3; Muzaale, 1987:75,80-83; Steyn, 1991:2-6) describe the poverty related problems in the rural areas. There are various reasons for rural poverty, but one reason that is singled out by authors such as Gingsberg (1976:4) and Gumbi (1992:7) is the fact that employment opportunities are limited in the rural areas.

6.3.3 Rural Social Work Practice: Roles Most Frequently Played by Rural Social Workers.

It has already been stated that rural social workers have to adopt a generalist approach, and that due to the fact that there is a scarcity of resources, the rural social workers are required to play a variety of different roles. The different roles that the rural social worker has to assume, has been described in the literature study, and are classified into 10 different roles. The roles are first described, and the respondents' perceptions of the roles most frequently played by rural social workers are then reflected in figure 6.3.

Roles most frequently played by the rural social workers:

- 01 Direct service role
- 02 Organizer
- 03 Educator
- 04 Resource specialist
- 05 Facilitator of inter disciplinary cooperation
- 06 Mediator

- 07 Advocate
- 08 Ombudsman
- 09 Administrative assistant
- 10 Friend and confident

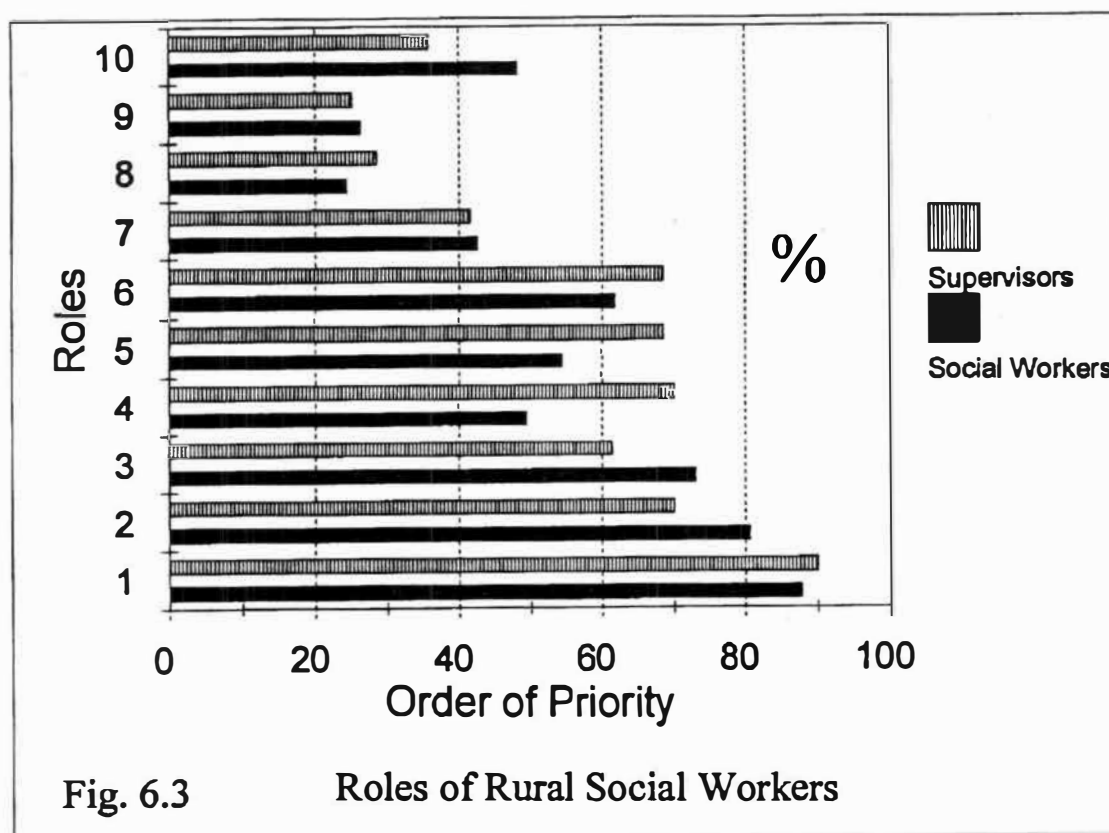


Figure 6.3 Roles most frequently played by rural social workers

Comparisons between the responses of the social workers and supervisors in figure 6.3 reveal that, in order of priority, the social workers and supervisors agree that the roles most frequently played by the rural social worker are the direct service (8.9), organizer (7.5), educator (6.7), and mediator (6.5) roles. The respondents also seem to agree that the roles that are less frequently played by the rural social worker are those of ombudsman (2.6) and administrative assistant (2.6). It is interesting to note that the supervisors consider the role of resource specialist (7.0) as equally important to the role of organizer (7.0). However, despite the fact that rural areas are characterized by a scarcity of resources, the social workers indicated that the role of resource specialist (4.9) is less frequent played by the rural social worker. Farley *et al* (1982:46) describe this role as one of the most difficult and most challenging roles that the rural social worker have to play, and stress that the social worker must ensure that the limited resources are utilized in an imaginative, effective and efficient manner.

6.3.4 Knowledge Base of the Rural Social Worker.

Compton & Galaway (1979:38) point out that it is the possession of knowledge, together with the ability to organize and apply this knowledge to various situations that marks the social work profession from other occupations. It was therefore important to determine what knowledge the rural social worker needs to have. The respondents' description of the knowledge needed by rural social workers is categorized into 10 different responses. A comparison between the social workers and supervisors' responses is reflected in figure 6.4.

Knowledge that the rural social worker need:

- 01 Knowledge about the different fields of service, and knowledge about other fields of service, for example, psychology.
- 02 Knowledge about human behavior and the stages of human development.
- 03 Knowledge about the different social work methods, including community development, and the different social work techniques.
- 04 Knowledge about rural and urban resources.
- 05 Knowledge about the different communities. This include knowledge about the history of the communities, the needs and problems of the communities, and the different roleplayers and leaders in the communities. Knowledge about the process of change in various communities is also included.
- 06 Knowledge about the language, culture, traditions, and value systems of the communities.
- 07 Knowledge about management and administration
- 08 Legal knowledge
- 09 Knowledge about the organization
- 10 Knowledge about the self

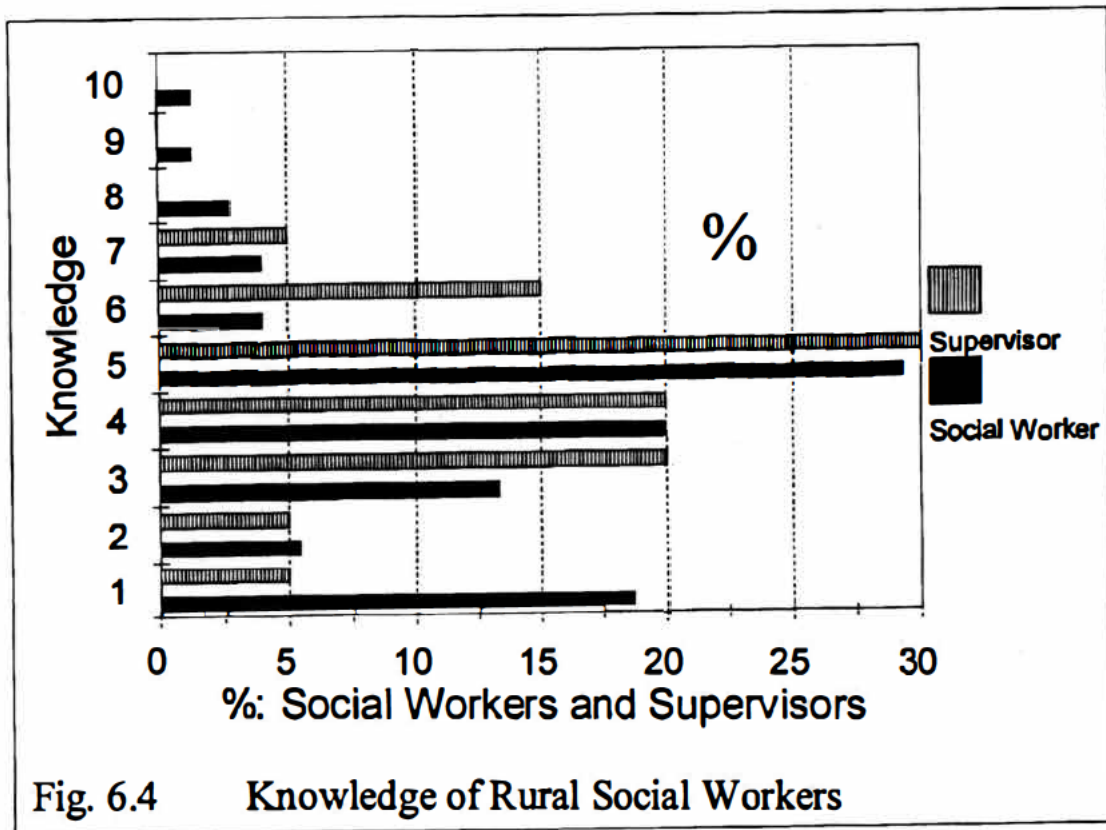


Figure 6.4 Knowledge of the rural social worker

Figure 6.4 shows that the largest group of the social workers (33.3% [25]) and supervisors (45.0% [9]) consider knowledge about the different communities, and the culture and values of these communities as the most important. Social workers (20.0% [15]) and supervisors (20.0% [4]) consider knowledge about resources as the second most important knowledge attribute. It must also be noted that 18.7% (14) of the social workers consider knowledge about the different fields of service as more important than knowledge about social work methods and techniques (13.3% [10]). Only 1.3% (1) of the social workers mention knowledge about the organization and the self, while none of the supervisors have mentioned these aspects. It is further important to note that only 4.0% (3) of the social workers and 5.0% (1) of the supervisors mention knowledge about management and administration.

From the above, it appears that there are certain similarities between the respondents' responses and the "Committee on Professional Questions Regarding Social Work's" summary (1987:33-35) of the knowledge base of a social worker. Similarities include knowledge about human behaviour, various cultures, legal aspects, resources, the needs and problems of clients, groups, and communities. It further appears that the respondents consider knowledge of persons, their interactions and social situations, as described by

authors such as Cronje (1994:250), Johnson (1989:51) and McKendrick (1990:247), as more important than knowledge of practice theory as explained by Johnson (1989:51), and Siporin (1975:96-97). The fact that only a small percentage of the respondents have mentioned knowledge about the organization and the self, and that none of the respondents have, for example, mention knowledge about research, are of concern. This is of special concern as various authors (Banerjee, 1975; Johnson, 1989; Siporin, 1975) have said that the most important tool a social worker possesses is him-/herself, and that considerable self-knowledge is essential. Furthermore, authors such as Botha (1993:4), Compton & Galaway (1979:45), and Sheafor *et al* (1988:57-58) have stated very clearly that clients are not well served unless the social worker is constantly alert, and brings the latest and most appropriate knowledge to the helping process.

6.3.5 Skills of the Rural Social Worker

The skills of the rural social worker are as important as the rural social worker's knowledge base. The social workers and supervisors were asked to describe the most important skills of a rural social worker, and 76 responses were received from 35 social workers, and eight supervisors. Three social workers failed to complete the question. The responses are categorized into 14 different descriptions of the skills that rural social workers need. Figure 6.5 reflects a comparison between the responses from the social workers and supervisors.

Skills of rural social workers:

- 01 Communication skills
- 02 Skills in negotiation
- 03 Reflective listening skills
- 04 Assessment skills
- 05 Skills in planning, including skills in the formulation and planning of welfare programmes
- 06 Evaluation skills
- 07 Organizing skills
- 08 Prioritizing skills
- 09 Skills in the building of different relationships
- 10 The ability to use the integrated approach
- 11 The ability to fulfill the different roles of a social worker
- 12 Report writing skills
- 13 Research skills

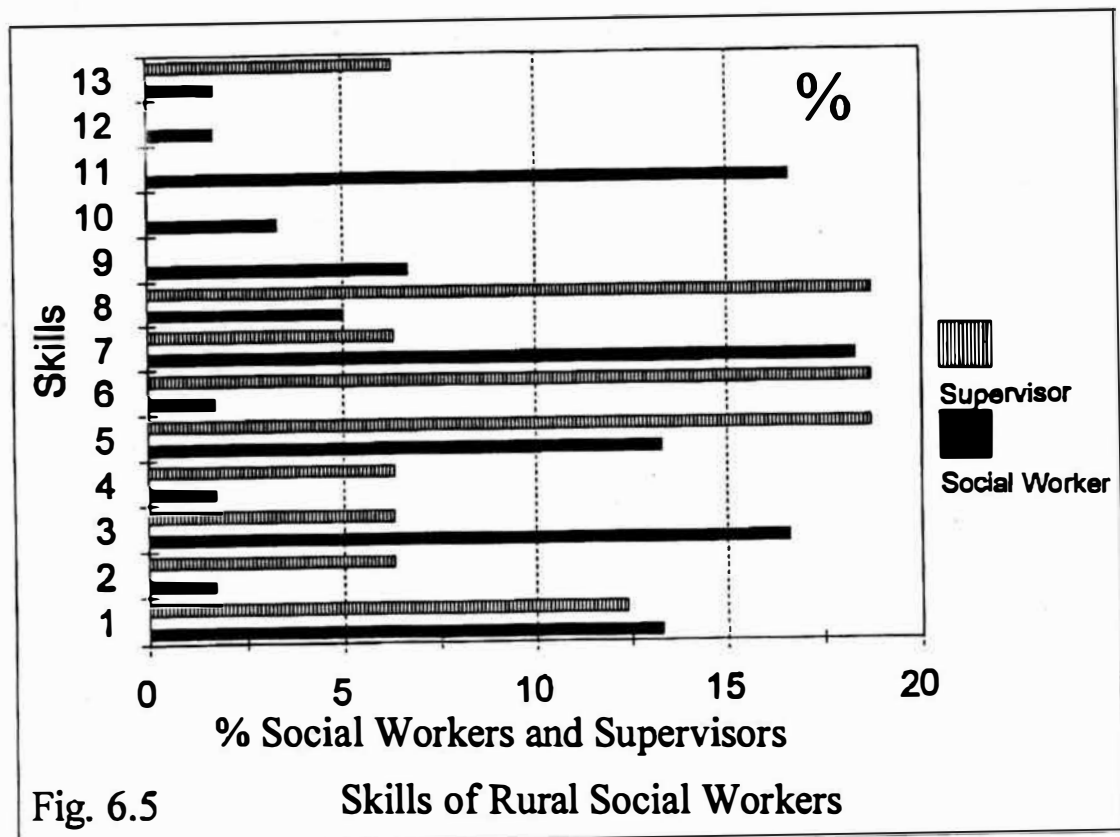


Figure 6.5 Skills of the rural social worker

Figure 6.5 shows that the largest group of the social workers' responses (51.5% [31]) consider organizing, reflective listening, and the ability to fulfill different roles as the most important skills. Communication (13.3% [8]) and planning skills (13.3% [8]) are also considered as important by the social workers. Although there is a fairly even distribution in the supervisors' responses, the majority of the responses (56.1% [9]) consider planning, organizing and the building of relationships as the most important skills. A small percentage of social workers (6.7% [4]) mention skills such as negotiation, assessment, evaluation, and report writing. Skills that are mentioned by the social workers but not the supervisors, include: the ability to use an integrated approach, the ability to fulfill different social work roles, and report writing. Skills in research, as mentioned by 6.3% (1) of the supervisors, were not mentioned by the social workers. There are similarities between the skills mentioned by the respondents and the functional skills as described by Loewenberg (1979:159). However, none of the respondents mentioned adaptive skills (Loewenberg, 1979:159). Skills in fulfilling the different roles of the rural social worker can include skills such as skills in problem-solving, linking people with resources, and skills in intervening on behalf of populations most vulnerable as described in the literature study. Neither the social workers, nor the supervisors mentioned the important skills of contributing to the

development and modification of social policy as described by authors such as Germain & Gitterman (1980:337), and Pincus & Minahan (1973:26). The fact that these skills were not mentioned are congruent with the fact that the social workers and supervisors indicated that the roles of advocate and ombudsman are less frequently played by the rural social workers.

6.4 THE RURAL SOCIAL WORKER'S ROLE IN HIS/HER OWN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The social workers and supervisors were asked to indicate who is primary responsible for the rural social worker's personal and professional development. The responses are reflected in table 6.9.

Table 6.9 Person(s) primary responsible for the rural social worker's personal and professional development

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
Person(s)	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social worker	12	31.6	5	62.5	17	36.9
Supervisor	7	18.4	1	12.5	8	17.4
Organization	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Social worker with assistance of supervisor	6	15.8	1	12.5	7	15.2
Social worker with assistance of organization	6	15.8	1	12.5	7	15.2
Social worker with assistance of supervisor and organization	4	10.6	0	0.0	4	8.7
Other: Community	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Question not answered	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 6.9 indicates that the largest group of the social workers (31.6% [12]), and supervisors (62.5% [5]) believe that the social worker is primarily responsible for his/her own personal and professional development. Another 31.6% (12) of the social workers believe that the social worker is primarily responsible for his/her own personal and professional development, but with the help of either the supervisor or the organization. Seven (18.4%) of the social workers and one (12.5%) supervisor believe that the supervisor is primarily responsible for the social worker's development. A small percentage of social workers has indicated that the organization (2.6% [1]) and the community (2.6% [1]) are responsible for the social worker's development. The latter is an interesting response. The respondent (2.6% [1]) has indicated that the communities' needs and problems will determine in which area the social worker will have to develop. This argument was not found in the literature. One (2.6%) social worker did not complete the question. There is a

correlation between the responses of the respondents and the literature study. Various authors (Frey & Edinburg, 1983:345-346; Hawkins & Shohet (1989:28; and Scherz, 1958:441) have indicated that the social worker is always primarily responsible for his/her own development. However, authors such as Guttman *et al* (1988:278), Kadushin (1992:xvii), Webb (1983:50), and Weinbach (1994:121-147) have also described the important role that the supervisor and the organization can play in the social worker's personal and professional development.

6.4.1 Methods Used by Rural Social Workers for Their Personal and Professional Development.

A variety of methods that social workers can use for their own personal and professional development was offered to the respondents, and they were asked to indicate how often the different methods are being used by the social workers. The social workers' responses are given in table 6.10, while table 6.11 reflects the supervisors' perceptions of the methods that are being used by the social workers for their personal and professional development.

Table 6.10 Methods used by rural social workers for their personal and professional development (page 155a)

The rural social workers' responses (22.4% [119]) as shown in table 6.10 indicate that the largest group of social workers use methods such as the setting of clear personal goals, self -, individual -, group supervision, and consultation always or frequently for their personal and professional development. Methods such as peer supervision, staff development, the building of a professional library and community activities are used sometimes or frequently (14.5%). Methods that are seldom or never (18.2%) used are student supervision, the developing of a journal club, membership of professional associations, the submission of papers for publication, and research. It must also be noted that out of a possible 532 responses, 78 (14.7%) of the responses did not indicate which methods the social workers use for their development.

It appears from the above that the rural social workers rely heavily on the different variations of supervision for their personal and professional development. This correlates with research done by Kemp (1985:95-96) and Van Biljon (1970:425) who have also found that social workers rely heavily on supervision, and that only a small percentage of social workers expand their knowledge through self-study. It is not clear why the rural social workers so seldom participate in student supervision/field instruction, as it is known that there are universities in the rural areas, for example the University of Fort Hare, and these universities do use the rural agencies to assist with the field instruction of their social work students. Methods such as the development of a journal club, membership of professional

Table 6.10 : Methods used by social workers for their personal and professional development.

Strategy	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Setting clear personal goals	16	42.1	15	39.5	4	10.5	1	2.6	-	-	2	5.3	38	100
Self Supervision	9	23.7	16	42.1	5	13.2	2	5.3	1	2.6	5	13.2	38	100
Peer Supervision	4	10.5	10	26.3	12	31.6	1	2.6	2	5.3	9	23.7	38	100
Individual Supervision	11	28.9	10	26.3	12	31.6	1	2.6	2	5.3	9	23.7	38	100
Group Supervision	8	21.1	12	31.6	7	18.4	8	21.1	1	2.6	2	5.3	38	100
Consultation	8	21.1	14	36.8	6	15.8	1	2.6	3	7.9	6	15.8	38	100
Student Supervision/Field Instruction	-	-	7	18.4	8	21.1	10	26.3	6	15.8	7	18.4	38	100
Professional Library	4	10.5	11	28.9	10	26.3	5	13.2	4	10.5	4	10.5	38	100
Journal Club	-	-	1	2.6	6	15.8	5	13.2	18	47.4	8	21.1	38	100
Community Activities	5	13.2	10	26.3	9	23.7	5	13.2	4	10.5	5	13.2	38	100
Professional Association	9	23.7	2	5.3	7	18.4	6	15.8	8	21.1	6	15.8	38	100
Submitting papers for Publication	-	-	-	-	3	7.9	6	15.8	21	55.3	8	21.1	38	100
Research	1	2.6	4	10.5	9	23.7	9	23.7	8	21.1	7	18.4	38	100

associations, and research will be discussed in more detail in the following sections, as control questions in regard to these aspects were asked to the respondents.

Table 6.11 Supervisors' perception of the methods used by rural social workers for their personal and professional development (page 156a)

Table 6.11 shows that there is a definite correlation between the responses from the supervisors and the social workers. The largest group of the supervisors' responses (37.5% [42]) reflect that the social workers use methods such as the setting of clear personal goals, self -, individual -, group supervision, consultation and staff development always or frequently for their development. Methods such as peer supervision, building a professional library, and community activities are used sometimes or frequently (12.5% [14]), while student supervision, the development of a journal club, membership of a professional association, submitting papers for publication, and research are seldom or never (19.6% [22]) used. It must also be noted that from a possible 112 responses, 16 (14.3%) responses did not indicate which methods the social workers use for their personal and professional development.

The building of a professional library, the developing of a journal club, membership of professional associations, and research will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

(a) Building of A Professional Library and the Development of A Journal Club

Professional libraries and journal clubs can be developed if the social workers subscribe to social work journals, and purchase professional literature. These aspects will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 6.12 Subscription to social work journals

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	13	34.2	8	100.0	21	45.6
No	25	65.8	0	0.0	25	54.4
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

The majority of the respondents (54.4% [25]) have indicated that the rural social workers do not subscribe to social work journals. Authors such as Sheafor *et al* (1988:167) have stated clearly that in order to remain knowledgeable about new developments in the field of practice, it is important that social workers shall read professional books and journals. In view of this, the fact that the respondents have said that social workers are primarily

Table 6.11 : Supervisor's perception of the methods used by rural social workers for their personal and professional development.

Strategy	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Setting clear personal goals	3	37.5	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100
Self Supervision	2	25	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Peer Supervision	-	-	4	50	2	25	-	-	-	-	2	25	8	100
Individual Supervision	5	62.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Group Supervision	4	50	3	37.5	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	8	100
Consultation	1	12.5	7	87.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100
Student Supervision/Field Instruction	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	2	25	8	100
Staff Development	3	37.5	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	8	100
Professional Library	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	8	100
Journal Club	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25	4	50	8	100
Community Activities	1	12.5	1	12.5	4	50	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Professional Association	2	25	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5	8	100
Submitting paper for publication	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	3	37.5	2	25	2	25	8	100
Research	-	-	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25	2	25	2	25	8	100

responsible for their own personal and professional development, that rural social workers are isolated, and that they have fewer opportunities to attend staff development activities, it is surprising that the largest percentage of the social workers do not subscribe to professional journals. The social workers were asked to give reasons why they do not subscribe to social work journals. These reasons varied from that they have forgotten to subscribe (16.0% [4]), to that they felt that the journals were not appropriate (4.0% [1]), and were thus not meeting the needs of the social workers. Other reasons why the social workers do not subscribe to social work journals include: the social workers can not afford to subscribe (12.0% [3]), they do not know the titles and subscription addresses (8.0% [2]), they have enough literature and do not need to receive more (4.0% [1]), and the organizations receive social work journals (16.0% [4]). Ten social workers (40.0%) have failed to give reasons as to why they do not subscribe to social work journals.

The social workers who have subscribed to social work journals mainly receive, according to the responses from the social workers and supervisors, South African journals such as: Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk (38.0% [11]); Psycho-Social Research and Practice (24.2% [7]); and Welfare Focus (10.4% [3]).

Table 6.13 The last time that rural social workers have bought professional literature

Frequency	N	%
1995	9	23.6
1994	8	21.1
1993	3	7.9
While studying	3	7.9
Cannot remember	8	21.1
Unknown	7	18.4
Total	38	100.0

Table 6.13 shows that 52.6% (20) of the social workers have bought professional literature in the current (1995) and past two (1993/4) years, while 21.1% (8) social workers could not remember when they have last bought literature, and 18.4% (7) did not answer the question. The conclusion can be drawn that the majority of the social workers buy professional literature fairly regularly. This conclusion also correlates with the supervisors' perception of the frequency at which social workers buy literature (table 6.14).

Table 6.14 Supervisors' perception of the frequency at which rural social workers purchase professional literature

Frequency	N	%
Always	0	0.0
Frequent	4	50.0
Sometimes	3	37.5
Seldom	1	12.5
Never	0	0.0
Total	8	100.0

Table 6.14 indicates that 50.0% (4) of the supervisors believe that the social workers buy literature frequently. None of the supervisors have indicated that the social workers never buy any literature. Sheafor *et al* (1988:167) suggest that the social workers not only have to purchase literature, but that it may also be worthwhile to approach their local libraries to obtain literature. Library personnel will respond to reasonable requests, because many social work topics are of interest to the reading public as well. It is therefore clear that there are different, and also inexpensive options available to the rural social worker.

The purpose of the next table was to determine how often the rural social workers read professional literature in order to contribute to their personal and professional development.

Table 6.15 Frequency at which rural social workers read social work and related articles

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
Frequency	N	%	N	%	N	%
One article per day	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
One article per week	6	15.8	2	25.0	8	17.4
One article per month	25	65.8	5	62.5	30	65.2
One article every three months	3	7.9	1	12.5	4	8.7
Question not answered	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	8.7
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 6.15 shows that 65.2% (30) of the respondents have indicated that the social workers read on average one article per month, while 17.4% (8) read one article per week. Only a small percentage (8.7% [4]) read one article every three months. If the rural social workers develop journal clubs as suggested by Sheafor *et al* (1988:166) they may find that these clubs can provide the structure and incentive many social workers need to give professional reading the attention it deserves. It can also be an effective, an inexpensive method of

expanding the social worker's knowledge and skills. Figure 6.6 will illustrate that the social workers have not discovered the advantages of a journal club, as nobody has indicated that peers or the journal club are responsible for the supplying of literature to the social workers. The person(s) responsible for supplying literature to the rural social workers are listed, and the responses of the respondents are reflected and compared in figure 6.6.

Person(s) responsible for supplying literature to the rural social worker:

- 01 Social worker
- 02 Supervisor
- 03 Organization
- 04 Social worker and the supervisor
- 05 Social worker and the organization
- 06 Supervisor and the organization
- 07 National Councils and/or head offices
- 08 University libraries
- 09 Journals and newspapers
- 10 South African Council for Social Work
- 11 Welfare Forums
- 12 No response

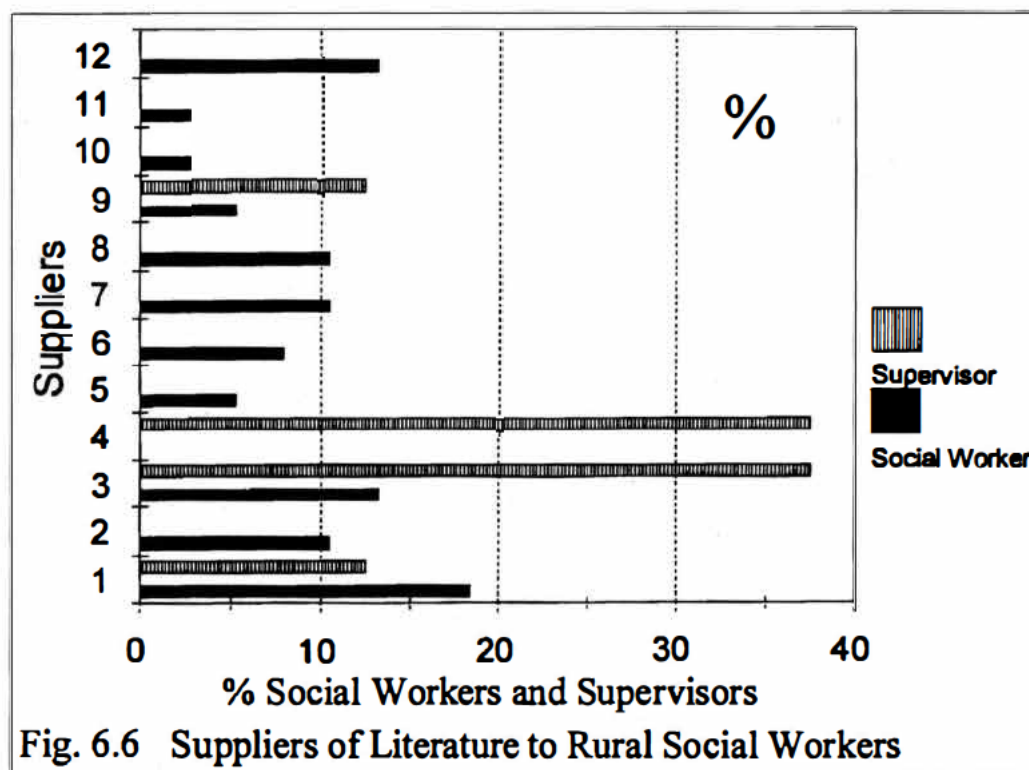


Figure 6.6 Person(s) responsible for supplying literature to the rural social workers

Figure 6.6 illustrates that 17.4% (8) of the social workers are responsible for finding their own literature, while 32.6% (15) rely on the supervisor and the organization to supply the necessary literature. A further 28.3% (13) have indicated other resources such as university libraries, the national councils of the welfare organizations, welfare forums and the South African Council for Social Work.

(b) Membership of Professional Associations

Tables 6.10 and 6.11 have shown that the social workers are seldom or never members of professional associations, and it is therefore not a method that is well used to contribute to the rural social workers' personal and professional development. Table 6.16 reflects the social workers' membership to professional associations.

Table 6.16 Membership of professional associations

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	8	21.1	3	37.5	11	23.9
No	28	73.6	5	62.5	33	71.8
Unknown	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	4.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 6.16 shows clearly that the majority of the rural social workers (71.8% [33]) do not belong to professional associations. It must also be brought to the attention that four social workers have mentioned that they belong to a professional association, and have given the name of the association as the South African Council for Social Work. This illustrates that at least 8.7% of the respondents in this research project is not only unclear about the role of professional associations, but also on the role of the Council for Social Work. In view of this, it can then be said that 80.4% (37) of the rural social workers are not members of a professional association. This is regrettably, as various authors (Botha, 1993:4; Frey & Edinburg, 1983:354; Gibelman & Humphreys, 1979:405 and Weinbach, 1994:142) have described the important contribution of professional associations in the professional development of social workers.

The respondents were asked to give the reasons why they do not belong to professional associations. These reasons are reflected in table 6.17.

Table 6.17 Reasons why rural social workers do not belong to professional associations

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
Reasons	N	%	N	%	N	%
No association in the area	14	50.0	4	80.0	18	54.5
Geographical distance	4	14.3	0	0.0	4	12.1
Associations do not function well	3	10.7	0	0.0	3	9.1
Social workers have joined unions	1	3.6	1	20.0	2	6.1
Can not afford membership fees	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.0
Question not answered	5	17.8	0	0.0	5	15.2
Total	28	100.0	5	100.0	33	100.0

Table 6.17 shows that 63.6% (21) of the respondents have indicated that it is not possible for the social workers to belong to a professional association, as the associations do not exist in the particular rural areas, or the associations do not function well, and therefore do not meet the needs of the social workers. Two (6.1%) of the social workers have indicated they have joined unions, 3.0% (1) do not belong to an association as the membership can not be afforded, and a further 12.1% (4) of the social workers have indicated that they do not belong to associations because of the large geographical distance (as much as 600 km) that they have to travel to meetings. It appears that distance is a real problem in some instances, but it is regrettable that the social workers feel that the professional associations do not make a contribution to their professional development. It also appears that the respondents do not make an effort to form a social workers' group, or an association that is within closer proximity.

(c) Research

In tables 6.10 and 6.11 it was shown that the rural social workers seldom or never do any research. Table 6.18 explores this tendency further, and the social workers reasons for not doing research will also be discussed.

Table 6.18 Rural social workers involvement in research projects during 1994

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	8	21.1	2	25.0	10	21.8
No	14	36.8	4	50.0	18	39.1
Question not answered	16	42.1	2	25.0	18	39.1
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 6.18 shows, consistent with the figures in tables 6.10 and 6.11, that 39.1% (18) of the social workers have not undertaken any form of research in the past year (1994). It is also important to note that 39.1% (18) of the respondents have not answered the question. Three supervisors (37.5%) have said that the social workers have not undertaken research as it was impossible due to the high workloads, or that it was not necessary to do research. No other reasons were given. The social workers (21.8% [10]) who have undertaken research have indicated that one social worker has completed a M A degree, while the other research projects were undertaken in order to expand services in the communities. These projects included need surveys, community profiles, and projects to determine, for example, the affect of unemployment on family life. The different projects are similar to the various forms of research that are described by Skidmore & Thackeray (1982:143-144). The necessity of research, especially in rural areas, is explained by Farley *et al* (1982:185), Grinnell (1993:9) and Skidmore & Thackeray (1982:143-144). In view of this importance of research, it is of concern that a relatively small percentage (21.8%) of the respondents have indicated that the rural social workers have undertaken research projects.

6.4.2 Strategies that Rural Social Workers Use To Cope With, and To Prevent Burnout

Stress and burnout seem to affect social workers, and it can have an influence on the social worker's personal and professional development. The respondents were asked to list the aspects of the work, or in the work environment of the rural social worker that cause stress and tension. These responses are categorized into 12 statements. Comparisons between the social workers and supervisors' responses are presented in figure 6.7. The strategies that rural social workers use to cope with, and to prevent burnout will be reflected in tables 6.19 and 20.

Aspects of the work, and/or in the work environment that cause stress and tension for the rural social worker:

- 01 The multitude and intensity of the community needs; pressure and expectations of the clients, communities; the generalist approach, and the resulting high workloads, overtime that the social worker often have to work.
- 02 Management related problems, such as poor functioning of the management committees, relationship problems between the social workers and the management committees, and an apparent lack of support and understanding for the role of the social worker.
- 03 Poor working conditions, and poor office facilities.
- 04 Poor salaries, lack of recognition, and lack of opportunities for advancement, and resulting stagnation.

- 05 Isolation, lack of supervision guidance and support, independent functioning.
- 06 Large geographical areas, and the poor infra-structure in some of the rural areas.
- 07 Lack of resources, including financial resources.
- 08 Relationship problems with colleagues.
- 09 Administration.
- 10 Changes in the welfare system and welfare policy. This also include participation in the Reconstruction and Development Programme, as well as the formulation of welfare programmes.
- 11 Aspects such as political differences and discrimination.
- 12 Bureaucratic procedures

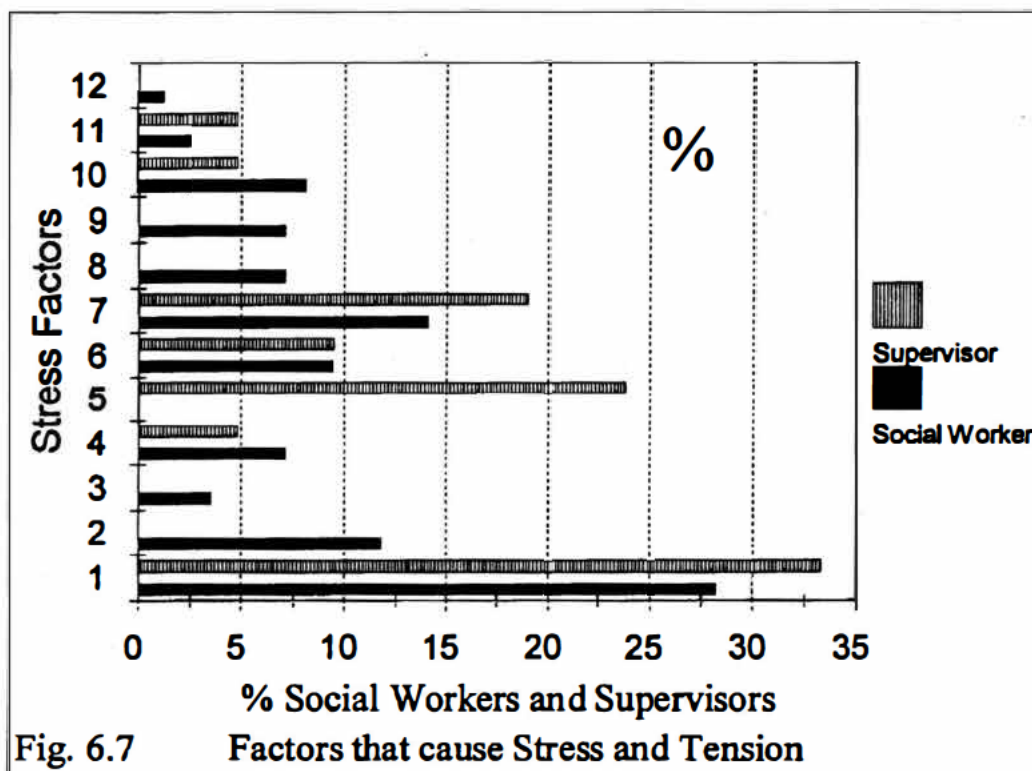


Figure 6.7 Aspects of the work, and/or in the work environment that cause stress and tension for the rural social worker

Figure 6.7 illustrates that the largest group of the social workers (28.2% [24]), and the supervisors (33.3% [7]) consider factors that are related to the client system as the biggest cause of worker stress. It is interesting to note that none of the supervisors have mentioned management related problems as a source of stress, while 11.8% (10) of the social workers have indicated that this is apparently the third highest reason for worker stress. It is also important to note that none of the social workers have mentioned the isolation, and the less frequent supervision as possible causes for stress, while 23.8% (5) of the supervisors

consider this as the second most important reason for worker stress. It appears that the respondents generally agree on factors such as large geographical areas, the lack of resources, and changes in the welfare systems as possible causes for the rural social worker's stress and tension.

The responses are congruent with the different sources of stress as described by authors such as Austin (1981:293), Daley (1979:376), Harrison (1980:32), Kadushin (1992:236-260), and Ratliff (1988:147-154). The respondents' descriptions can eventually be categorized into four of the five broad categories as described in the literature, namely: the social work profession, organizational environment; social, economic and political factors; and gender related causes for stress. The strategies that the rural social workers use to cope with stress, and to prevent burnout, and the supervisors' perceptions of these strategies are reflected in table 6.19 and 6.20.

Table 6.19 Strategies that rural social workers use to cope with, and to prevent burnout (page 164a)

The largest group of the social workers' responses (34.9% [159]) indicate that strategies such as positive self talk, positive imagery, the building of positive relationships, becoming more assertive, supervision, and staff development are always or frequently use to cope with stress, and to prevent burnout. Peer support groups are frequently or sometimes used by the social workers. The journal club, is congruent with the previous discussions, seldom or never used by the social workers. From a possible 456 responses, only 12 (2.6%) responses have been received that indicated that the social workers also use other strategies to cope with stress. These strategies include: sport and socialization, vacation leave and psycho-therapy. The strategies that the social workers use to cope with stress are similar to the strategies described in the literature by authors such as Beck (1987:3-15), Cournoyer (1991:263-264), Daley (1979:375-379), and Harrison (1980:31-44).

The supervisors' perceptions of the strategies that rural social workers use to cope with stress, and to prevent burnout are reflected in table 6.20.

Table 6.20 Supervisors' perceptions of the strategies that rural social workers use to cope with, and to prevent burnout (page 164b)

Table 6.20 shows that according to 35% (28) of the supervisors' responses that the supervisors believe that the rural social workers always or frequently use strategies such as positive self talk, building positive relationships, becoming more assertive, and supervision. These responses are similar to the social workers' responses. However, the supervisors (16.3% [13]) have indicated that strategies such as positive imagery, staff development,

Table 6.19 : Strategies that rural social workers use to cope with stress and to prevent burn-out.

Strategy	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Positive self-talk	19	50	13	34.2	3	7.9	1	2.6	-	-	2	5.3	38	100
Positive Imagery	9	23.7	13	34.2	5	13.2	5	13.2	1	2.6	5	13.2	38	100
Building Positive Relationships	20	52.6	12	31.6	4	10.5	1	2.6	-	-	1	2.6	38	100
Becoming more Assertive	6	15.8	24	63.2	3	7.9	2	5.3	-	-	3	7.9	38	100
Supervision	6	15.8	18	47.4	5	13.2	5	13.2	1	2.6	3	7.9	38	100
Staff Development	10	26.3	9	23.7	12	31.6	4	10.5	1	2.6	2	5.3	38	100
Journal Club	2	5.3	2	5.3	9	23.7	4	10.5	13	34.2	8	21.1	38	100
Peer support group	5	13.2	14	36.8	6	15.8	5	13.2	3	7.9	5	13.2	38	100
Sport	7	18.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	81.6	38	100
Socialization	1	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37	97.4	38	100
Vacation leave	1	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37	97.4	38	100
Psycho-therapy	3	7.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	92.1	38	100

Table 6.20 : Supervisor's perceptions of the strategies that rural social workers use to cope with, and to prevent burnout.

Strategy	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Positive self-talk	2	25	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Positive Imagery	-	-	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	4	50	8	100
Building Positive Relationships	4	50	3	37.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Becoming more Assertive	2	25	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Supervision	3	37.5	4	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Staff Development	2	25	1	12.5	4	50	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Journal Club	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	-	-	1	12.5	4	50	8	100
Peer support group	-	-	2	25	3	37.5	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	8	100
Vacation leave	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	87.5	8	100
Psycho-therapy	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	87.5	8	100

journal clubs and peer support groups are sometimes or seldom use by the workers. Two responses (2.5%) indicate that the social workers also use strategies such as vacation leave and psycho-therapy to cope with stress. Sport and socialization were not mentioned by the supervisors.

6.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter it has been shown that the majority of the respondents who have participated in the research project are female, and have no post degree qualifications, while only 10.8% have acquired other social work related qualifications. The majority (57.9%) of the social workers are between the age of 25 and 34 years, have between zero and six years experience as a social worker, and have been in their current employment situation for between zero and six years. The majority (62.5%) of the supervisors are in the age group of 50 59 years, have between seven and nine years experience as a supervisor, and have been between seven and twelve years in their current employment situation. It appears that there is not a high turnover rate of supervisors in the rural areas. At least 68.4% of the social workers are employed at rural organizations with one or two social workers on their staff, and 52.6% of the social workers are rendering services in well developed rural areas with highly organized service delivery systems. The roles that are most frequently played by the rural social workers are those of organizer, educator, mediator and the direct service role, while the advocate and ombudsman roles are less frequently played.

The respondents descriptions of the differences between rural and urban social work indicate that there is general consensus on the unique characteristics and difficulties of rural social work. The most important differences between rural and urban social work are: the lack of resources and facilities, the generalist approach that the social workers are forced to adopt, the wide range of tasks that the social workers need to carry out, and the wide geographic dispersion that characterized the rural areas. The respondents have also indicated that the rural social workers often work in isolated circumstances, have fewer opportunities for professional development, receive less frequent supervision, and are therefore more self-reliant and independent. The respondents consider knowledge about communities, persons in their social situations, their social interactions, and resources as the most important knowledge that rural social workers need. It is of concern that only 1.3% of the respondents have mentioned knowledge about the self and the organization, while no respondent has mentioned knowledge about research. The respondents believe that the rural social workers need organizing, reflective listening skills, and skills that will enable them to fulfill the different roles that they have to play. Only 6.3% of the supervisors has mentioned research skills. The unanswered question is how the rural social workers are able to bring the latest and most appropriate knowledge to their practice, and the helping

processes without knowledge and skills about research.

The discussions on the rural social workers' personal and professional development reveal that only 36.9% believe that the social worker is primarily responsible for his/her own development, while the other responses have indicated that the social workers believe that they are responsible for their own development with the assistance of the supervisor and/or the organization, or that the supervisor, organization or community is primarily responsible for the social workers' development. It is throughout the discussions clear that the social workers rely heavily on the supervisors' contributions to their professional development. It appears that the social workers mainly use methods such as the setting of clear personal goals, self -, individual -, group supervision and consultation for their personal and professional development. Methods such as student supervision, journal clubs, membership of professional associations, the submission of papers for publication and research are seldom or never used. These findings support the previous statement, namely that rural social workers rely to a large extent on the supervisors' contribution to their professional development, and it appears that self study is seldom undertaken.

The research findings about the role that the supervisor and organization play in professional development of the rural social worker will be discussed in chapter seven.

CHAPTER 7

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL SOCIAL WORKER: THE ROLES, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SUPERVISOR AND ORGANIZATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature study, and the research findings as discussed in chapter six have indicated that rural social workers often work in isolated circumstances, and that they rely to a large extent on the supervisors' contribution to their professional development. However, the organization can also play a very important role in the social workers' professional development. The contributions of the supervisors and the organizations as revealed in the empirical study will be discussed in this chapter.

7.2 THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The social workers and supervisors' perceptions of the role of the supervisor in the professional development of the rural social worker will be discussed in the following section.

7.2.1 Distance Supervision

The majority of the social workers (52.6% [28]) and the supervisors (87.5% [7]) have indicated that the supervisor is based either at a regional or head office. McFarlane's description (1991:129) of distance supervision is therefore applicable to the supervision that the majority of the rural social workers receive. The respondents were asked to describe distance supervision. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents have given a definition of distance supervision. However, the responses reveal the respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of the supervision that is being offered to the social workers. Ten (28.6%) respondents have indicated that distance supervision is a good alternative, and that they are satisfied with it. The respondents have indicated that it is a form of supervision which allow the social worker to be more self-reliant, and independent, yet, the supervisor is still available to offer guidance and support. The supervisor also have the opportunity to use a variety of unique methods and resources.

The majority of the respondents (71.4% [25]) are dissatisfied with distance supervision, and have indicated that this form of supervision is very unsatisfactory, and often superficial. The social workers have indicated that they miss regular, personal contact with the

supervisors, that the supervisors are less involved in the agency, and social workers' problems, and that they do not receive sufficient support and feedback from the supervisors. The supervisors also describe it as less effective, and very tiring due to the geographical distances, and time that is spent on travelling. In order to determine the nature and extent of the supervision that the rural social workers receive, the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of individual - and group supervision, the extent to which the social workers are involved in the development of a supervision program, the frequency of feedback, and the methods and techniques that the supervisors use in individual -, group supervision and staff development. These aspects, and the social workers' satisfaction with the support that they receive will be reflected in the following tables and figures.

7.2.2 Individual and Group Supervision

The frequency of individual and group supervision is categorized into 10 different categories. Comparisons between the social workers and supervisors' perception of the frequency of individual and group supervision are reflected in figure 7.1.

Frequency of individual and group supervision:

- 01 Twice per month
- 02 Once per month
- 03 Once every two months
- 04 Once every three months
- 05 Once every four months
- 06 Once every six months
- 07 Once per annum
- 08 No individual or group supervision
- 09 Not applicable because respondent is receiving consultation
- 10 Unknown, no response

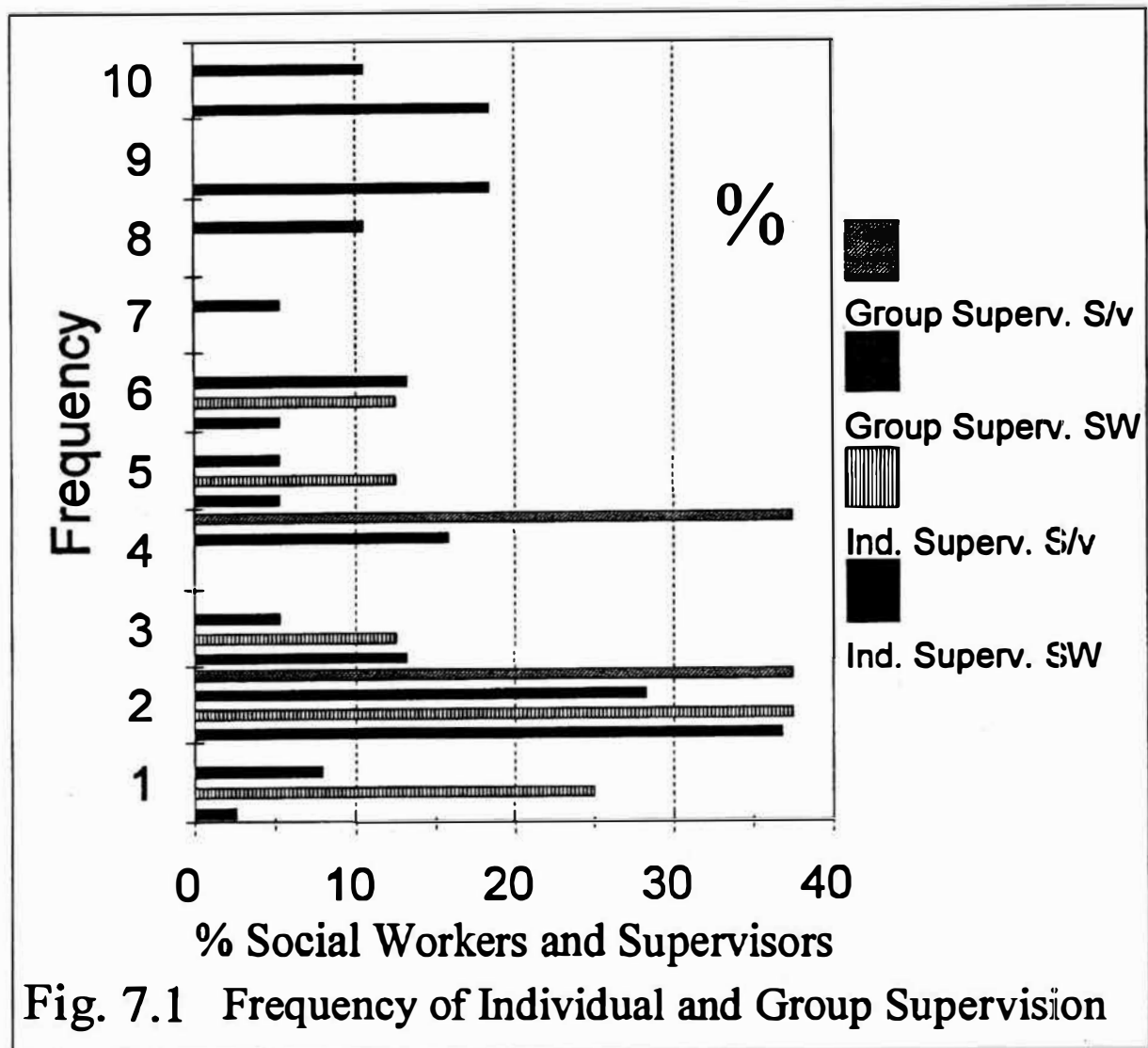


Fig. 7.1 Frequency of Individual and Group Supervision

Figure 7.1 Frequency of individual -, and group supervision

Figure 7.1 illustrates that the largest group (37.0% [17]) of the respondents have indicated that rural social workers receive individual supervision once per month. It is also important to note that 13% (6) of the respondents have said that the social workers only receive supervision once per quarter or once every six months. The social workers' dissatisfaction with the frequency of the supervision that they receive, and the need for more personal contact and support are therefore understandable and justified. It appears that the situation in respect of group supervision is even more bleak. While 28.3% (13) of the respondents have indicated that the social workers receive group supervision once per month, an equal number (28.3% [13]) have said that the social workers receive group supervision once every six months, once per annum, or not at all. It is difficult to believe that group supervision can make an effective contribution to the professional development of the rural social worker if it is so seldom presented. If the advantages of group supervision, as

described by authors such as Getzel & Salmon (1985:27-43) Kadushin (1992:405-413), and Schulman (1993:225), are taken into account, it is obvious that this method of supervision can play a much more prominent role in the professional development of the rural social worker.

(a) Social Workers' Involvement in The Development of A Supervision Programme

Guidelines for a competence oriented supervision are suggested by authors such as Guttman et al (1988:280-281), Morton & Kurtz (1980:241), and Kadushin (1992:214), and include assessment, developing a contract with the supervisees, formulating goals and objectives, and determining strategies for learning. The extent to which rural social workers are involved in developing a competence oriented supervision programme is reflected in tables 7.1 and 7.2.

Table 7.1 Extent to which rural social workers are involved in developing a supervision programme (page 170a)

Table 7.1 shows that 76.3% (29) of the social workers are always or frequently involved in the assessment of their own learning needs, while 7.9% (3) of the respondents have indicated that they are never involved in this process. The majority of the respondents have also said that they are frequently or sometimes involved in the formulation of supervision goals and objectives (55.3% [21]), and the determining of strategies for learning (57.9% [22]). However, 18.4% (7) of the social workers are seldom or never involved in the formulation of supervision goals and objectives, 23.7% (9) are seldom or never involved in determining strategies for learning, and 44.7% (17) are seldom or never involved in drafting a supervision contract. It appears that supervision contracts are seldom or never used to further adult and professional development as explained by Fox (1983:38).

Table 7.2 Supervisors' perception of the extent to which rural social workers are involved in developing a supervision programme (page 170b)

The supervisors' perceptions of the extent to which the rural social workers are involved in developing a competence oriented supervision programme differ slightly from the social workers' perceptions. Table 7.2 shows that the majority of the supervisors believe that the social workers are always or frequently involved in the assessment of their own learning needs (62.5% [5]), always or frequently involved in formulating supervision goals and objectives (50.0% [4]), and the drafting of a supervision contract (50.0% [4]), while 37.5% (3) have said that the social workers are always or frequently involved in determining strategies for learning. It is important to note that 25.0% (2) of the supervisors have not completed the question. It appears that the majority of the supervisors who have

Table 7.1 : Extent to which rural social workers are involved in developing a supervision program.

Involvement In:	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Assesment of own learning needs	15	39.5	14	36.8	6	15.8	-	-	3	7.9	-	-	38	100
Formulation of supervision goals and objectives	7	18.4	13	34.2	8	21.1	4	10.5	3	7.9	3	7.9	38	100
Determining strategies of learning	5	13.2	12	31.6	10	26.3	8	21.1	1	2.6	2	5.3	38	100
Drafting a supervision contract	6	15.8	7	18.4	4	10.5	4	10.5	13	34.2	4	10.5	38	100

Table 7.2 : Supervisor's perception of the extent to which rural social workers are involved in developing a supervision program

Involvement In:	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		No Answer		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Assesment of own learning needs	3	37.5	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	2	25	8	100
Formulation of supervision goals and objectives	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	-	2	25	8	100
Determining strategies of learning	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	2	25	8	100
Drafting a supervision contract	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	-	1	2.5	2	25	8	100

participated in the research project try to implement the guidelines for a competence oriented supervision programme.

(b) Providing Feedback

The frequency of the feedback that rural social workers receive from their supervisors is reflected in table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Frequency of feedback received from supervisors

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Frequency	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	12	31.6	5	62.5	17	37.0
Frequent	9	23.7	3	37.5	12	26.1
Sometimes	7	18.4	0	0.0	7	15.2
Seldom	6	15.8	0	0.0	6	13.0
Never	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	8.7
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.3 shows that 63.1% (29) of the respondents have indicated that the social workers receive feedback always or regularly. Of concern is the fact that 26.3% (10) of the social workers have indicated that they seldom or never receive feedback from their supervisors. It appears that Morton & Kurtz's (1980:246) statement that the provision of feedback is an important, but often neglected aspect, is true for at least 26.3% of the social workers who participated in this research project. Authors such as Middleman & Rhodes (1985:286) have stressed that feedback should be provided regularly as part of teaching and supervision.

Table 7.4 Rural social workers' satisfaction with the feedback they receive from supervisors

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Satisfaction	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	24	63.2	7	87.5	31	67.4
No	13	34.2	1	12.5	14	30.4
Unknown	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.4 indicates that according to 67.4% (31) of the respondents that the social workers are satisfied with the feedback that they receive. They are satisfied with the feedback as it is given regularly, and it is constructive. They have further indicated that the supervisors are

supportive, that they create opportunities for learning, that the feedback is part of well planned supervision sessions, and that the supervisors give recognition for work that is well done. Thus, the feedback is effective and in accordance with guidelines as described by Kadushin (1992:165-166). The 30.4% (14) of the respondents who have said that they are not satisfied with the feedback that is being given, have mentioned reasons such as the following for their dissatisfaction: The supervision sessions are not well planned, feedback is not given regularly or is given in a destructive manner, and too little feedback is given. One social worker (2.6%) has also said that his/her need is for consultation, and not supervision. It appears that when the guidelines for the provision of feedback (Kadushin, 1992:165-166) are not followed, it results in dissatisfaction with the feedback that is being received.

(c) The Techniques that Supervisors Use in Individual -, Group Supervision and Staff Development

The perception that rural social workers have of the techniques that supervisors use during individual - (in), group supervision and staff development are reflected in tables 7.5 (a-c). The responses are presented in table 7.5a: individual supervision; table 7.5b: group supervision; and table 7.5c: staff development. The presentation is done in this way in order to make the interpretation of the results easier, and more user friendly.

Table 7.5a,b,c The perception that rural social workers have of the techniques that supervisors use during individual -, group supervision and staff development. (page 172a, 172b, 172c)

Table 7.5(a-c) show that the only technique that supervisors always or frequently use in individual -, group supervision and staff development is discussions related to case-, group-, and community work. Out of a possible 912 responses, it is clear that 43.5% (397) of the responses indicate that all the other techniques as mentioned in table 7.5(a-c), are seldom or never used. It is also important to note that 33.2% (303) responses have not been given. It is possible that the respondents are not familiar with, for example the tele-picture, or that it is too expensive for many of the organizations to use this new technological development (Picture Tel Video, 1994). However, the use of the technical media in distance supervision (Rumble, 1986:11-13) is of special importance, and can effectively be used in the facilitation of, for example, group learning. Telephone conferences can, for example, be used in offering more regular group supervision/group consultation sessions. It must be remembered that adult learning is primarily experiential, and as Brannon (1985:30-39) has suggested, it is important to use techniques and strategies such as roleplays, that will challenge the learner, and facilitate growth.

Table 7.5 (a) : The Perception that rural social workers have of the techniques used by supervisors during individual supervision.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	16	42.1	8	21.1	5	13.2	-	-	1	2.6	8	21.1	38	100
Discussions of literature	2	5.3	2	5.3	9	23.7	8	21.1	6	15.8	11	28.9	38	100
Roleplays	1	2.6	-	-	3	7.9	8	21.1	14	36.8	12	31.6	38	100
Analysis of audio recordings	1	2.6	-	-	-	-	3	7.9	23	60.5	11	28.9	38	100
Analysis of video recordings	-	-	-	-	2	5.3	2	5.3	21	55.3	13	34.2	38	100
Tele-conference	1	2.6	1	2.6	2	5.3	1	2.6	21	55.3	12	31.6	38	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	7.9	22	57.9	13	34.2	38	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	3	7.9	4	10.5	4	10.5	1	2.6	12	31.6	14	36.8	38	100

Table 7.5 (b) : The perception that rural social workers have of the techniques used by supervisors during group supervision.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	7	18.4	10	26.3	8	21.1	1	2.6	2	5.3	10	26.3	38	100
Discussions of literature	2	5.3	3	7.9	9	23.7	6	15.8	7	18.4	11	28.9	38	100
Roleplays	1	2.6	1	2.6	2	5.3	8	21.1	11	28.9	15	39.5	38	100
Analysis of audio recordings	1	2.6	-	-	-	-	4	10.5	17	44.7	16	42.1	38	100
Analysis of video recordings	-	-	1	2.6	3	7.9	4	10.5	15	39.5	15	39.5	38	100
Tele-conference	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	2.6	19	50.0	15	39.5	38	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5.3	21	55.3	15	39.5	38	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	3	7.9	6	15.8	7	18.4	1	2.6	9	23.7	12	31.6	38	100

Table 7.5 (c) : The perception that rural social workers have of the techniques used by supervisors during staff development.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	6	15.8	8	21.1	7	18.4	2	5.3	2	5.3	13	34.2	38	100
Discussions of literature	1	2.6	5	13.2	8	21.1	9	23.7	4	10.5	11	28.9	38	100
Roleplays	-	-	2	5.3	3	7.9	9	23.7	13	34.2	11	28.9	38	100
Analysis of audio recordings	1	2.6	-	-	2	5.3	5	13.2	19	50	11	28.9	38	100
Analysis of video recordings	1	2.6	-	-	7	18.4	2	5.3	16	42.1	12	31.6	38	100
Tele-conference	-	-	-	-	1	2.6	2	5.3	19	50	16	42.1	38	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5.3	21	55.3	15	39.5	38	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	6	15.8	10	26.3	5	13.2	1	2.6	5	13.2	11	28.9	38	100

Tables 7.6(a-c) reflect the supervisors' own perception of the different techniques that are being used in individual -, group supervision and staff development. Tables 7.6(a-c) are presented in the same manner as tables 7.5(a-c).

Table 7.6a,b,c Techniques that supervisors use in individual -, group supervision, and staff development. (page 173a,173b, 173c)

Tables 7.6(a-c) reflect the same tendencies as tables 7.5(a-c). The supervisors could have given a possible 192 responses, but 49.9% (94) responses have not been given. Furthermore, 21.4% (41) of the responses indicate that techniques such as the discussion of literature, roleplays, analysis of audio and video recordings, tele-conferences, and tele-pictures are seldom or never used by the supervisors. Discussions related to case-, group-, and community work appear to be the only technique that is frequently used. It would be possible to enhance the quality of the social workers' learning if other techniques and strategies are also incorporated.

(d) The Rural Social Workers' Satisfaction with The Support They Receive from Their Supervisors.

The respondents were asked to indicate the rural social workers' satisfaction with the support that they receive from their supervisors. These responses will be reflected in table 7.7, where after the reasons for the satisfaction or dissatisfaction will be discussed.

Table 7.7 Rural social workers' satisfaction with the support they receive from supervisors.

	Social Workers		Supervisors		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	24	63.2	4	50.0	28	60.8
No	12	31.5	4	50.0	16	34.9
No answer	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	4.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.7 shows that 60.8% (28) of the respondents are of the opinion that the rural social workers are satisfied with the support that they receive from the supervisors, and also with the role that the supervisors play in the management of the social workers' stress. The respondents indicated that the supervisors are supportive, show a real concern for and interest in the workers, and help the social workers to seek alternatives to deal with work related problems. The respondents have also mentioned that the supervisors play the mediator role effectively, and provide opportunities for development, and further ensure

Table 7.6 (a) : Techniques that supervisors use in individual supervision.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	5	62.5	3	37.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100
Discussions of literature	1	12.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Roleplays	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	1	12.5	6	75	8	100
Analysis of audio recordings	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	2	25	5	62.5	8	100
Analysis of video recordings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100
Tele-conference	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	2	25	5	62.5	8	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	50	4	50	8	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	1	12.5	6	75	8	100

Table 7.6 (b) : Techniques that supervisors use in group supervision.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	3	37.5	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	2	25	8	100
Discussions of literature	1	12.5	4	50	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	8	100
Roleplays	-	-	1	12.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5	8	100
Analysis of audio recordings	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	6	75	8	100
Analysis of video recordings	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25	3	37.5	8	100
Tele-conference	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	2	25	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	8	100

Table 7.6 (c) : Techniques that supervisors use in staff development.

Techniques	Always		Frequent		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case-, Group-, Community work related discussions	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	5	62.5	8	100
Discussions of literature	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	5	62.5	8	100
Roleplays	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	6	75	8	100
Analysis of audio recordings	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	1	12.5	6	75	8	100
Analysis of video recordings	1	12.5	-	-	2	25	-	-	1	12.5	4	50	8	100
Tele-conference	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	25	6	75	8	100
Tele-picture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100
Lectures presented by guest speakers	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	3	37.5	8	100

that the social workers take regular vacation leave. Of concern is the fact that 34.9% (16) of the respondents have indicated that the social workers are dissatisfied with the support that they receive from the supervisors. The supervisors have indicated that due to a lack of time, and the geographical distance, it is often not possible to provide adequate support to the social workers. The social workers' reasons for their dissatisfaction include the following: There is a lack of trust and a poor relationship between the social worker and supervisor; the supervisors do not protect the social workers; the supervisors are too critical, and contribute to the workers' stress. The social workers have also indicated that they need more individual time and attention from the supervisors.

From the above, it is clear that there are a variety of reasons why social workers feel frustrated and devalued. In view of the fact that the rural social workers often work in isolated circumstances, and it is therefore important that the supervisors shall give special attention to the supportive function of supervision, as described by authors such as Kadushin (1992:228-272) and Middleman & Rhodes (1985:119-143).

(e) The Role that The Supervisor Plays in The Professional Development of The Rural Social Worker

As a final question in this section, the respondents were asked to describe the role that the supervisor play/can play in the professional development of the rural social worker. It must first be noted that 10.5% (4) social workers have not answered this question, including one social worker who has previously indicated the supervisor is primarily responsible for the rural social worker's professional development. Three (37.5%) of the supervisors have also failed to answer the question. It must also be noted that 7.9% (3) of the social workers have claimed that there is no role for the supervisor in the professional development of the social worker. One of these respondents feels that the supervisor is unable to contribute to the worker's development, while the other two respondents have said that the supervisor only has an administrative and control function to play. These perceptions of the role of the supervisor appear to be inaccurate in view of all the literature on supervision.

The majority of the respondents (78.3% [36]) have said that supervisors can play a very important role in the rural social workers' personal and professional development. The respondents have indicated that the supervisors' role include the following: The supervisor should create opportunities for development, such as planning and implementing staff development programmes, and the liaison with other organizations to ensure the effective use of time, and resources. The respondents felt strongly that the supervisors should keep the social workers informed about new developments in the field of social work practice. Roles such as these of advocate, educator, and enabler should be played by the supervisors, and finally, more attention should be given to the educational function of supervision. It is

clear from the different responses that it is essential that the supervisors shall implement a growth-orientated supervision model (Guttman et al, 1988:279; Webb, 1983:50) that will enable the social worker to acquire knowledge, skills, self-understanding and maturity. This model will enable supervisors and social workers to concentrate more on the social workers' strengths, and will stress progress and future goals.

7.3 THE ROLE THAT THE ORGANIZATION PLAYS IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The respondents' opinion of the role that the organization can play in the personal and professional development of the rural social worker will be discussed in this section. The social workers and supervisors' responses will be categorized into eight different statements, and comparisons between the responses will be illustrated in figure 7.2.

The organization's contribution to the personal and professional development of rural social workers:

- 01 The organization should create opportunities for development, and should for example, have a staff development programme, arrange workshops, conferences.
- 02 Time should be available for the social workers to attend staff development programmes.
- 03 Funds should be made available for staff development programmes.
- 04 Organizations should regularly purchase literature, and subscribe to social work journals.
- 05 Study leave, and if possible study bursaries and loans, should be available to the staff.
- 06 Organizations should improve the working conditions of the staff.
- 07 Support, recognition and encouragement from the management committees are important. Sound management practices are also necessary.
- 08 No answers/suggestions.

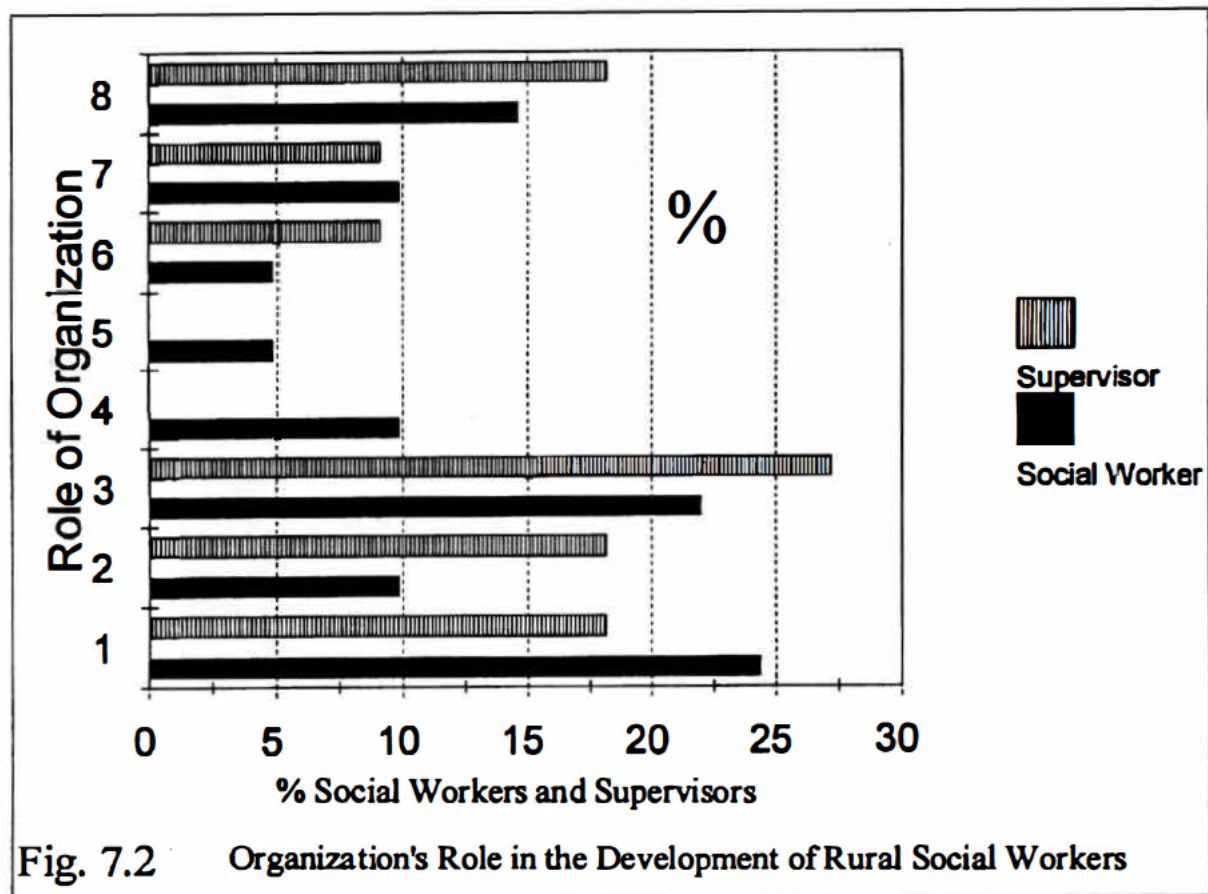


Figure 7.2 **The role that the organization can play in the professional development of the rural social worker**

Figure 7.2 shows that according to the responses of the social workers (56.2% [23]) and supervisors (63.6% [7]), the organization should create opportunities for development, and that funds and time should be made available for this purpose. The only difference in the responses is that the social workers have also suggested study leave and bursaries, and the purchasing of literature, while the supervisors did not mention these options at all. The respondents' suggestions are congruent to the suggestions that have been found in the literature (Doueck & Austin, 1986:28; Wax, 1979:117-118; Weinbach, 1994:132-133, and Weiner, 1980:233)

7.3.1 Continuing Education

The extent to which the rural organizations contribute to the social workers' professional development will be determined by discussing the organizations' staff development programmes, the purchasing of literature, and the collection of professional literature at the organizations.

Table 7.8 Staff development programme

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	26	68.5	7	87.5	33	71.7
No	11	28.9	1	12.5	12	26.1
No answer	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.8 shows that the majority of the organizations (71.7% [33]) have, according to the respondents a staff development programme. Weinbach (1994:287) has said that staff development can never be ignored, and it appears from the responses that the organizations realise the importance of staff development. However, it is of concern that 26.1% (12) of the respondents have indicated that the organizations have no staff development programme.

Table 7.9 Person(s) responsible for the drafting of the staff development programme

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Person(s)	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social worker	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
Supervisor	10	26.4	3	37.5	13	28.6
Social worker and supervisor	8	21.1	1	12.5	9	19.5
Director	4	10.5	1	12.5	5	10.8
Management	0	0.0	2	25.0	2	4.3
Head office	3	7.9	0	0.0	3	6.5
Nobody	11	28.9	0	0.0	11	23.8
No answer	1	2.6	1	12.5	2	4.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.9 indicates that the social workers do not play an active role in the drafting of the staff development programmes. Only 21.7% (10) of the respondents have indicated that the social worker participate in this exercise. It is not known to what extent the supervisors, directors, management committees and head offices involve the social workers in the drafting of the staff development programmes. However, their participation is essential according to authors such as Abels (1977:12-13), Doelker & Lynett (1983:380), Mullins (1993:582-583) and Weinbach (1994:232-233).

Table 7.10 Person(s) responsible for the implementation of the staff development programme

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Person(s)	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social worker	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	4.3
Supervisor	10	26.4	2	25.0	12	26.2
Social worker and supervisor	7	18.4	2	25.0	9	19.6
Social worker and management	0	0.0	2	25.0	2	4.3
External experts	4	10.5	2	25.0	6	13.0
Nobody	11	28.9	0	0.0	11	23.9
No answer	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	8.7
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

The figures in table 7.10 are congruent with the figures in table 7.9. It appears that the same person(s) who are responsible for drafting staff development programmes are also responsible for the implementation of the programme. It is of concern that rural social workers, who work in small agencies and often in isolated circumstances, do not participate more actively in designing and implementation of the staff development programmes. The social workers, as agency employees, and peer trainers (Weinbach & Kuehner, 1985:481-482; Weinbach, 1994:134-136) can make a valuable contribution to their own, and colleagues' professional development, and it is not necessary to rely so heavily on senior staff and external experts.

Table 7.11 The rural organization's budget for a staff development programme

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Amount	N	%	N	%	N	%
R500-R1000	1	2.6	1	12.5	2	4.3
R1000-R2000	3	7.9	0	0.0	3	6.5
R2000 >	1	2.6	1	12.5	2	4.3
No budget	3	7.9	0	0.0	3	6.5
Uncertain	20	52.6	2	25.0	22	47.9
No answer	10	26.4	4	50.0	14	30.5
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.11 shows distressing tendencies: 30.5% (14) of the respondents have not answered the question; 47.9% (22) of the respondents did not know how much is spent on staff development; and only 10.8% (5) of the respondents have indicated that the organizations spend more than R1000 per annum on staff development. This is similar to the findings of research done by De V Smit (1994:10). This author has found that organizations are

inclined to spend three times as much on looking after equipment as opposed to looking after staff, and that budgets for staff development programmes tend to be as little as 0.45 percent of the organizations' overall expenditure. Further responses from the respondents have revealed that only 2.6% (1) is actively involved in decisions about the staff development budget. This explains why 47.9% of the respondents do not know how much is budgeted for staff development. It appears that the management committees or head offices of certain agencies are responsible for decisions about the staff development budget, while the social workers are responsible for the management of the budget. It is unclear to what extent the rural social workers' development and continuing education needs are considered when budget decisions are taken. However, it is of the utmost importance that the social workers shall play a more active role in these decision-making processes, and shall provide the other roleplayers with clear information about the social workers' needs.

(a) Attendance of Seminars and Workshops

The respondents have indicated that the availability of funds, and geographical distance determine how often the rural social workers attend workshops, seminars, and conferences. However, 43.5% (20) respondents have said that the social workers attend these opportunities at least once per quarter. All the respondents have indicated that they attend workshops and seminars, even if it is only once per annum. Although the rural social workers attend workshops and seminars, the impression is gained that the attendance of these events is not part of a well planned staff development programme. Factors such as geographical distance, and the availability of funds appear to be the most important considerations.

(b) Purchasing of Literature

The respondents were asked to indicate how often the organizations purchase professional literature, and how much is spent on average on the purchasing of literature. The responses were congruent with the responses presented in table 7.11: 21.7% (10) of the respondents have said that literature is never bought, while 37.0% (17) of the respondents did not know how much the organization spent on the purchasing of literature. The respondents have further indicated that literature is purchased when necessary, and 34.8% (16) have said that the organizations spend less than R500 per annum on literature. The respondents were also asked to indicate whether their organizations have their own library or collection of professional literature. These responses are reflected in table 7.12.

Table 7.12 Library/collection of professional literature at rural organizations

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	18	47.4	4	50.0	22	47.8
No	17	44.7	3	37.5	20	43.5
No answer	3	7.9	1	12.5	4	8.7
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.12 shows that an almost equal number of organizations have (47.8% [22]), and do not have (43.5% [20]) their own collection of professional literature. These responses give reason to concern as literature is one of the most important resources that rural social workers have to improve their knowledge. An unanswered question is whether the social workers inform the organizations about their needs, and importance of, for example a collection of literature, or whether the organizations fail to respond to the social workers' requests. Authors such as Sheafor *et al* (1988:167) have stressed that it is important that staff shall regularly request funds for the purchasing of literature from those who control the funds. These authors have found that a surprising large number of social workers and supervisors never request library funds, thus conveying a message that professional literature is not needed or wanted.

Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the organizations subscribe to professional journals. These responses are reflected in table 7.13.

Table 7.13 Subscription to social work journals

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	16	42.1	5	62.5	21	45.7
No	15	39.5	2	25	17	37.0
No answer	7	18.4	1	12.5	8	17.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.13 shows that 45.7% of the organizations subscribe to professional journals, while 37.0% (17) of do not subscribe to journals. In summary it can be noted that 26.1% (12) of the respondents have indicated that their organizations have no staff development programme, and it appears that at least the same number of organizations do not purchase professional literature, do not have a collection or library of professional literature, and also do not subscribe to social work literature. This is an alarming tendency, especially in view

of the isolated circumstances of the rural social worker that have previously been described. It also appears that continuing education programmes as described by Doelker & Lynett (1983:380), Wax (1979:118), Weinbach & Kuehner (1985:477-487), and Weinbach (1994:121-147) do not receive adequate attention at the rural organizations.

7.3.2 Consultation

The organization can make a further contribution to the social workers professional development through the arrangement of consultation for the more experienced, and competent social worker. The social workers and supervisors responses in regard to this aspect will be discussed in the following section. The respondents have been asked to indicate the number of years that the social workers have received supervision before receiving consultation. Their responses are reflected in table 7.14.

Table 7.14 Number of years that rural social workers have received supervision before they received consultation

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Number of years	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-3	8	47.1	4	50.0	12	48.0
4-6	9	52.9	1	12.5	10	40.0
7-9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
10-12	0	0.0	2	25.0	2	8.0
No answer	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	4.0
Total	17	100.0	8	100.0	25	100.0

It appears that there is a tendency to move the rural social workers within the first three years to a consultation level, as 48.0% (12) of the respondents have indicated that the social workers have received consultation after the first three years of receiving supervision. However, at least 8.0% of the respondents have said that the social workers have received consultation after ten years of supervision. Westheimer (1977:160) has clearly stated that social workers should continue to learn all their lives, but the means of learning should be different and in accordance with the stage of professional development that the workers have reached. The decision to arrange consultation should also be linked to the workers' level of competence, and organizations should have carefully worked out criteria to evaluate the social worker's level of competence (Westheimer, 1977:161). Only 32.6% (15) of the respondents have indicated that their organizations have such criteria, 10.9% (5) respondents have said that their organizations do not have criteria, and factors such as the geographical distance between the social worker and supervisor were taken into account. It is of concern that 56.5% (26) of the respondents have not indicated whether their

organizations have criteria for determining whether or not a social worker should receive consultation. It is therefore difficult to draw an accurate conclusion on this aspect. However, it appears as if the responses are congruent to the findings of Pretorius (1991:206). In a study that was undertaken by this author it was found that less than 50% of the organizations and state departments that had participated in the study had clear, written criteria and policy for determining whether a social worker should receive consultation or ongoing supervision.

The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of the consultation that the rural social workers receive. The responses are indicated in table 7.15.

Table 7.15 Frequency of consultation

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Frequency	N	%	N	%	N	%
Twice per month	2	11.8	0	0.0	2	8.0
Monthly	4	23.5	2	25.0	6	24.0
Bi-monthly	4	23.5	1	12.5	5	20.0
Quarterly	2	11.8	0	0.0	2	8.0
On request	5	29.4	3	37.5	8	32.0
No answer	0	0.0	2	25.0	2	8.0
Total	17	100.0	8	100.0	25	100.0

Table 7.15 shows that 32.0% (8) of the respondents have indicated that the rural social workers receive consultation on the social workers request, while 44.0% (11) have said that the social workers receive consultation either monthly or bi-monthly. These responses give the impression that the respondents confuse consultation and supervision. This was also found in a study that was undertaken by Pretorius (1991:204). This author has stated that social workers and supervisors do not have sufficient knowledge about the process of consultation, and that it is often, and easily confused with other similar processes such as supervision. This could be due to the fact that consultation is not explicitly defined in the social work literature. It appears from the responses that consultation is not used as the time-limited, problem-solving method that is described by authors such as Kadushin (1977:26), Rapoport (1977:194), and Westheimer (1977:158-159).

Chaiklin & Munson (1983:25) have suggested that peer consultation offers an opportunity for self-directed and self-paced learning, and the respondents were therefore asked to indicate whether the rural social workers attend peer consultation groups in addition to the individual consultation that they receive. The responses are reflected in table 7.16.

Table 7.16 Consultation group

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	6	35.3	2	25.0	8	32.0
No	11	64.7	5	62.5	16	64.0
Unknown	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	4.0
Total	17	100.0	8	100.0	25	100.0

Table 7.16 indicates that 64.0% of the rural social workers do not attend consultation groups. They have indicated that such groups either do not exist, or that the geographical distance makes it impossible to attend such groups. The 32.0% (8) of the respondents who have indicated that the rural social workers attend consultation groups, have said that these groups are attended monthly, or in some instances bi-monthly. This is yet another opportunity for contact with peers, and for self-paced, self-directed learning that is, for various reasons not used by rural social workers.

7.3.3 Performance Appraisals

Various authors (Kadushin, 1992:343-344; Millar, 1990:66; Mullins, 1993:584; and Weinbach, 1994:150) have suggested that performance appraisals are crucial to the effective management of an organization's human resources, and that performance appraisals can indicate which aspects of the social worker's development need further attention. The frequency at which performance appraisals are done at the rural organizations, and the manner in which these appraisals are done, will be discussed in this section.

Table 7.17 Frequency of performance appraisals

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Frequency	N	%	N	%	N	%
Quarterly	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	8.6
Six monthly	4	10.5	2	25.0	6	13.0
Annually	21	55.3	5	62.5	26	56.5
Bi-annually	1	2.6	0	0.0	1	2.2
No appraisals done	8	21.1	1	12.5	9	19.7
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.17 shows that performance appraisals are, according to 78.1% (36) of the respondents, regularly done at the rural organizations. It must also be noted that 19.7% (9) of the respondents have indicated that no performance appraisals are done. It appears from

the different responses that the following appraisal methods are applied at the rural organizations: critical incident techniques (16.7% [6]); the achievement of supervision objectives, and the welfare programme (11.1% [4]); rating scales and questionnaires (72.2% [26]). It was not clear from the responses whether behaviorally anchored rating scales or graphic rating scales are used in the appraisals of worker performance. However, it appears as if some of the appraisal methods that are described in the literature by authors such as Brody (1993:160-161), Lewis *et al* (1991:135-138) and Mullins (1993:588-589) are being used at the rural organizations.

Authors such as Elridge (1982:489-491) and Kadushin (1992:344) have explained the importance of self-evaluation as every social workers' responsibility. Elridge (1982:492) has also suggested a model for self-evaluation. The extent to which rural social workers do self-evaluation is reflected in table 7.18.

Table 7.18 Self-evaluation

	Social Worker		Supervisor		Total	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	23	60.5	5	62.5	28	60.9
No	13	34.2	3	37.5	16	34.8
Unknown	2	5.3	0	0.0	2	4.3
Total	38	100.0	8	100.0	46	100.0

Table 7.18 indicates that 60.9% (28) of the rural social workers do some form of self-evaluation, while 34.8% (16) do not apply this method of evaluation. This is an aspect of concern as Kadushin (1992:344) has clearly stated that the social worker's continuous, critical assessment of his/her own performance is the best guarantee of effective and efficient services.

An attempt was also made to establish whether the rural organizations have criteria not only for the evaluation of the social workers' performance, but also for salary and merit increases, and whether outstanding work performance is rewarded in any way. The social workers and supervisors responses are reflected in tables 7.19 and 7.20, and in the following discussion.

Table 7.19 Organizational criteria for evaluation, salary and merit increases, according to rural social workers

	Evaluation		Salary increase		Merit increase	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	29	76.3	28	73.7	17	44.7
No	9	23.7	7	18.4	18	47.4
Uncertain	0	0.0	2	5.3	0	0.0
No answer	0	0.0	1	2.6	3	7.9
Total	38	100.0	38	100.0	38	100.0

Table 7.19 shows that 76.3% (29) of the organizations have criteria for the evaluation of the social workers' performance, and 73.7% (28) have criteria for salary increases, while only 44.7% (17) of the organizations have criteria for merit increases. The supervisors' responses on this question is given in table 7.20, whereafter the responses will be discussed.

Table 7.20 Organizational criteria for evaluation, salary and merit increases, according to supervisors

	Evaluation		Salary increase		Merit increase	
Yes/No	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	7	87.5	6	75.0	1	12.5
No	1	12.5	2	25.0	6	75.0
Uncertain	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0

Table 7.20 shows that the supervisors' responses are congruent with the responses that were received from the social workers. The majority of the supervisors have indicated that the rural organizations have criteria for the evaluation of the social workers' performance (87.5% [7]), and for salary increases (75.0% [6]), while the majority of the organizations (75.0% [6]) do not have any criteria for awarding merit increases. The social workers (57.9% [22]) and supervisors (50.0% [4]) have also indicated that outstanding work performance is never rewarded at the organizations. The other respondents have indicated that outstanding work performance is rewarded through verbal recognition, monetary rewards, such as a 14th cheque or honorarium, or extra leave. Berliner (1979:335) and Mullins (1993:372) have explained that recognition is one of the most important things that

people seek, and it appears that this aspect do not receive sufficient attention at the rural organizations.

7.4 SUMMARY

The rural social workers' reliance on the supervisor for their professional development demands that the supervisor shall implement a growth-oriented supervision model, and that the supervisor shall use a variety of techniques, and strategies to facilitate adult learning and growth. The fact that the majority of the supervisors' are based at regional and head offices also require the innovative use of, for example, the technical media.

The need for supportive supervision is evident, as there are a number of factors that cause stress and tension for the rural social worker. The stress factors are related to the client system, isolation of the rural social workers, the wide geographic dispersion, the lack of resources, and the changes in the welfare system. Besides supervision, the rural social workers also use techniques such as positive self-talk, positive imagery, the building of positive relationships, and the ability to become more assertive to cope with stress and tension.

The respondents agree that the organizations should create opportunities for the professional development of the rural social workers. They have suggested that the organizations shall make time and funds available for the purpose of staff development, and continuing education, and that the organizations shall encourage and support these efforts. Although 71.7% of the respondents have indicated that the rural organizations have a staff development programme, it is also clear that staff development is not a high priority at the organizations. The respondents have indicated that the majority of the social workers are not involved in the decisions on the staff development budget, that literature is not regularly bought, and that only 43.5% of the organizations have a collection of professional literature. Furthermore, only 45.7% subscribe to professional journals. It is also apparent that the rural social workers rely on more senior staff, such as the supervisors, to plan and implement the staff development programmes. It does not appear as if a concept such as peer training is implemented. At least 48% of the respondents have indicated that the rural social workers have received consultation within three years after receiving supervision. Only 32.6% of the organizations have according to the respondents criteria for deciding whether or not the social worker shall receive consultation.

The respondents have indicated that performances appraisals are regularly done at 73.1% of the rural organizations, while it is never done at 19.6% of the organizations. Rating scales and the critical incident technique are most frequently used as methods to do the performance appraisals. Self-evaluation is encouraged. While the majority of the

organizations have criteria for the evaluation of the social workers' performance, and for salary increases, few have criteria for merit increases. At least 56.5% of the respondents have said that outstanding work performance is never rewarded. The other respondents have indicated that outstanding work performance receive verbal recognition, or in some instances monetary rewards, or extra vacation leave.

The conclusions of this study, and recommendations will be presented in chapter eight.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in chapter one, the goal of this study has been to provide practice guidelines for the professional development of rural social workers to the rural social workers, supervisors, and rural welfare organizations that will ensure effective and relevant service rendering to rural clients and communities. The conclusions and recommendations that will be presented in this chapter, are based on the literature study and the results of the empirical study. The discussion will be based on the objectives and hypothetical assumptions that have been formulated for this study.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

In order to avoid confusion, the objectives will be presented first, whereafter the conclusions will be given.

8.2.1 To determine the special characteristics of rural social work, including the differences between urban and rural social work practice, and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes the rural social worker should possess.

There are differences between rural and urban social work that do require rural social workers to be more innovative, self-directed, and self-motivated. The most important differences are centered around the fact that the rural social worker is often the entire social service system in areas that are characterized by wide geographic dispersion, and inadequate resources and facilities. Another very important difference is that the rural social worker is forced to adopt a generalist approach, and there is no opportunity for specialization. The social worker will therefore need to have a wide knowledge base that include knowledge about the different communities, cultures, and values. The literature study has also revealed the importance of knowledge about practice theory, research, management and administration. Unfortunately, the results of the empirical study have indicated that the respondents did not consider knowledge about these aspects as of particular importance. This is an aspect of concern, as the effective social worker will consciously build on existing knowledge and add to this knowledge base when possible.

The rural social worker is also required to play a wide variety of different roles, including those of organizer, educator, mediator, resource specialist, advocate and ombudsman. In

order to play these roles effectively, the social worker needs to have functional skills such as communication, assessment, engagement skills, and skills in intervention activities. Of concern is the fact that none of the respondents have mentioned the importance of adaptive and research skills, as well as skills in contributing to the development and modification of social policy. These skills are of particular importance if the rural social worker wants to play the roles of advocate and ombudsman effectively, and if they want to intervene on behalf of populations most vulnerable. Purposeful attempts by the social worker are necessary to develop his/her knowledge and skills, and to relate these to newly emerging methodologies. This will enable the social worker to render ongoing effective services to clients and communities. It was very clear from the literature that the development of the required knowledge and skills are a continuous process, and that the social worker should never try to intervene in today's problems with yesterday's knowledge. Effective service rendering can therefore only be achieved through the ongoing professional development of the social worker.

8.2.2 To determine to what extent rural social workers accept responsibility for their own professional development.

Rural social workers are often separated from their supervisors, and as a result, receive less frequent supervision, and less support from their supervisors. This situation demands that the rural social worker shall accept responsibility for his/her own professional development. The literature study has indicated very clearly that the social worker has primary responsibility for his/her own professional development. However, the conclusion that is drawn from the empirical study is that the largest group of the respondents believed that the social worker is **not** primarily responsible for his/her own professional development. It was evident that the majority of the social workers do not take sufficient responsibility for their own development, while others take almost no responsibility for their own professional development. It was evident that the social workers rely, despite problems and frustrations that are related to distance supervision, on the supervisor for their development. With the exception of the setting of clear personal goals, the majority of the respondents have indicated that they only use some or other form of supervision, and consultation for their professional development. Methods that involve the contribution of colleagues - such as peer supervision, peer consultation, professional associations, and journal clubs are seldom used. Methods that require a great deal of self-study, such as the submission of papers for publication or research are almost never used. These findings are of concern, as it has already been pointed out that rural social workers often work in isolated circumstances where they are the entire social service system in the rural area, and that they need to be self-directed and self-motivated. It is critically important that the rural social worker shall accept responsibility for his/her own professional development. Social workers need to

remember that the most important tool that a social worker possesses is him-/herself. In order to use this tool skillfully and knowledgeably, the social worker needs to continuously and deliberately develop him-/herself both personally and professionally. Professional accountability further demands of the social worker to contribute continually to the knowledge base of social work, and to share this knowledge with colleagues.

8.2.3 To determine what methods, and strategies are available to the rural social worker to further his/her own professional development.

The literature study has revealed that there are a number of options available to the rural social worker that will enable him/her to improve his/her professional development, and simultaneously allow contact with, and support from peers. This is of particular importance as rural social workers frequently work in isolated circumstances. It has already been indicated in section 8.2.2 that the majority of the respondents who participated in this study prefer to use some or other form of supervision (e.g. self-, individual or group supervision) and consultation to further their professional development. Methods such as student supervision, the development of professional libraries and journal clubs, membership of professional associations, research and the submission of papers for publication are either seldom, or never used by the rural social workers for their professional development. The respondents often indicated that they are unable to use the said methods due to a lack of finances, geographical distance, high workloads and time pressure. Yet, from the literature study it was clear that these methods are often inexpensive, time saving, and that the contact with colleagues are invaluable. As the rural social worker often receive less frequent supervision, it becomes more important to explore and use other alternatives for his/her professional development, and to accept the primary responsibility for his/her own professional development.

8.2.4 To determine the supervisor's role and task in the rural social worker's professional development.

It was evident from the empirical study that the rural social workers rely to a large extent on their supervisors for their professional development. From the literature study it was also clear that, while the social worker is primarily responsible for his/her own development, this concern is and should be shared with the supervisor. The supervisor has therefore an important role in facilitating effective practice, in promoting competence and the professional development of rural social workers. Simultaneously, the supervisor should encourage the social worker to accept responsibility for his/her own professional development. Supervisors should not allow social workers to become dependent, or to rely solely on the supervisor for promoting the workers' professional development, as this will

have a negative affect on the workers' growth, and professional maturity. It is important that the supervisors shall be aware of the differences between conventional face-to-face supervision, and distance supervision as the supervisor and the rural social worker are often separated from each other by geographical distance. It is essential that the supervisor shall be skillful in using methods, strategies, and techniques that will enhance effective distance supervision. The utilization of the technical media is of particular importance.

In view of the unique problems that are associated with rural social work it is important that the supervisor shall implement a supervision model that will provide adequate support to the rural social worker, and simultaneously promote the rural social worker's growth and competence. The supervisor needs to play a variety of roles, including those of advocate, coach, change agent, administrative buffer and warrior. It is also important to remember that the various aspects of the competence of the social worker are complemented by the supervisor's characteristics, capacity and skills. A genuine conviction of the need for effective supervision is essential, and the supervisor's enthusiasm and dedication can be contagious, and will contribute to the social worker's personal and professional development.

8.2.5 To determine the role that the organization can play in the rural social worker's professional development.

Professional staff are a crucial, but expensive resource, especially in the rural communities. It is vitally important, especially in times of limited funding, and demands for accountability that organizations shall optimise the contributions of the staff in achieving the goals of the organization, and meeting the needs of the client system. The organization is therefore an important role player in promoting the professional development of the rural social worker. A positive attitude towards staff development, and efforts to create opportunities that will enhance the professional development of the social workers will communicate to the staff that the management value them, and that they are willing to commit necessary time and other resources to promote more effective work performance. This will have a positive affect on the social worker's sense of identity with his/her work, and the worker's professional esteem.

The empirical study has revealed that there is a vast difference between the suggestions in the literature, and the real situation at the rural organizations which participated in the research project. It appears that the professional development of the social workers is not a priority, and that limited time and resources are spent on staff development. It has been evident that the majority of the rural social workers are ignorant about the organizations' staff development budget, and that they are not involved in the budgeting process. The

various options that are available to organizations to promote the professional development of the social workers as described in the literature are seldom, or in some instances never used at the rural organizations. Some of the common things that people want from their jobs such as opportunities for advancement, recognition, competent leadership, and satisfactory working conditions also seem to be lacking at the organizations. This implies that the conditions at the organizations do not support staff development. The absence of a positive milieu for staff development, and carefully planned staff development programs affects the social workers' professional esteem negatively.

In accepting responsibility for their own professional development it is of importance that the rural social workers shall continuously bring their professional development needs to the attention of the agencies, become actively involved in the development of the agencies' staff development programmes, in the budgeting process, and in the implementation of the staff development programme. Agencies need to be much more aware of the fact that the ongoing professional development of the social worker will have a positive affect on the quality of services that are rendered to individuals, groups and communities.

8.2.6 Hypothetical assumptions

In view of the above discussion of the research objectives, it can be concluded that the hypothetical assumptions on which this study was motivated and founded appears to be correct. Throughout this study, the importance of social work knowledge and skills have been stressed. It has also been clear that social workers continuously need to add to this knowledge base, and to improve and develop their skills. It is vitally important that social workers shall keep abreast with new developments that will enable them to render relevant, effective and efficient services. It is doubtful that the social worker shall be able to develop his/her knowledge and skills unless he/she accept responsibility for his/her own professional development. This is even more true for rural social workers who often work in isolated circumstances, who have fewer opportunities to participate in staff development programmes, and receive less frequent supervision. Rural social workers need to be self-directed, self-motivated, and need to accept responsibility for their own professional development.

This study has also brought to light the important role and contribution of both the supervisor and the rural welfare organization in the professional development of the rural social worker. With reference to the latter, it was evident that the social worker's productivity in the organizational setting, and his/her professional esteem can be either augmented or hindered by environmental influences in the organization. The necessity to concentrate on the professional development of the social workers is an important function of organizations as staff require a growth promoting atmosphere in which they can develop,

undergo learning experiences, and discover their professional self.

The importance of the correlation between the rural social worker's experience of supervision, and the social worker's competency and professional development should be stressed. The supervisor has a responsibility to ensure the personal and professional development of the social worker. A competent supervisor will invest continuously in the development of the social worker, will show enthusiasm, a commitment to and believe in the supervisory process. However, the significance of supervision to social workers will depend on the goals the workers formulate for themselves, and their willingness to share responsibility for their own personal and professional development. In conclusion, it can be stated that the rural social worker always has the primary responsibility for his/her own professional development. This responsibility is shared and supported by the supervisor, and the rural welfare organization.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the research findings it is recommended that:

- 8.3.1 **Rural social work** be acknowledge as a **specialized** form of practice that requires the social worker to have special knowledge and skills that will enable him/her to render effective and efficient services to people in rural areas.
- 8.3.2 **Rural social workers shall accept responsibility for their own professional development**, and shall strive continuously to improve their knowledge and skills. It is important that the social workers shall guard against dependence of the supervisor, and shall use the variety of options that are available to further their professional development, and that will also allow them meaningful and supportive contact with peers and other professionals.
- 8.3.3 **Supervisors shall implement a competence oriented supervision model that stimulate worker growth and development**, and simultaneously provide the much needed support for the rural social worker. The unique characteristics of distance supervision and distance education should be taken into account, and the use of the technical media in implementing for example, individual and group supervision, should receive serious attention.
- 8.3.4 **Rural welfare organizations shall create opportunities for the professional development of the social workers** in an organizational climate that encourage, support and recognize the workers' developmental efforts.
- 8.3.5 The **research findings** be published in order to make all the participants in rural

social work aware of the unique situation of the rural social worker, and the importance of the social worker's ongoing professional development.

8.3.6 **Further research** be undertaken on the subject of rural social work in South Africa in order to widen the indigenous knowledge base on rural social work.

It is trusted that this study has made practitioners aware of the unique characteristics and problems of rural social work. Further, it is the wish of the researcher that this study has made the social workers, supervisors and organizations aware of their role and responsibility in the social workers' professional development, and that the implementation of the recommendations will enhance the quality of service rendering to individuals, groups and communities in rural areas.

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APPENDIX 1

**LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO DO
THE SURVEY AT THE DIFFERENT WELFARE
ORGANIZATIONS AND STATE DEPARTMENTS
IN THE EASTERN, NORTHERN AND WESTERN CAPE.**

Private Bag X1
BELHAR
7507
3 March 1995

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

Dear

RESEARCH: THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The undersigned is a candidate for the MA degree in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. Prof NJ Botha is the study leader.

The aim of the research is to investigate the rural social worker's responsibility in his/her own personal and professional development, and the role and responsibility of the supervisor and organization in this regard. Guidelines will be provided to increase the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of rural social work practice through the ongoing personal and professional development of the rural social worker.

Family welfare organizations and the state departments working in the rural areas of the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape will be involved in the research. Anonymous questionnaires in Afrikaans and English, an example is attached, will be sent to social workers and supervisors. Neither the organization, nor the social worker will be identified. Confidentiality is therefore obvious.

Your permission for involving your organization/department in the research will be greatly appreciated.

The questionnaires will be submitted during the second quarter of 1995. An address list of your organization/offices and supervisors in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape, and an indication of the number of social workers at each organization/office will be appreciated. A self addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

.....
MS R VAN ZYL

.....
PROF NJ BOTHA
STUDY LEADER

APPENDIX 2.1

SELF-ADMINISTERED MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE EASTERN, NORTHERN AND WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X1

BELHAR

7507

19 April 1995

Dear Colleague

RESEARCH: THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The undersigned is a candidate for the MA degree in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. Prof NJ Botha is the study leader.

The aim of the research is to investigate the rural social worker's responsibility in his/her own personal and professional development and the role and responsibility of the supervisor and the organization in this regard. Guidelines will be provided to increase the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of rural social work practice through the ongoing personal and professional development of the rural social worker. Family welfare organizations and state departments working in the rural areas of the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape will be involved in the research.

An anonymous questionnaire is included. Each social worker at the organization/office must please complete the questionnaire in detail. For your convenience the questionnaires have been drafted in English and Afrikaans. The completion of the questionnaire will take approximately thirty minutes.

Kindly complete the questionnaire(s) and return it not later than 25 May 1995 in the enclosed, self addressed envelope to the undersigned.

Your participation will make a valuable contribution to the research project!

Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

MS R VAN ZYL

THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL SOCIAL WORKER

A IDENTIFYING PARTICULARS

1. SEX M F
2. AGE

20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-65
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3. WORK EXPERIENCE
- 3.1 Number of years experience as a social worker.
- 3.2 Number of years employed in your current work situation.
4. QUALIFICATIONS
- 4.1 Please indicate your highest qualification in social work.

Diploma	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
BA Social Work (3 years)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
BA Social Work (4 years)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
Hons BA Social Work	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
MA Social Work	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
D Phil	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>

- 4.2 Other related social work qualifications:

B CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

1. State the number of social workers employed in your office, including yourself.
2. Carefully read the following three descriptions of a rural area. Indicate which of the three descriptions describe your working area the best.
- 2.1 The area is well developed and has a highly organised service delivery system with an adequate number of social workers to deliver services. The felt need in this area consists of improving the quality of direct services to individuals, groups and communities.
- 2.2 The rural area has a minimal service delivery system. Service systems are less visible, less comprehensive and less professionalized. The informal helping networks are most critical. The area relies on services from the nearest urban area. A sharp difference exist between the value system of the service deliverers and the recipients of the services.
- 2.3 The rural area is characterized by wide geographic dispersion. Towns and villages are isolated from each other and metropolitan areas. The area has virtually no formal systems and the informal ones are sporadic and undependable. Periodic visits by a social worker is the only semblance of a service system.

3. How do you think is practising in a rural area different from social work in an urban area?

4. Please indicate in order of priority the roles most frequently played by the rural social worker.

4.1 Direct service role

4.2 Organizer

4.3 Educator

4.4 Resource specialist

4.5 Facilitator of interdisciplinary co-operation

4.6 Mediator/arbitrator

4.7 Advocate

4.8 Ombudsman

4.9 Administrative assistant

4.10 Friend and confidant

5. What knowledge does a rural social worker need in order to render quality services?

6. Please list the most important skills that a rural social worker needs in order to render quality services.

C PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Who do you think is primary responsible for the rural social worker's personal and professional development? Please motivate your answer.

2. Please indicate which of the following methods you use for personal and professional development.

METHOD	ALWAYS	FREQUENT	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
2.1 Setting clear personal goals					
2.2 Self supervision					
2.3 Peer supervision					
2.4 Individual supervision					
2.5 Group supervision					
2.6 Consultation					
2.7 Student supervision/Field instruction					
2.8 Staff development					
2.9 Building a professional library					
2.10 Developing a journal club					
2.11 Community activities e.g. serving on a board of management					
2.12 Belonging to a professional association					
2.13 Submitting papers for publication					
2.14 Research					

3. Do you receive any social work journals?

Y	N
---	---

- 3.1 If yes, please list the name(s) of the journal(s).

- 3.2 If no, please indicate the reason for your answer.

4. When was the last time you bought professional literature?

- 4.1 Title and author of the book

5. How often do you read social work and related articles?

One article	per day	per week	per month	every three months	every six months
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- 5.1 Who supply the articles?

6. Do you belong to a professional association?

Y	N
---	---

6.1 If yes, please provide the name(s) of the association(s)

6.2 If no, please provide a reason why they do not belong to a professional association.

7. If you have been involved in any research project during the past two years, please state the purpose of your research project.

8. Please indicate which of the following strategies do you use to cope with, and to prevent burnout.

STRATEGY	ALWAYS	FREQUENT	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
8.1 Positive self talk					
8.2 Positive imagery					
8.3 Building positive relationships					
8.4 Becoming more assertive					
8.5 Supervision					
8.6 Staff development					
8.7 Journal club					
8.8 Peer support group					
8.9 Other (please specify)					

D SUPERVISION

1. Is your supervisor based at your organisation?

Y	N
---	---

1.1 If no, how would you describe distance supervision?

2. How often do you receive individual supervision? _____

3. How often do you attend group supervision sessions? _____

4. Please indicate the extent to which you are involved in:

	Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
4.1 assessment of your learning needs					
4.2 formulation of supervision goals and objectives					
4.3 determining strategies for learning					
4.4 drafting a supervision contract					

5. How often do you receive feedback from your supervisor on your work performance?

Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
--------	----------	-----------	--------	-------

6. Are you satisfied with the feedback that you receive?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer

7. Please indicate how often the following techniques are used in individual, (in) group supervision (gr) and staff development (sd).

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS			FREQUENT			SOMETIMES			SELDOM			NEVER		
	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd
7.1 Discussions related to case-, group, community work															
7.2 Discussion of literature															
7.3 Roleplays															
7.4 Analysis of tape recordings															
7.5 Analysis of video recordings															
7.6 Tele-conference															
7.7 Tele-picture *															
7.8 Lecture presented by guest speaker															

* Tele-picture: Similar to a tele-conference. You can have direct contact with people over a distance. You can hear, see and speak to other people.

8. Are you satisfied with the support that you receive from your supervisor?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer:

9. Which aspects of your work or in environment cause stress and tension?

10. What role does your supervisor play in the management of work related stress and tension?

11. How would you describe the supervisor's role in the personal and professional development of a rural social worker?

E CONSULTATION

1. If you are on consultation level, please indicate the number of years that you have received supervision?

2. What criteria was used in moving you from supervision to consultation?

3. How often do you receive consultation? _____

4. Are you attending peer consultation groups?

Y	N
---	---

4.1 If yes, how often?

4.2 If no, please state the reason for your answer.

F PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

1. How often are performance appraisals done? _____

2. How are performance appraisals/evaluations done at your organization?

3. Are you actively involved in the evaluation process?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer:

4. **Does your organization have:**

4.1 Criteria for the evaluation of rural social workers

4.2 Criteria for salary increases of rural social workers

4.3 Criteria for merit increases of rural social workers

Y	N
Y	N
Y	N

5. How does your organization reward outstanding work performances?

6. Is self evaluation encouraged?

Y	N
---	---

If yes, how?

G THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION

1. What role can the organization play in the personal and professional development of the rural social worker?

2. Does your organization have a staff development programme?

Y	N
---	---

- 2.1 If yes, who is responsible for drafting the programme?

- 2.2 Who is involved in presenting the programme?

- 2.3 If no, please give the reason(s)

3. What percentage of your organization's budget is earmarked for staff development?

_____ % = R _____

- 3.1 Who is involved in deciding the staff development budget?

4. How often do you attend courses, workshops and seminars?

5. How often does the organisation purchase social work and related literature?

- 5.1 On average, how much is spent per annum on the purchasing of literature?

R _____

6. Does your organisation subscribe to a professional journal?

Y	N
---	---

- 6.1 If yes, please state the name of the journal. _____

- 6.2 If no, please give a reason for your answer. _____

7. Does your organisation have a library/collection of professional literature?

Y	N
---	---

- 7.1 If no, give a reason for your answer

- 8 Any other comments, remarks

Thank you for your co-operation.

APPENDIX 2.2

SELF-ADMINISTERED MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUPERVISORS IN THE EASTERN, NORTHERN AND WESTERN CAPE.

Private Bag X1
BELHAR
7507

19 April 1995

Dear Colleague

RESEARCH: THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The undersigned is a candidate for the MA degree in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. Prof NJ Botha is the study leader.

The aim of the research is to investigate the rural social worker's responsibility in his/her own personal and professional development and the role and responsibility of the supervisor and the organization in this regard. Guidelines will be provided to increase the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of rural social work practice through the ongoing personal and professional development of the rural social worker. Family welfare organizations and state departments working in the rural areas of the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape will be involved in the research.

An anonymous questionnaire is included. Each social worker at the organization/office must please complete the questionnaire in detail. For your convenience the questionnaires have been drafted in English and Afrikaans. The completion of the questionnaire will take approximately thirty minutes.

Kindly complete the questionnaire(es) and return it not later than 25 May 1995 in the enclosed, self addressed envelope to the undersigned.

Your participation will make a valuable contribution to the research project!

Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

MS R VAN ZYL

THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL SOCIAL WORKER

A IDENTIFYING PARTICULARS

1. **SEX**

M	F
---	---
2. **AGE**

20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-65
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

3. WORK EXPERIENCE

- 3.1 Number of years experience as a supervisor
- 3.2 Number of years employed in your current work situation

4. QUALIFICATIONS

- 4.1 Please indicate your highest qualification in social work.

Diploma	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
BA Social Work (3 years)	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
BA Social Work (4 years)	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
Hons BA Social Work	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
MA Social Work	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
D Phil	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>

- 4.2 Other related social work qualifications:

B CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

1. State the number of rural social workers that you supervise
2. Carefully read the following three descriptions of a rural area. Indicate which of the three descriptions describe your working area the best.
- 2.1 The area is well developed and has a highly organised service delivery system with an adequate number of social workers to deliver services. The felt need in this area consists of improving the quality of direct services to individuals, groups and communities.
- 2.2 The rural area has a minimal service delivery system. Service systems are less visible, less comprehensive and less professionalized. The informal helping networks are most critical. The area relies on services from the nearest urban area. A sharp difference exist between the value system of the service deliverers and the recipients of the services.
- 2.3 The rural area is characterized by wide geographic dispersion. Towns and villages are isolated from each other and metropolitan areas. The area has virtually no formal systems and the informal ones are sporadic and undependable. Periodic visits by a social worker is the only semblance of a service system.

3. How do you think is practising in a rural area different from social work in an urban area?

4. Please indicate in order of priority the roles most frequently played by the rural social worker.

4.1 Direct service role

4.2 Organizer

4.3 Educator

4.4 Resource specialist

4.5 Facilitator of interdisciplinary co-operation

4.6 Mediator/arbitrator

4.7 Advocate

4.8 Ombudsman

4.9 Administrative assistant

4.10 Friend and confidant

5. What knowledge does a rural social worker need in order to render quality services?

6. Please list the most important skills that a rural social worker needs in order to render quality services.

C PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Who do you think is primary responsible for the rural social worker's personal and professional development? Please motivate your answer.

2. Please indicate which of the following methods are used by the rural social workers for their personal and professional development.

METHOD	ALWAYS	FREQUENT	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
2.1 Setting clear personal goals					
2.2 Self supervision					
2.3 Peer supervision					
2.4 Individual supervision					
2.5 Group supervision					
2.6 Consultation					
2.7 Student supervision/Field instruction					
2.8 Staff development					
2.9 Building a professional library					
2.10 Developing a journal club					
2.11 Community activities eg serving on a board of management					
2.12 Belonging to a professional association					
2.13 Submitting papers for publication					
2.14 Research					

3. Do the social workers receive any social work journals?

Y	N
---	---

- 3.1 If yes, please list the name(s) of the journal(s).

- 3.2 If no, please indicate the reason for your answer.

4. How often do the rural social workers that you supervise buy professional literature?

Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
--------	----------	-----------	--------	-------

5. How often do the social workers that you supervise read social work and related articles?

One article	per day	per week	per month	every three months	every six months
-------------	---------	----------	-----------	--------------------	------------------

- 5.1 Who supply the articles?

6. Do the social workers that you supervise belong to a professional association?

Y	N
---	---

6.1 If yes, please provide the name(s) of the association(s)

6.2 If no, please provide a reason why they do not belong to a professional association.

7. Have any of the social workers that you supervise been involved in research projects during the past two years?

Y	N
---	---

7.1 If yes, how many? _____

7.2 What was the purpose of the research project(s)?

7.3 If no, please state the reasons.

8. Please indicate which of the following strategies do the rural social workers use to cope with, and to prevent burnout.

STRATEGY	ALWAYS	FREQUENT	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
8.1 Positive self talk					
8.2 Positive imagery					
8.3 Building positive relationships					
8.4 Becoming more assertive					
8.5 Supervision					
8.6 Staff development					
8.7 Journal club					
8.8 Peer support group					
8.9 <u>Other</u> (please specify)					

D SUPERVISION

1. Are you based at a regional office?

Y	N
---	---
2. How often do the social workers receive individual supervision? _____
3. How often do the social workers attend group supervision sessions? _____
4. How would you describe distance supervision?

5. Please indicate to what extent rural social workers are involved in:

	Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5.1 assessment of your learning needs					
5.2 formulation of supervision goals and objectives					
5.3 determining strategies for learning					
5.4 drafting a supervision contract					

6. How often do you provide the rural social workers with feedback on their performance?

Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
--------	----------	-----------	--------	-------

7. Are the social workers satisfied with the feedback that they receive?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer

8. Please indicate how often the following techniques are used in individual, (in) group supervision (gr) and staff development (sd).

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS			FREQUENT			SOMETIMES			SELDOM			NEVER		
	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd	In	Gr	Sd
7.1 Discussions related to case-, group, community work															
7.2 Discussion of literature															
7.3 Roleplays															
7.4 Analysis of tape recordings															
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7.6 Tele-conference															
7.7 Tele-picture *															
7.8 Lecture presented by guest speaker															

* Tele-picture: Similar to a tele-conference. You can have direct contact with people over a distance. You can hear, see and speak to other people.

9. Do you think that you support the rural social workers adequately?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer:

10. Which aspects of the work or in the work environment cause stress and tension for the rural social worker?

11. What role do you play in the management of work related stress and tension?

12. How would you describe the supervisor's role in the personal and professional development of a rural social worker?

E CONSULTATION

1. If any of the social workers in your area are receiving consultation, please indicate the number of years that they have received supervision _____

2. What criteria was used in moving the social worker from supervision to consultation?

3. How often do the social worker receive consultation? _____

4. In addition to individual consultation, does the social worker belong to a peer consultations group?

Y	N
---	---

- 4.1 If yes, how often is peer consultation sessions attendees? _____

- 4.2 If no, please state the reason for your answer.

F PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

1. How often are performance appraisals done? _____

2. How are performance appraisals/evaluations done at your organization?

3. Are the social worker actively involved in the evaluation process?

Y	N
---	---

Please motivate your answer:

4. **Does your organization have:**

- 4.1 Criteria for the evaluation of rural social workers
- 4.2 Criteria for salary increases of rural social workers
- 4.3 Criteria for merit increases of rural social workers

Y	N
Y	N
Y	N

5. How do your organization reward outstanding work performances?

6. Is self evaluation by the social worker encouraged?

Y	N
---	---

If yes, how?

G **THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

1. What role can the organization play in the personal and professional development of the rural social worker?

2. Do the rural organizations have a staff development programme?

Y	N
---	---

2.1 If yes, who is responsible for drafting the programme?

2.2 Who is involved in presenting the programme?

2.3 If no, please give the reason(s)

3. What percentage of the rural organization's budget is earmarked for staff development?

_____ % = R _____

3.1 Who is involved in deciding the staff development budget?

4. How often do the rural social workers that you supervise attend courses, workshops and seminars?

5. On average, how often do the rural social work agencies purchase social work and related literature?

5.1 On average, how much does a rural social work agency spend on the purchasing of literature per annum ?

R _____

6. How many of the rural social work agencies subscribe to a professional journal?

7. How many of the rural social work agencies have their own library/collection of professional literature? _____

8 Any onther comments, remarks

_Thank you for your co-operation.

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