

**Essential Management Tasks Executed by Social Workers in
the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in
Namibia: An Ecological Systems Perspective**

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late beloved father, Tate Tje Kambita Ngaringombe.

ABSTRACT

Management in social work is an area of growing scholarly interest but it is seldom understood in the context of developmental social welfare services. Management is mostly associated with the fields of business and marketing. Moreover, there is little evidence about the managerial tasks executed by social workers in their day to day activities and why some of these managerial tasks are essential in social welfare service delivery. The literature that exists in management tasks is primarily derived from business and management in general which is a different field from that of managing social services.

The body of knowledge that exists on management focuses primarily on business management and not on management tasks of social workers at different levels in organisations. Furthermore, the execution of these tasks is also influenced by the organisational environment in which social workers operate. Additionally, social workers are no longer working in isolation but they see themselves more and more as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Contemporary social workers are professionals who manage their work to ensure quality service to their service users. With constant change in the needs and demands of communities served by social workers, research and more research on management in social work and especially on management tasks needs to keep abreast in order to highlight essential management tasks executed by social workers as it directly impacts the services offered by social workers.

The study explored and described some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSWS) in the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) in Namibia. The study was based on a qualitative study with 20 frontline social workers and 7 middle level managers as participants. The empirical study and the findings were analysed in line with the data categories as identified in some essential management tasks, namely: workload management, time management, information management, risk management, change and transformation management, supervisory management, programme and project management and monitoring and evaluation (M & E). Subthemes and categories were identified from the empirical data in line with the practice and narratives of the research participants.

The findings indicate that social workers at frontline and middle levels of management executed management tasks. The study further revealed that although social workers are functioning in different divisions and at different levels, they seem to have adopted an integrated approach to management tasks.

Specific recommendations, based on an ecological systems perspective are offered in the current study, which may be applicable to diverse organisational contexts. This was done by synthesising some essential management tasks from literature and how they are implemented in practice by social workers in the Directorate.

Recommendations were made along the literature categories, with specific recommendations under each category. Mostly, the main recommendations were linked to the need to provide in-service training to social workers on management in social work in order to create more awareness on their managerial tasks and for them to be more appreciative of their roles. Other recommendations were in terms of the working environment and the centralisation of the fragmented social welfare services.

OPSOMMING

Bestuur in maatskaplike werk is 'n groeiende area in die literatuur, maar dit word selde binne die konteks van ontwikkelende maatskaplike welsynsdienste verstaan. Bestuur word meestal geassosieer met die velde van besigheid en bemerking. Verder is daar min navorsingbewyse oor bestuurstake wat maatskaplike werkers uitvoer as deel van hulle daaglikse aktiwiteite. Daar is ook min inligting oor hoe hulle die bestuurstake uitvoer asook waarom sommige van hierdie bestuurstake noodsaaklik is vir maatskaplike dienslewering. Die meeste literatuur wat daar in bestuurstake is, is hoofsaaklik afkomstig van korporatiewe beheer wat in die algemeen verskil van hoe maatskaplike welsynsdienste bestuur word.

Die kennisbasis wat bestaan oor bestuur fokus hoofsaaklik op korporatiewe bestuur en nie soseer op bestuurstake wat maatskaplike werkers uitvoer op verskillende vlakke in organisasies nie. Die uitvoer van hierdie bestuurstake word ook beïnvloed deur die organisatoriese omgewing waarin maatskaplike werk bedryf word. Daarbenewens werk maatskaplike werkers nie meer in isolasie nie, maar vorm hulle al hoe meer deel van multi-dissiplinêre spanne. In hulle professionele werk word van maatskaplike werkers verwag om kwaliteit diens aan hul diensverbruikers te voorsien. Voortdurende veranderings in die behoeftes en eise van gemeenskappe vereis meer navorsing oor bestuur in maatskaplike werk en veral oor bestuurstake wat maatskaplike werkers uitvoer.

Die studie verken en beskryf enkele essensiële bestuurstake soos dit verrig word deur maatskaplike werkers wat in die voorste linie en middevlak werk in die Direkoraat van Ontwikkelingsgerigte Maatskaplike Welsynsdienste (DDSWS) in die Ministerie van Gesondheid en Maatskaplike Dienste (MOHSS) in Namibië. Die studie is gebasseer op 'n kwalitatiewe ondersoek van deelnemers, in besonder 20 voorste linie maatskaplike werkers en 7 middelvlakbestuurders. Die empiriese studie is gedoen deur middel van 'n sintese van essensiële bestuurstake vanuit die literatuur en hoe dit in die praktyk deur maatskaplike werkers toegepas word in die Direkoraat. Deur 'n deduktiewe sintese van essensiële bestuurstake, was die navorser in staat om die omvang en grense van die navorsing te stel, en om betekenisvolle beskrywings van bestuurstake aan te bied om die uitvoering daarvan deur maatskaplike werkers te verken en te verstaan.

Die empiriese studie en bevindinge is ontleed vanuit die volgende essensiële bestuurstake naamlik: werksladingbestuur, tydsbestuur, inligtingverspreiding, risikobestuur, veranderingsbestuur, supervisie, program- en projekbestuur asook monitering en evaluering. Subtemas en datakategorieë is geïdentifiseer vanuit die empiriese data, op grond van die praktyke en narratiewe van die navorsingsdeelnemers.

Die bevindinge toon aan dat maatskaplike werkers wel in die voorste linie en middelvlak bestuurstake uitvoer. Die uitvoer van bestuurstake van maatskaplike werkers vereis egter meer formalisering om bewustheid van bestuurstake te skep.

Aanbevelings word gemaak na aanleiding van die literatuurkategorieë, met spesifieke aanbevelings ten opsigte van elke bestuurstaak. Die hoofaanbevelings lê klem op die indiensopleiding van maatskaplike werkers ten opsigte van bestuur in maatskaplike werk oor die algemeen, en in besonder op bestuurstake in die maatskaplikewerk-professie, sodat organisasies holisties beskou kan word, in plaas van as gefragmenteerde dele sonder 'n geheel. Ander aanbevelings fokus op die voorsiening van kantoorruimte en -toerusting, asook sentralisering van die gefragmenteerde maatskaplike welsynsdienste.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE AND RATIONALE

The term management has always been associated with disciplines such as economics, business and commerce. Before 1979, the ideas of “performance and management” were seldom heard in social work and they were mostly associated with business (Spolander & Martin, 2012). However, managing social services has become imperative since the provision of market-related services and policy issues like affordable and equitable service delivery have contributed to the increasing importance of management in social work.

Management in social work is certainly an activity performed by social workers at all administrative levels within human service organisations that are designed to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). Coulshed and Mullender (2006: 8), two of the international commentators most cited on management in social work, together with renowned authors such as Weinbach (2003) and Skidmore (1995) use the terms “manager”, “administrator” and “leader” interchangeably, and regard all social workers as managers. Skidmore (1995: 1) also perceives management and administration as synonymous. In this regard, the author maintains that administration in social work is changing from a pyramid to a circle; no longer does one person at the top have absolute power to dictate and control agency policies and practices. Such power is being shared more and more with staff members that are being challenged to reach for increased knowledge and skills to help plan and facilitate effective services.

Within this context, management in social work is defined as a “... set of systems and processes designed to help employees accomplish organizational and individual goals” (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2012: 8). Various authors (Hellrieger, Jackson & Slocum, 2012; Lussier, 1997) concur that management in social work involves the utilisation of organisational resources for the effective and efficient achievement of organisational goals by utilising processes of management functions, as originally coined by Fayol (1949), such as planning, organising, leading and controlling. These functions are

operationalised in various essential management tasks, such as office management, workload management, programme and project management, time management, human resources management and financial management (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2012; Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2014; Weinbach & Taylor, 2015).

It is however pivotal to note that the essential management tasks are not the same as management functions. Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) make it clear that management tasks are the actual day to day tasks performed in social service organisations drawing on specific skills and functions in order to execute them. These day to day essential management tasks are executed by all social workers, regardless of their management level of functioning in an organisation whether they are at the top-, middle- and/or frontline level, as all professionals are regarded as managers in social work (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006: 8). However, it is furthermore noted that the management tasks of social workers are determined by the internal and external environments of the organisation (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2012). Thus, although management tasks in social work may appear to be universal on meso and macro levels, the nature and execution thereof on the micro (frontline intervention) level is affected by the macro (governmental), and meso (organisational) environment in social work (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014; Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2014).

Nevertheless, the specific nature and execution of management tasks of social work is usually an unknown territory in many contexts, especially in environments which are in the process of transformation (Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2014). One such case is the national transformation of social welfare services in Namibia.

Shortly after independence on 21 March 1990, welfare services in Namibia became more consolidated. All social workers from various administrations/organisations were brought under one roof and the Ministry of Health and Social Services has since then been one of the main employers of social workers in Namibia. There are currently 161 social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services of which 121 are operating at the frontline level of management (Ames, 2014). Namibia, as a sovereignty state, became party to the *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development* (United Nations, 1995) and adopted a social development approach. Social services are supposed to be carried out within this paradigm. A social

development approach to social work is “...the official approach of the *Namibian* nation” (Ananias & Lightfoot, 2012: 205), hence the renaming of the Directorate of Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in the early nineties.

Despite the shift from social welfare services to a developmental approach, the lack of standardised social welfare service policies to guide the work of social workers in Namibia remains a huge challenge. In 1996, a Draft Discussion Paper on Social Welfare Policy in Namibia was drafted but until today it remains a draft paper. Chiwara (2015) confirms that Namibia has been trying to develop a social welfare policy since 1996 but the drafting of a national social development policy to guide the implementation of developmental social work is still in a situational analysis phase. This has implications for management on all levels of social work in Namibia, but most obvious on the frontline social work level in terms of the execution of management tasks. Another implication is the lack of knowledge about what exactly social workers manage in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. It is important to determine what social workers at the frontline and middle level of management actually have to manage on a day to day basis is. This importance is emphasised by Slavin (1978: xxv-xxvi) in his primary, ground-breaking work on management of social services when the author states that “The primary staff group (*frontline social workers*) reflects the norms and standards of the profession to which it belongs and to which it refers when questions of professional practice are raised.”

Hence the need for this study arose in order to determine how the macro (top) and meso (middle) environments in Namibia affect social workers in *what* essential management tasks they perform and *how* they perform these tasks. Findings of this study highlight essential management tasks executed at the frontline and middle levels of management. The appreciation of these tasks by all management levels will strengthen social work services within the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. The Directorate might find the findings useful in developing its welfare policy.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The management of essential tasks is part of the day to day social work practice (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006). Social service organisations for that matter cannot be successful without effective management by social workers, especially in environments where rapid transformation is unavoidable. Effective management is directly associated with organisational success and sustainability in a rapidly changing and challenging environments (Hassan, Waldman & Wimpfheimer, 2012). Similarly, Larkin (2005: 2) argues that "... there is a growing need for human service organisations to respond to increasing client complexity and diversity within a rapidly changing global environment."

That is why it is of great importance to understand essential management tasks executed by social workers and how they do that in order for them to be responsive to the needs, complexity and diversity of service users.

As far as the researcher could determine, there has never been a study in Namibia on essential management tasks executed by social workers at different levels of management. This emphasises the importance of this study to determine some essential management tasks performed by social workers in the frontline and middle level of management in Namibia. Additionally, social workers are not performing their tasks in isolation but they are affected by the organisational environment and hence, an ecological systems perspective was applied to enhance the understanding of *what* social workers manage and *how* they manage it. If this research was not carried out, the nature of essential management tasks and the execution thereof by social workers in Namibia would remain unknown. Furthermore, the findings of this research can inform welfare policy formulation in the Directorate.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question is as follows: what are the experiences of social workers regarding the nature and execution of some essential management tasks in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia?

This question was unpacked by interrogating the following secondary questions:

- *What* are some of the essential management tasks executed by frontline and middle line social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia?
- *How* do social workers in the said Directorate perform their essential management tasks?
- *Why* are these tasks essential?

1.4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of some essential management tasks executed by social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia within the framework of an ecological perspective.

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To describe social work in Namibia and critically examine the Namibian context of social work, important concepts and some critical reflections;
- To describe the ecological systems perspective and its relevance to management in social work;
- To provide a comprehensive discussion on management in social work;
- To provide a wide discussion on essential management tasks that social workers are expected to execute;
- To empirically investigate some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle level of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services;
- To make recommendations not only to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia about the findings of the research, but also to contribute to the development of policy to inform practitioners in executing their management tasks.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

This section summaries and elucidates the concepts and terms applied in this research report by providing definitions, and explaining their applicability to this study. In other words, this is meant to help the reader develop a common understanding of meanings ascribed to key concepts and terms by the researcher. Following are the key concepts relevant to the study in no particular order of significance.

1.5.1 Ministry of Health and Social Services

Shortly after independence in 1990, eleven social welfare administrations were consolidated under one ministry, namely the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS). Its vision is to be the leader of quality health care and social services according to international set standards. The Mission of the Ministry is to provide integrated, affordable, accessible, equitable, quality health and social welfare services that are responsive to the needs of the Namibian population (Republic of Namibia, 2010).

1.5.2 Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSWS)

It was also a few years after independence that Namibia adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development which has influenced transformation from the Directorate of Social Services to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSWS) in the Ministry of Health and Social Services (Chiwara, 2015). The Directorate consists of various departments or sub-divisions which are expounded in Chapter 2.

1.5.3 Social worker

A social worker is a professionally trained specialist in social work, and a graduate of schools of social work who uses his or her knowledge and skills to provide social services to clients (Mujingane, 2007).

1.5.4 Management in social work

Management in social work is the process of organising resources to get work done and to allow social workers to get involved in this process (Hafford-Letchfield, 2007). Weinbach and Taylor (2015: 6) define management in social work as certain activities performed by social workers at all levels of management within human service organisations that are designed to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals. Management is thus a process which enables an organisation to achieve its goals.

1.5.5 Levels of management

Levels of management refer to the boundaries that differentiate various managerial positions in an organisation. The level of management regulates a chain of command, and the amount of authority and status enjoyed by any managerial position. Each level possesses certain job responsibilities within their position to ensure the effective overall operation of the organisation (Glen, 2017). Normally there are three levels of management in organisations, namely the top-, middle- and frontline (Lazenby, 2016).

1.5.6 Management tasks

If it is generally accepted that management is about delivering results, then management tasks refer to those day to day activities that managers need to execute in their daily work routine to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in their organisation. Coulshed and Mullender (2006) postulate that management tasks refer to those specific everyday jobs carried out by managers, enabling themselves and others to get work done and carrying forward the overall aims of the organisation. Weinbach and Taylor (2015: 7) refer to management tasks as management activities and that these activities are determined by the context of the organisations.

1.5.7 Managers and social work managers

A manager is an individual who is in charge of a certain group of tasks, or a certain department or division of an organisation. A manager usually has a staff of people who report to him or her. In other words, a manager is a person who manages or is in charge of something (Kotter, 2001). Thus, for the purpose of this study, a social work manager refers to social workers in the front- and middle- line.

1.5.8 The ecological systems perspective

The ecological systems perspective offers a framework to observe individuals' relationships within communities and the wider society. It recognises five environmental systems with which an individual interacts. The ecological systems perspective explains how structures or organisations are influenced by different types of environmental systems. The ecological systems perspective addresses both the fit of the client to the environment, and the extent of support from the environment (Segal & Steiner, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the ecological systems perspective addresses the fit of social workers to the organisational environment as

well as the extent of support from the organisation. From an ecological systems perspective, the focus was on how the various systems in the Ministry as well as the broader working environment influence the execution of management tasks in the Directorate. Goady and Lehmann (2016) posit that from an ecological systems perspective, causes are considered to be circular, in other words, all people or groups of people in a system share a reciprocal influence on one another.

1.6 THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

The theoretical point of departure for this study was the ecological systems perspective. The researcher relied heavily on the original work of Bronfenbrenner (1994) on the ecological systems theory. The fore-mentioned author identifies five environmental systems with which an individual interacts namely the individual, micro, meso, exco and macro.

There are three assumptions that are inherent to the ecological systems perspective according to Bronfenbrenner (1994), namely that:

- i. the individual and environment are interacting and constantly changing,
- ii. the individual is an active participant, and
- iii. changes in one ecological system influence changes in others and vice versa.

However, the researcher modified the environmental systems from five to three to make it appropriate to the present study. For example, figure 1.1 below illustrates the environment within which social workers execute their managerial tasks and how these systems affect the execution of these tasks.

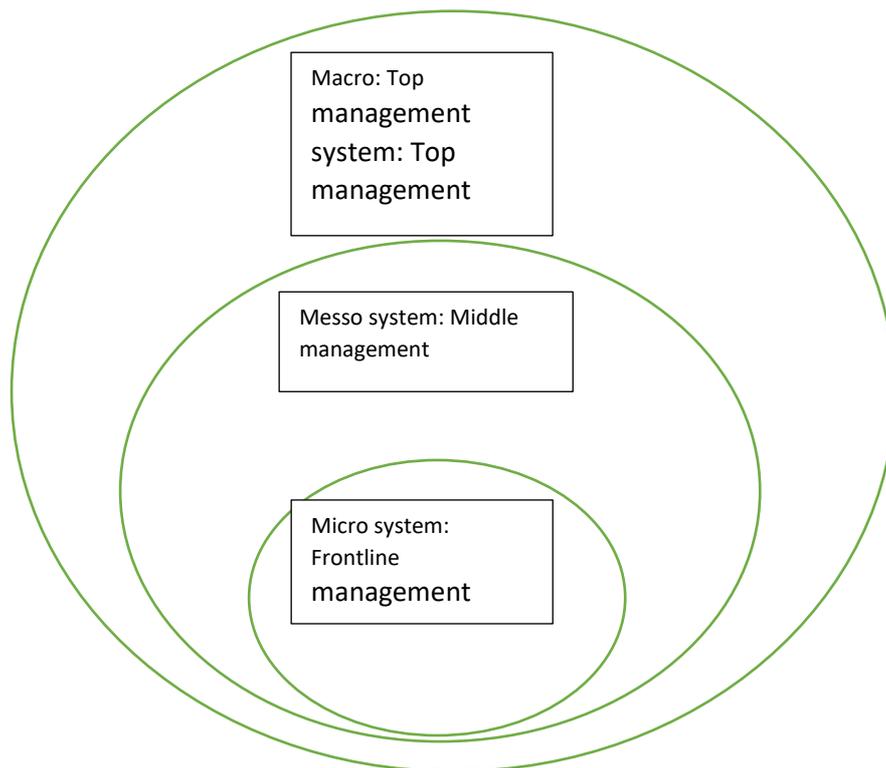


Figure 1.1: Environment within which social workers execute their managerial tasks

Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1994)

At the micro management level, the researcher described gender, years of experience of participants, as well as essential management tasks and working area for example, child protection or substance abuse among others. The meso level represents the middle management focusing on aspects such as years of experience as middle manager, level of education, number of supervisees, etc. The third level which is the macro system symbolises top management which highlighted the organisational ideology, culture and policies. Unfortunately, top management did not form part of this study because the Director of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSWS) was acting as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry while the Deputy Director who was part of the top management had retired before the researcher started with data collection. The current social worker, who was acting as the Director, was less than a year in this position and thus did not meet the inclusion criteria of three years in a specific position.

The ecological systems perspective is about transactions between people and their environment, their adaptation and reciprocity (Johnson & Yanca, 2004). In this regard, Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) contend that managers in social service organisations see themselves as part of a greater network, and that this puts demand on them to render the best possible services to the service users. The ecological systems perspective highlights how the environments in which social workers operate affect the execution of some essential management tasks.

In terms of social work management, through the lens of the ecological systems perspective, the researcher was able to determine essential management tasks performed by front- and middle- line social workers. Furthermore, this perspective assisted in exploring factors which influence front- and middle- line managers when executing their tasks. Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) justly insist that the management of organisations should be viewed as an action with interrelated systems, where actions in one system influence the other system. In addition, Payne (as cited by Pierson & Thomas, 2010, p. 190) suggests that the ecological systems perspective focuses on the adaptive and mutual relationship between people and their environment.

There seems to be scanty literature on the applicability of the ecological systems theory in management, but Skinner (2012) has actually appreciated this theory. The author reasons that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can be applied in developing a manager's understanding of individuals, actions and interactions. It means that understanding the meso- and exosystem can benefit managers because they become aware of the sources of employee satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In this section, the researcher briefly outlines the research design, research method, phases of the research, research methodology, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

1.7.1 Research design

In order to study the nature of essential management tasks executed by front- and middle- line social workers as well as their experiences in performing these tasks, this research applied the exploratory and descriptive designs. Exploratory design is applied to explore a topic when a researcher is examining a new topic of interest, or when the subject of study is relatively new and unstudied (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). According to Fouché (2011), a descriptive study design helps to provide answers to the questions related to the who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem. A descriptive study design is also used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The researcher was interested in exploring some essential management tasks executed by front- and middle- line social workers as well as describing these essential tasks. Essential management tasks and how they are performed by front- and middle- line social workers is an unknown area in Namibia because as far as the researcher could determine, no research in essential management tasks in social work had been done. To this effect, Neuman (1997) endorses that exploratory studies are undertaken when researchers want to study new areas of interest. Consequently an exploratory and descriptive design did not only provide new information on what essential management tasks are executed by front- and middle- line social workers, but also permitted an in-depth exploration on how these management tasks are performed in Namibia. As a result, new knowledge on essential front- and middle- line management tasks and how they are executed was created.

1.7.2 Research method

For this study a qualitative research method was used to allow the researcher to obtain rich data that described the experiences of front- and middle- line social workers about the nature and execution of management tasks they perform. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is naturalistic where groups of people are studied in their natural settings involving the interpretation of a

particular phenomenon. The study interpreted, through face-to-face semi-structured interview schedules, the experiences and/or views of frontline- and middle- managers (a group of people) on the execution of essential management tasks (phenomenon) in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia. Mouton (2006) supports the afore-mentioned statement stating that insiders' perspectives can be obtained if the personal experiences on a topic provide direct information.

1.7.3 Population and sampling

The population of this study were social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare in Namibia and a sample of 20 frontline social workers and 7 middle managers were drawn from the population. Thus a total of 27 research participants were interviewed. Initially the Director and Deputy Director were supposed to form part of the research participants to represent the top level of management but the Director was the Acting Permanent Secretary while the Deputy Director retired before data collection was carried out. The control social worker who was acting as the Director was only four months in the position when data was collected. Consequently, she did not meet the research inclusion criteria of three years and more.

In order to get to the participants, permission was obtained from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services to conduct the research (see Annexure 3). After permission had been granted, the researcher wrote an email to the Acting Director of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services to make the research known. The researcher got a list of names of social workers in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia where the study took place. The participants were purposefully selected from the list using the following criteria for inclusion:

Frontline social workers:

- Three and more years of work experience in the Directorate
- Should be working as frontline social workers
- Should be willing and available for the semi-structured interviews

Middle managers:

- Three and more years of work experience as middle manager in the Directorate
- Should be willing and available for the semi-structured interviews as well

The participants participated on a voluntary basis and had to consent to participate by completing a consent form (see Annexure 4). Voluntary participation is discussed in detail later in this chapter under ethical considerations.

1.7.4 Method of data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Annexure 5), based on the literature study was applied as an instrument of data collection with 20 frontline social workers, and 7 middle level social works to ensure rich experiences and thick diverse opinions. Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research because the researcher is considered to be interested in other people's stories (Seidman, 1998, p. 1). Since this research followed a qualitative approach, a face-to-face semi-structured interview schedule was used to capture the language and experiences of social workers in the frontline as well as middle levels of management. A semi-structured interview schedule is a questionnaire written to guide interviews. This provides the researcher with a set of predetermined questions that might be used as an appropriate instrument to engage participants and designate the narrative terrain (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In most cases, the researcher used open-ended questions. Besides the interview schedule, the researcher acquired permission from participants to use a digital voice recorder to ensure that all important information was captured during interviews.

The researcher conducted a pilot study before the major research to help the researcher fine-tune the questions for the main study in order to bring possible deficiencies to the forth timely. In order to test the interview schedule, two pilot interviews were conducted, one with a frontline social worker and one with a middle level social worker, and necessary amendments to the data collection instrument were made.

A pilot study is the pretesting of a measuring instrument which consists of trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of participants (Singleton, Straits, Straits & McAllister, 1988).

1.7.5 Data analysis

After data had been collected, the next step was the analysis of data, including the recorded data, which was transcribed before the researcher organised and analysed it. According to De Vos (2011), the data needs to be organised, analysed and interpreted in order for the researcher to identify trends and determine the outcomes of the empirical study. Steps included: identifying repeating ideas, generating themes, and grouping themes into theoretical constructs; these theoretical constructs were finally linked to the research concerns, questions and literature review, thus generating a theoretical narrative.

Since the theoretical point of departure for this study was the ecological systems perspective, themes were derived from interviews with the micro (frontline) social workers and meso (middle) social workers.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher being a qualified social worker as well as a social work lecturer was aware of ethical sensitivities. The adequate supervision and guidance the researcher received from Prof. L. Engelbrecht, the researcher's mentor, is worth mentioning. In addition to all these ethical safeguards, the researcher is registered with the Health Professions Councils of Namibia (HPCNA) which regulates social work practice by providing the Code of Ethics for the social workers, hence ethical considerations while exploring perceptions and experiences of social workers in performing essential management tasks were inclusive of the following key ethical aspects in social research:

- ***Informed Consent***

Each and every participant was requested to complete an informed consent form prior to the face-to-face interview (see Annexure 4). The researcher explained the purpose of the study, and how the data was collected and used. The participants knew that they could withdraw from the interview process if they did not want to continue.

Moreover, the researcher obtained informed consent (see Annexure 3) from the Research Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, which hosts the participants, to carry out the study. In addition, the Departmental Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) of Stellenbosch University provided ethical clearance prior to the commencement of this study.

- ***Confidentiality***

The privacy of participants was protected and confidentiality was maintained since the participants engaged in a semi-structured interview schedule and their identity was not disclosed.

Above-all, this study did not involve sensitive issues and it was classified as a low-risk study. However, the researcher allowed participants the opportunity to say yes or no to participate in the study.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The chapters for this report are as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the research study and what it aims to achieve as well as the plan implemented for conducting the research. This chapter provides a useful outline of the larger report presented by defining the problem statement the research wanted to address, the main goal and objectives of the study, the research methodology and the key ethical considerations. This chapter resulted from the proposal submitted and approved by the Higher Education Degrees Admissions Committee at Stellenbosch University.

Chapter 2 is a contextualisation and description of social work in Namibia. Furthermore, this chapter provides an overview of the Namibian socio-economic situation which has implications on service delivery. It was also imperative to outline the progression of social work in Namibia. The research participants are hosted in the Ministry of Health and Social Services and hence this chapter highlights the mandate of the Ministry of Health and Social Services as well as the current status of social work within the social development paradigm. This chapter also critically examines current laws and policies pertaining to the social work practice, and the education of social

work. Lastly, this chapter provides some critical reflections relating to the social work sector in general.

Chapter 3 describes and provides an analysis of theories of management and especially the ecological systems perspective and its applicability to management in social work. It further gives a brief introduction on management in social work.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of management in social work and a detailed description and definition of management in social work within the paradigm of the ecological systems perspective. In addition, this chapter expounds on the levels, functions and skills of management.

Chapter 5 is a description and synthesis of some essential management tasks that social workers at the front- and middle- levels of management are expected to execute within the context of social service delivery in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services.

Chapter 6 summarises the research methodology of the empirical study by deliberating on the research process including the research design and approach as well as the pilot study. The research ethics relevant to this study are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 7 specifies the findings from the empirical study with understandings from both sample stages and it forms the basis from which the next and last chapter is developed.

Chapter 8 discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

1.10 IMPACT

From the researcher's experience, most literature on social work management is influenced by western experiences and little has been written about social work management in African developing countries including Namibia. Little also seems to be known concerning management tasks executed by social workers.

The research findings consequently enhance the understanding of management tasks fulfilled by social workers. The study findings could add value to the existing gap on

literature about essential management tasks executed by social workers in developing countries.

1.11 CONNECTION WITH DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Research on management in social work and especially on management tasks is one of the areas of focus in the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. The research topic falls within the domain of the Department and thus, contributes to existing research and promotes future research in this subject area.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL WORK IN NAMIBIA: CONTEXT, CONCEPTS AND SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the motivation for this study and also outlined the goal and objectives of the study. In this chapter, the focus is on describing social work in Namibia in general and in particular in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia. At independence, on 21 March 1990, Namibia as a democratic country, expressed her commitment towards the welfare of its citizens at Constitutional level. Chapter Three of the Constitution which deals with fundamental human rights and freedoms clearly states that “human rights and freedoms enshrined in this chapter shall be respected and upheld” (Republic of Namibia, 1990: 7). Social workers are responsible for providing social welfare services and financial social assistance to those Namibians in need, and the country adopted a developmental approach to social welfare services shortly after independence. Social development is a theory and approach to social work that stresses the fact that economic development should be combined with social interventions (Midgley & Coney, 2010: xiv). In other words, social development utilises integrated social and economic development to enhance the living standards of the needy. Therefore, social work underpinned by the social development paradigm is referred to as developmental social work (Chiwara, 2015). In this context, social work functions within a human rights framework, promotes social and economic inclusion, facilitates the participation as well as empowerment of client groups and emphasises partnership on micro, meso and macro levels of intervention (Patel, 2005: 207). Despite the developmental approach adopted by Namibia as a country shortly after independence and by social workers in particular, there are still many challenges hindering social workers in rendering effective services. In order to have a better understanding of social work in Namibia, it is important to get a glance of the general overview of the Namibian social-economic situation, a background of the development of social welfare, and the current status of social work. Finally, the chapter also reflects on challenges faced by social workers in Namibia.

2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE NAMIBIAN SOCIAL-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Namibia is part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), sharing borders with various countries in southern Africa, but on the western side is the Atlantic Ocean. In the north it shares land borders with Zambia and Angola, Botswana to the east and South Africa to the south. Geographically, Namibia is a vast country of 824,269 sq. km but it has a mere population of 2, 2 million according to the National Population and Housing Census of 2011 (National Statistics Agency, 2011). There are 11 diverse ethnic groups in Namibia and the largest group being the Owambo people who make up 51% of the population and the remaining 49% makes up the rest of the 10 ethnic groups. Every group has its own language and traditional practices that are unique to each group but the official language in Namibia is English.

Namibia emerged from a history of colonialism; as a country it was colonised twice, first by Germany in the 1800s after the 1884/85 Berlin conference and it was known as German South West Africa. During the German occupation, war broke between the Ovaherero and German soldiers which led to the annihilation of more or less 80% of the Ovaherero after an Extermination Order was issued against them on 2 October 1904 by General Lothar von Trotha. The Nama people went through the same experience and a similar order was issued against them on 22 April 1905 (Olusongo & Erichsen, 2010).

South African occupation started in May 1915 when General Louis Botha who was the first Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa (then known as the Union of South Africa), deployed 40 000 South African troops in Namibia (German Südwest Africa then) forcing the German forces into retreat. That brought 31 years of German rule to an end but Namibians were under another colony and they experienced apartheid for the next 75 years under South Africa (Wallace & Kinahan, 2011) until its independence on 21 March 1990. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) has been the ruling party since independence.

Namibia is classified as a rich, upper middle income country (Republic of Namibia, 2012: xv). Although it is well documented that Namibia is an upper middle-income developing country that is rich in resources (Jauch & Kaapama, 2011), it is beset by unacceptably high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequalities. The National Statistics Agency (2012) provides statistical confirmation of the levels of poverty and inequality in Namibia. Revealingly, it is reported that the income per capita of households where Khoisan is the main language

spoken, is N\$ 6, 631 compared to N\$ 150 730 in households where German is the main language. These figures highlight massive income disparities as individuals in a German speaking household on average have a level of income that is 23 times higher than in a Khoisan speaking household (National Statistics Agency, 2012:14). The Khoisan, normally known as the San, has a history of social and economic marginalisation and they are the most marginalised ethnic group in Namibia (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2012).

Despite the low population of Namibia and the rich natural resources, not all segments of the Namibian nation benefit from its massive wealth. Smith (2011, as cited by Chiwara, 2015) reports that a number of adults and children search for discarded food at the Kupferburg dumpsite in Windhoek every day. The social inequality which has historical roots contributes to a high rate of unemployment and poverty among many Namibians. To this effect, Jauch, Edwards and Cupido (2011:243) attribute inequality in present day Namibia to the South African colonial regime, which left Namibia with a highly dualistic society comprised of the extremely rich and the extremely poor. Namibia's First National Development Plan (NDP1) (1995) indicates that at independence the Namibian Government inherited among others, the following socio-economic parameters:

- Widespread unemployment, exacerbated by colonial policies aimed at providing cheap labour for the modern sector;
- Very low per capita incomes for most Namibians; and
- Glaring poverty among the African population contrasted sharply with the very rich white minority.

Securing the well-being of all citizens and ensuring that their social needs are responded to appropriately is the primary aim of the Government of the Republic of Namibia. The country is one of the only three countries in Africa that provides social security to its citizens through social grants. The other two countries that make provisions for social grants are South Africa and Botswana. Despite this provision, the social welfare system in Namibia is not well-

established and properly coordinated. There are two bodies responsible for social security in the country and they are presented below:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is mandated under the National Pensions Act No. 10 of 1992 to pay-out pension grants. The general expectation is that social security and protection in Namibia should fall under the Ministry of Health and Social Services being one of the government institutions that employ a high number of social workers, but that is not the case. The Government of the Republic of Namibia recognises that there is a great need to financially support the frail citizens and to achieve this; the following social grants are administered by Epupa Investment (PTY) Ltd:

- *Foster parent grant* is the grant given to children who are found in need of care and placed through a Court Order either in the individual families or organisations that are taking care of children.
- *Special maintenance grant* which is given to children under sixteen years living with disability.
- *Maintenance grant* is given to children whose one parent passed on and the remaining parent is earning less than N\$1000 per month. The same benefit goes to the children of pensioners, children of parents with disability and children for parents (bread winner) sentenced to more than six months in prison.
- *Grant for vulnerable children* is for children whose parents have no source of income whose parents' income is less than N\$1000-00.

The total number of orphans and vulnerable children who benefited from the grant system as of March 2017 is 285 431 and beneficiaries of all four types of grants receive N\$250.00 per child once a month (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 2017).

There are of course various requirements and provisions for the different social grants and in general these various grants are appreciated by beneficiaries. In a study done by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for example, each participating child grant beneficiary and caregiver was asked to specify the four main items (in order of priority) that the grant is spent on. Food was the most commonly cited spending item for all the focus group

participants receiving a child welfare grant (40%) whilst school fees were mentioned by 35% of participants as the main spending item. If one adds pre-school/ child care, school hostel fees and other school expenses to this figure, then the percentage nominating education-related expenses as the main spending item rises to 43%. Therefore, food and broad education expenditure alone represent the main forms of spending of grant income for nearly 85% of participants (Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2010). The following statements from the above-stated research participants, specifically on child welfare grants, give a general impression of how beneficiaries appreciate social grants:

“The child welfare grants are definitely making a difference. Even though it is only a small portion, it is spent on food that the child needs. The other needs can be divided into personal needs. At least the money makes it possible to meet some basic needs of that household. Even if the money does not go directly to the child, you at least know that there will be food”

“With this money, they just buy food. Because if they do not buy food, we go to school hungry.”

“... it has made education possible for almost all of these children. I know that this grant is used for educational needs of the child, and this is outstanding.”

The second body through which the Government of the Republic of Namibia contributes to the social welfare of Namibians is the Social Security Commission which was established under the Social Security Act, No. 34 of 1994. The core aim of the Commission is to provide a foundation of social protection on the principles of solidarity for workers in Namibia and their dependents. It is claimed that since the inception of the Social Security Commission (SSC) in 1995, it has made significant differences in the lives of ordinary workers and their dependents in respect of earnings replacement due to incidents arising from maternity leave, sick leave and death and work related disabilities, injuries and loss of employment. The Social Security Commission originates its funds from membership contributions through compulsory payroll deductions from every employee working and receiving a basic income, plus a contribution paid by employers based on the income and nature of the organisation. The employing

organisation is responsible for the registration and payment of the contributions to SSC.

Benefits that employees can enjoy include the following:

- Payment of Medical expenses for injured employee, including transport expenses to hospital;
- Compensation for temporary or permanent disability;
- Compensation for occupational diseases and or injuries;
- Pension to dependents for fatal accidents;
- Merit rebates to employers as incentive;
- Death in terms of funeral/ burial expenses;
- Maternity leave;
- Sick leave; and
- Retirement.

There are also requirements and provisions for each of the above-stated benefits such as age, employment status and health conditions (Mujingane, 2015).

In general the social and economic inequalities are prevalent worldwide and Namibia is no exception to this global reality. Scholars such as Lundy and Van Wormer (2007) and Ortiz (2007) agree that the 21st century has been facing challenges of a rising trend in social and economic inequalities between and within countries. To this effect at independence, Namibia inherited a dual economy with four interrelated challenges: low economic growth coupled with a low economic base, and inequitable distribution of wealth and income, high unemployment and a high rate of poverty (Ananias, Black & Strydom, 2017). By 2010, Namibia had risen to an upper middle income class country, but 49% of the Namibians lived in poverty due to the income disparities between the rich and poor below the poverty line (HelpAge International, 2015). In terms of the Namibian Constitution, the Namibian Government has an obligation to promote the welfare of all people irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity or origin (Republic of Namibia, 1990).

As a country, Namibia recognises this reality and addressing socio-economic inequalities is a critical priority area for Vision 2030, Namibia's Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development (Republic of Namibia, 2004b:7). Vision 2030 emphasises that the government alone cannot deal with socio-economic inequalities and that there is a need for collaboration

with civil societies and all members of the Namibian community (Republic of Namibia, 2004b: 9-10). Surely the social work profession has a contributing role to play and it should be part of this partnership. From an international viewpoint, the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), 2014) acknowledges the significant role that social workers can play in supporting, influencing and promoting initiatives aimed at achieving social and economic equalities. In line with this, Palattiyil, Sidhva and Chakrabarti (2016) postulate that social workers are increasingly involved in global social issues impacting human development and well-being.

The development of social work in Namibia is presented in the next section to shed more light on social and economic advancement and social work.

2.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Despite the dark history of genocidal acts such as mass killings, rape and other atrocities during the period 1904 and 1908, as well as the segregation and discrimination during the apartheid South African regime, there were no formal social welfare services to help communities deal with these painful experiences. It was only in the 1950s that social work started to emerge as a profession in Namibia. The historical development in Namibia is sketched below as it evolved in three eras namely during apartheid, post-apartheid and the current state.

2.3.1 The Apartheid Era

Given the brief background about the socio-economic overview in Namibia, the researcher was one of the first social workers trained in Namibia in 1983. Prior to that, all social workers in Namibia, which was known as Suid-Wes Africa then, received their training in South Africa at a college which was known as Minnie Hofmeyer College. However, as part of enforcing the apartheid tactics, the black people who wanted to study social work were not allowed at this college but they were rather provided training on a part time basis in Windhoek. *“I was one of those who received training from the Minnie Hofmeyer College but because I’m black, I was not good enough to study in South Africa. Instead, we received our training at Augustineum High School in Windhoek on a part-time basis”* recalled a retired social worker (Keister, 2017).

“Yes, that is how apartheid affected us, we received the same training as the Coloureds who went to Minnie Hofmeyer (College) but because we are Black we were considered as welfare

workers and expected to work under the supervision of social workers” (Bock, 2017). A study by Kaseke (1995) points out that welfare workers were complaining that they were not receiving due recognition for their contributions and showed unhappiness to be supervised by people they perceived to have received similar training and being at the same level.

Social work in Namibia evolved more or less in the same way as in Western societies, namely it started off as informal means of mutual aid provided by the family, the clan and/or communities. This is supported by Mbedzi (2015:46) who states that social welfare is believed to have originated in the early years when mutual aid was essential for survival and families were responsible for taking care of their members. In this regard, Zastrow (2014) agrees that the responsibility of meeting the needs of those who were unable to be self-sufficient was largely taken by the family, the church, and even neighbours and as such there was no formal organised way of providing help to the needy ones. In other words, informal care systems gave way to formal systems of care. As the case in most African set up, families used to care for their members but due to development and civilisation, changes started to take place at various levels. For example, urbanisation disrupted traditional family structures, and the family as an institution became less and less able to meet the family members' needs (Mujingane, 2015).

In the South African context, the Dutch Reform Church created the first structured care for the welfare needs of people in South Africa between 1864 and 1899 Engelbrecht & Strydom (2015). It was the same church, the Dutch Reformed Church that introduced social work for the first time in Namibia by appointing its first social worker in 1953 in a small town called Tsumeb (Mujingane, 2015). The social worker provided services to members of its congregation and the broader white community (Ananias, Black & Strydom, 2017). It was also this Church that played a role in the establishment of the first children's home known as the Namibia Children's Home and catered for children in need from all communities. In addition to the Dutch Reform Church, there was the Church Benevolence Board (CBB) in Windhoek which registered as a welfare organisation 1957 and provided welfare services to its white church members and the rest of the white society. According to Mujingane (2015), the CBB had three key aims:

- Rendered charitable services to church members as well as non-members but who were State cases;
- Provided rehabilitation services; and
- Networked with other churches, the State and other organisations on social issues.

It goes without saying that there were still no formal welfare services for the majority blacks in Namibia since the membership for the Dutch Reformed Church was and is still white. However, the local municipality in Windhoek employed Dr Zed Ngavirue as the first black Namibian social worker in 1959. However, it could not be established how he succeeded to go to Minnie Hofmeyer College at the beginning of 1965. Nevertheless, his career as a social worker was short-lived; he was dismissed when he confronted the colonial rulers over unjust practices against black Namibians during the Old Location massacre in 1959 (Ananias, Black & Strydom, 2017).

Since South-West Africa (Namibia) under the South African Apartheid Regime was considered a fifth Province of South Africa, there was a South-West Africa Administration which rendered services to all ethnic groups. But in 1969 welfare services were taken over by the Department of Welsyn en Pensioene (Welfare and Pensions) in South Africa, with a branch office in Windhoek which is the capital city of Namibia (Mujingane, 2015). During the same time, a Department of Bantu Administration and Development for black people was established in Windhoek. A separate Department of Social Welfare was established but with sub-departments to serve all the different ethnic groups, and again in 1980 a Direktooraat van Nasionale Gesondheid en Welsyn (Directorate of National Health and Welfare) was established to coordinate the social services of all the ethnic administrations or second tier governments as they were referred to. That tells a story that social workers were appointed in the administrations where they served their own ethnic groups and they had to develop social services in line with the culture and tradition of the specific ethnic group they served. Social workers started working within the culture of the eleven different ethnic groups; for example, the researcher was employed as a social worker by the then Ovaherero Administration in 1987. This resulted in unequal distribution of welfare benefits among the various population groups in Namibia. The white needy communities enjoyed better welfare services followed by the coloured community while the majority black populations were the

most marginalised. For example, while a coloured family received R200-00 foster grant per child, foster care grant for a black child was R25-00 per month.

During the Apartheid Era there were, however, some Acts (also called Ordinances) to regulate welfare services in South-West Africa (Namibia now) such as:

- Women and Children Protection and Maintenance Act;
- The Blind Persons Allowances Acts of 1952;
- The Children's Act No. 33 of 1960;
- The National Welfare Act No. 79 of 1965; and
- 1965 Act on Prevention and Treatment Alcoholism and Anti-Social Behaviour.

However, besides the role played by the State and the laws, there were also Non-Governmental Organisations which provided some specialised services in specific areas. Many of these services also started mostly in 1951 (Mujingane, 2015), such as the following:

A Welfare Organisation for people with disability was initiated in 1951 and appointed its first social worker in 1959 and this organisation opened a home for people with disability in 1960. Since this home was catering for the white community, six years after, another home for black people opened in Katutura in 1966. Katutura is an Otjiherero word which means "when will we as black settle down" and it was and still is a township (residential area) for black people in Windhoek. Katutura was created in 1961 following the forced removal of Windhoek's black population from the Old Location which afterwards was developed into a residential suburb for the white population called today Hochland Park.

During this time specialised services expanded to the elderly and two old age homes were established in Windhoek namely the Susanne Grau Heim and Potgieter Old Age Homes catering for the German and Afrikaans speaking communities.

During the apartheid period, the country continued to experience the effects of economic decline due to unequal wealth and service distribution. The fact that social workers were working for various administrations prevented them from developing a professional identity and they were working in isolation.

2.3.2 The Post-Apartheid Era

The first democratic election in South-West Africa was held in 1989 under the supervision of the United Nations (UN) Resolution 435 and the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) won the election and became the first ruling party of a democratic Namibia on 21 March 1990. The political transformation was felt at all levels and in all fields, including social welfare. Shortly after independence, a Ministry of Health and Social Services was established and social workers as well as welfare workers from all the various second tier governmental welfare departments were brought together under the Directorate of Social Services. This Directorate is under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Social Services and it is therefore a governmental institution that is tasked to offer social welfare services to the people of Namibia. This arrangement created a lot of challenges and issues for the social/welfare workers and the realities of managing social services for the nation soon took up time, consultations, investigations and lengthy reports. A study done by a consultant (Kaseke, 1995) reveals that the Directorate was experiencing poor interpersonal relationships; tensions and conflicts were preventing social/welfare workers from working together. These were ascribed to the fact that the social/welfare workers from different ethnic groups were brought together without any proper groundwork. "These tensions and conflicts were more evident in Windhoek and perhaps these are due to the fact that at independence social workers who had been working for the different second tier authorities were suddenly put together without any meaningful preparatory work taking place" (Kaseke, 1995: iv).

This Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) has been the main employer of social workers in Namibia. After Namibia's independence, social welfare was re-organised and consolidated by giving a comprehensive sole mandate to the Ministry of Health and Social Services as the ministry in charge of welfare services (Chiwara, 2015). Following South Africa's move to a developmental social welfare model, the Government of the Republic of Namibia also adopted a developmental approach as outlined in the United Nations World Summit on social development in 1995 (Ananias, Black & Strydom, 2017), hence the renaming of the Directorate of Social Services to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSW). Being a member of the African Union (AU), Namibia is party to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, and in an effort to obey the principles outlined under this

declaration, the Government of the Republic of Namibia started campaigning for the development of a cohesive social development policy that will set the foundation for an efficient social welfare system in Namibia (Republic of Namibia, 2013; Republic of Namibia, 2014). The United Nations Copenhagen Declaration (1995) on Social Development re-kindled the urgent need for governments to adopt a social development approach to social welfare services.

2.4 MANDATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The mandate of the Ministry of Health and Social Services is derived from the Namibian Constitution, Article 95, where the state is required to maintain the welfare of the people by putting in place legislation that seek to provide health care for the people and also to ensure social welfare for the people including the weak and vulnerable members of the society (Republic of Namibia, 1995). It is important to mention that the Directorate renders professional social services to persons older than 18 years, meaning that children below 18 years fall under the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. This is discussed in detail later in the chapter, under the sections on the current status of social work and also when presenting critical reflections.

2.4.1 Vision of the Ministry of Health and Social Services

A workshop held under the theme “*Social Work at the Cross-roads*” in 1996 endorsed unanimously the Vision, Mission and Development Objectives of the Directorate Social Services (that was before the name change). The vision of the Ministry is to be the leader of quality health care and social services according to internationally set standards (Republic of Namibia, 1995), but Mabengano (2013) specifies the following as encapsulating the vision of the Directorate:

- A socially stable and forward looking Namibia;
- Where disparities and inequalities inherited from the past are being corrected;
- All human rights and fundamental freedoms are ensured; and
- Where the social sector, in co-operation with other stake holders make the best use of resources so that economic and social development reinforce each other in order to ensure human security and wellbeing for all Namibians.

2.4.2 Mission of the Ministry of Health and Social Services

The Mission of the Ministry of Health and Social Services is to provide integrated, affordable, accessible, equitable, quality health and social welfare services that are responsive to the needs of the population (Republic of Namibia, 1995). However, Mabengano (2013) lists the following as the reasons why the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Service exists:

- To contribute to the social and economic development of Namibia;
- By designing and implementing a developmental, community-centred and participatory social welfare policy;
- Which will promote the social well-being, mental and physical health, active participation and self-reliance of all inhabitants;
- Promote the functioning of families and communities through empowerment, preventative and developmental community work;
- Maintain and strengthen the coping capacities of individuals and families; and lastly
- Advocate for people who have special needs, and those who are poor, disadvantaged or vulnerable.

2.4.3 Organisational structure of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services

This section outlines the structure of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services within the Ministry of Health and Social Services as illustrated in figure 2.1. The structure is under revision as confirmed by Ames (2017).

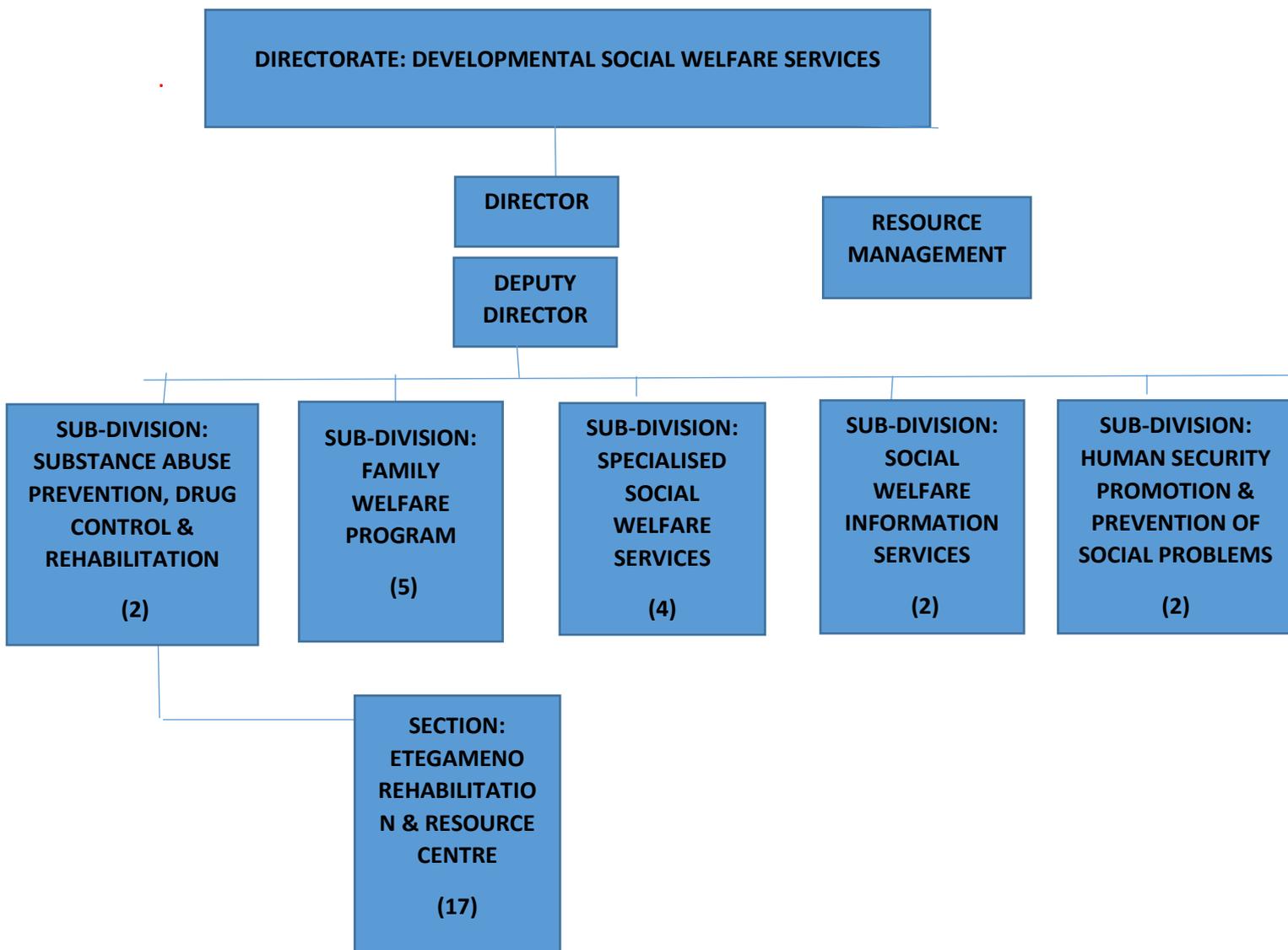


Figure 2.1: Organisational Structure of the DDSWS

Source: Ministry of Health & Social Services (2010)

According to the above structure as demonstrated in figure 2.1, the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services has a Director, Mrs Petronella H. Masabane, who was Acting Chief Executive Officer during data collection and one Deputy Director, Ms Elisabeth Van Rhyn who had retired by the time data was collected. The Directorate consists of five departments or sub-divisions namely:

2.4.3.1 Sub-division: Substance Abuse Prevention, Drug Control and Rehabilitation

This sub-division hosts the Etegameno Rehabilitation and Resource Centre and has a total of 17 staff members, among them 1 control social worker, 1 chief social worker, 2 senior social workers, a driver, cook, cleaner, artisan person, a priest, and health personnel such as nurses, doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists.

It is responsible for the provision of promotive and preventative services, such as mass media campaign on substance abuse, and one popular programme is the Coalition for Responsible Drinking. The sub-division is also responsible for the development of the National Policy on Alcohol. Etegameno Resource and Rehabilitation Centre (ERRC) is responsible for the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol and drug dependent individuals and their families. Since substance abuse does not only impact the social and physical life of an individual but also his or her mental capacity, the sub-division provides mental health services as well.

2.4.3.2 Sub-division: Family Welfare Programme

In this sub-division there is 1 control social worker, 2 chief social workers and 2 senior social workers. The main functions of this sub-division is to develop, improve and provide sustainable services to older people (people older than 60 years) in order to enhance active aging by providing services such as sub-economic housing, counselling, training, regional boards, etc. The sub-division also promotes the strengthening of family values and morals to prevent and reduce social problems within families.

2.4.3.3 Sub-division: Specialised Social Welfare Services

There are 4 staff members in this sub-division as indicated in figure 2.1, consisting of 1 control social worker, 1 chief social worker and 2 clerks. The responsibilities of this sub-division include the registration of welfare organisations, residential care facilities for older people (old age homes), alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres, training, etc. This subdivision is also responsible for the development of legislation for the Directorate.

2.4.3.4 Sub-division: Social Welfare Information Services

There is 1 control social worker and 1 clerk, making the staff compliment in this sub-division 2. Key responsibilities of this division include taking care of the development and maintenance of a database on social welfare information in the Ministry, as well as the rest of the social welfare sector.

2.4.3.5 Sub-division: Human Security Promotion and Prevention of Social Problems

This sub-division advocates for the inclusion of the poverty dimensions and HIV and AIDS in sectoral programmes and initiatives at various forums. It addresses poverty through community development and supports the National Poverty Reduction Action Programmes. It is further responsible for the strengthening of service delivery capacity through staff development, student practical work and the promotion of the profession of social work.

The sub-division Resource Management as indicated in figure 2.1 does not fall directly under DDSWS but is in the Office of the Chief Executive Officer and is more responsible for developing overall policies in the Ministry as well as for human resource development and management thereof. It is the sub-division responsible for handling finances and logistics services including office equipment.

These five sub-divisions are at the national level only, but there are similarly social welfare services at Regional and District Levels in all 14 Political Regions in Namibia and social workers at these levels are responsible for the following services:

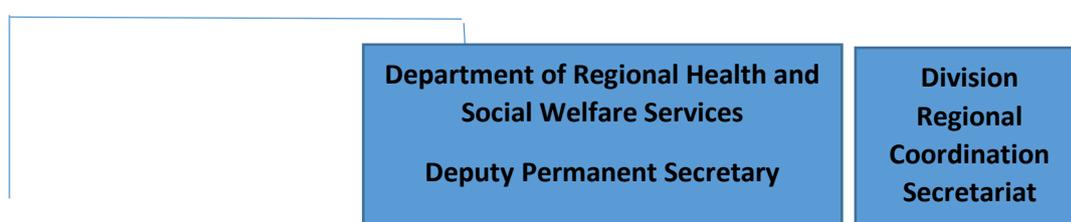
Provision of counselling to any person above the age of 18 years with regards to:

- pre-marital and marital counselling;
- marriage enrichment;
- alcohol and drug abuse;
- commercial sex work;
- older people (neglect and abuse, applications for sub-economic housing units and old age homes, active aging), unlawful grabbing of property and other estate disputes;
- reintegration of released prisoners into society;
- bereavement counselling;

- stress management;
- trauma counselling; and
- pre-trial assessments and pre-sentence reports for adults.

Group work also includes activities such as effective parenting skills groups, aftercare groups for alcohol and drug abusers and gender-based violence, and empowerment of communities by means of community projects.

Furthermore, medical social workers fall under the regional and district social welfare services and they are among others responsible for the assistance needed depending on the patient's needs. Social workers also provide patient education on treatment options and help coordinate services needed after discharge, such as medical equipment. Medical social workers also arrange grief counselling or other mental health services for patients. Social welfare services at Regional and District Levels can be sketched as illustrated in figure 2.2 below.



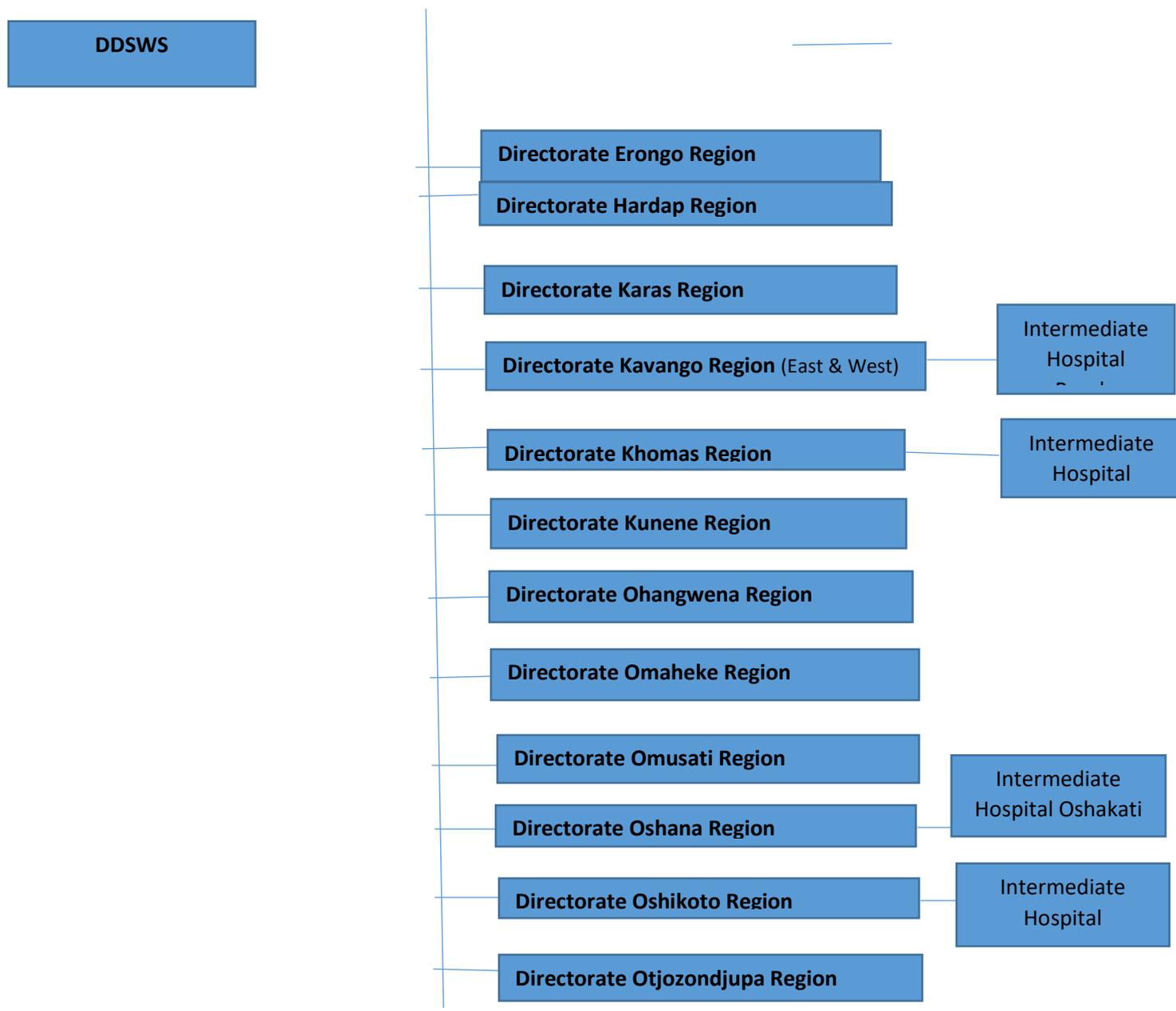


Figure 2.2: *Illustrating social welfare services in the districts and regions*

Source: *Ministry of Health and Social Services (2010)*

Namibia has fourteen Political Regions but figure 2.2 reflects 13 regions only because Kavango East and West are combined for the purpose of social welfare rendering. As per the structure, only four of these Directorates in the regions have medical social workers in intermediate hospitals; Kavango Region, Oshana Region, and Oshikoto Region. However, while Khomas Region has two state hospitals, only the Intermediate Katutura Hospital falls under the

Department of Regional Health and Social Welfare Services. The Windhoek Central Hospital is hosted in the Directorate of Tertiary Health Care and Clinical Support Services under the Department of Health and Social Welfare Policy and that is why it does not appear on the sketch. As alluded earlier, the structure is under revision (Ames, 2017) and the total number of social workers in the Ministry of Health and Social Services at national, regional and district levels is summarised in figure 2.3 below.

Social workers' posts in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSWS) at national level (NL) = **15**

- 5 X Control Social Workers (5 out of 5 filled = 100%)
 - 6 X Chief Social Workers (6 out of 6 filled = 100%)
 - 4 X Senior Social Workers (4 out of 4 filled = 100%)
- Total: 15 (15 out of 15 filled = 100%)

Social workers' posts in DDSWS at regional and district Levels = **157**

- 18 X Chief Social Workers (18 out of 18 filled = 100%)
 - 24 X Senior Social Workers (21 out of 24 filled = 88%)
 - 115 Social Workers (99 out of 115 filled = 86%)
- Total: 157 (138 out of 157 filled = 88%)
- Total Social Workers in the MOHSS: 172 (152 out of 172 filled = 88%)

Against this backdrop of the evolvement of social welfare in Namibia, the current status of social work is expanded in the next section.

4.5 The Current Status of Social Work in Namibia

Social work in Namibia is still going through transformation and 28 years after independence there are no social policies to guide the delivery of social welfare services in Namibia. In 1996 the Ministry of Health and Social Services, as the ministry having the full mandate for social welfare services delivery by then, attempted to draft The Green Paper to inform a draft social development policy. The Ministry of Health and Social Services saw a need for The Green Paper because economic and social developments are inter-reliant and strengthen each other. In order to take advantage of this relationship, it is necessary to design and follow an

explicit, systematic and comprehensive public policy towards the equalisation of opportunities and the well-being for all members of society (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1997). To this effect, many social concerns are included in various chapters of the National Development Plan (NDP 1) because there is still no systematic and comprehensive presentation or analysis on the set of issues that are usually considered to belong under the concept social welfare policy (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1997). After more than 20 years, what is supposed to be the Green Paper is still a draft at the situational analysis phase and it is entitled the *4th Draft Situational Analysis on Social Development* in Namibia (Chiwara, 2015). The plan was to distribute the draft Green Paper to various stake holders for their input and comments to inform the development of a Draft Social Welfare Policy to be referred to as The White Paper (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1997). The expectation was that upon finalisation, this White Paper would guide social welfare delivery in Namibia. Unfortunately the finalisation of this policy was thrown in bewilderment when the Namibian Government started to establish more and more government ministries dealing with social welfare services. As a result of this, there was no clarity as to which Ministry is responsible for social welfare services as responsibilities were shared amongst various institutions. In this regard, the Ministry of Health and Social Services (2010) affirms that the establishment of more public institutions means that the sole mandate which was given to MOHSS, was fragmented and dispersed amongst various ministries, hence social workers have not yet fully embraced the developmental approach. The frustrating situation is evident among social workers as indicated here: *“there is still no systematic and comprehensive presentation on the set of issues that usually are considered to belong under the concept of social welfare. There is no coordination of social welfare services in Namibia as the delivery of social welfare service is scattered under various government institutions”* (Denk, 2017).

The Government of the Republic of Namibia established the following ministries:

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, currently employs approximately 83 social workers according to Damases (2017). Out of this number, roughly 20 social workers are foreign nationals whose contracts were to be terminated at the time of conducting the current research. This would likely worsen the shortage of social workers which the country is currently experiencing: *“We have vacancies but they cannot be filled, the government has a serious financial crisis”* (Damases, 2017).

The Directorate of Child Welfare Services in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is mandated to promote and protect the well-being of all Namibian children below the age of 18 years. It implements programs in accordance with National and International instruments such as the Namibian Constitution, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Directorate is further mandated to empower communities to take care of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC); strengthen the implementation of child welfare services/programmes; improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, strengthen coordination and networking at all levels.

Ministry of Defence employs 10 social workers according to the senior Human Resource Officer (Uazukuani, 2017). Uazukuani (2017) confirms that there are future plans to appoint more social workers in other towns in Namibia. According to Shilongo (2017), all the social workers are under the Division of Psychology and Social Work hosted in the Department of Human Resources and their clients are employees of the Ministry. Alcohol abuse is a common issue and they provide counselling to staff members who have drinking problems as well as subsequent issues and they work closely with the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

The Ministry of Safety and Security has been assigned with the responsibility of upholding law and order, protecting lives and properties, as well as the provision of safe custody to delinquents while rehabilitating them for possible re-integration back into society as law abiding citizens. The ministry consists of three main departments namely the Namibian Police Force, Namibian Correctional Service, and Finance and Administration. It is the first two departments that host social workers and they are referred to case managers and commissioners. The 7 social workers in the Department of the Namibian Police are mainly responsible for providing social service to the Police officers, their family and other staff members (Ndjendja, 2017). The Department of Correctional Services has 25 social workers and they perform the following functions and duties:

- Ensuring that every inmate is secured in safe and humane custody, within a correctional facility until lawfully discharged;
- Rendering health care to inmates;

- Applying rehabilitation programs and other meaningful and constructive activities to sentenced offenders that contribute to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into community as law abiding citizens;
- Supervising offenders who are on conditional release;
- Performing all work necessary for, arising from, or incidental to, the effective management, administration and control of correctional facilities and community correctional centres; and
- Performing such other functions as the President may from time to time assign to the Correctional Service.

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs is established with the mandate to address the plight of veterans of the liberation struggle by initiating and promoting projects and programs, including keeping the history of the national liberation struggle alive in terms of the Veterans Amendment Act, No. 3 of 2013. The responsibilities of the social workers employed in this Ministry are, among others, to manage welfare of veterans and their dependents, and assist veterans who are physically, mentally and psychologically affected by the war of liberation struggle by providing post-trauma counselling enabling them to cope with issues related to post-traumatic experience. It was not possible to determine the number of social workers in this ministry due to its “political nature.”

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (in the meantime the name has changed to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation) does not have social workers at the moment but as the previous name suggested, it has vacant positions for social workers. One of the core functions of the Ministry used to be the payment of social grants to senior citizens and people living with disabilities. It is also responsible for the implementation of the following Acts:

Labour Act No.11 of 2007; Affirmative Action (Employment) Act No. 29 of 1998; National Pension Act No. 10 of 1992; Social Security Act No. 34 of 1994; Employee’s Compensation Act No. 30 of 1941; and lastly, Employment Services Act No. 8 of 2011.

Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Social Services

As if the repetition and fragmentation of social welfare services was not enough, the Government of the Republic of Namibia added another ministry in 2015 namely, the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Social Services. The rationale for this according to the Republic of Namibia's current President, Honourable Hage Geingob, is that the revised new government structure which saw the creation of new ministries and splitting of others was necessitated by recently passed constitutional amendments and improved alignment of existing objectives. Hence, poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, sustainable economic growth and economic diversification, job creation and improved service delivery were the main challenges the government was faced with (Ntinda, 2015).

The author further continues that while there had been broad alignment, it was realised that in some instances, government's structure did not directly speak to its goals and objectives. For example, poverty alleviation is a key government goal, but there was no single ministry tasked to address this important national goal. Instead, elements of poverty alleviation were spread across different ministries, therefore leading towards a fragmented approach towards poverty reduction that is not efficient and effective.

This was one of the reasons for the creation of the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. It underscored the importance that the government devoted to the fight against poverty and the ultimate aim of eradicating poverty.

Besides the above-stated government institutions, there is also the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture which is authorised to empower and develop the youth, and promote sport, arts and culture. The Directorate of Youth employs 5 social workers whose main responsibility is to introduce programmes that deal with issues affecting young people such as unemployment and school drop outs.

Most of these Ministries employ social workers, and even those that are currently not employing them now have plans to appoint social workers in future, and render social welfare services. This could be a clear indication that social work in Namibia is not well coordinated as the social workers are not hosted under one government institution but scattered in various ministries. Besides these different Ministries, social workers in Namibia are also working for the private sector, faith-based organisations as well as non-governmental

organisations (NGOs). There are some social workers in private practice; however, the number could not be established during the process of this study. The impact of this is the lack of synchronisation in the delivery of social welfare services and unhealthy competition and envy among social workers in different sectors. It is also not clear which institution has the full mandate of social welfare and this has contributed to the non-existence of a social welfare policy. Chiwara (2015) emphasises that the absence of a national comprehensive social welfare policy is in turn blamed for the poor collaboration amongst different social welfare ministries. In this regard, a report of the National Planning Commission in Namibia (2011:4) states that “it is, however, recognised that the mobilisation and organising of resources for development would be facilitated much more effectively if the social objectives and strategies currently scattered in various sectoral plans could be coordinated within a unifying and systematic conceptual and organisational framework”.

The impact of this fragmentation is not felt by social workers only, but the client system is negatively affected by this arrangement as well. This institutional arrangement is reported to have caused a lot of animosity and confusion amongst clients as they at times do not know as to which door to knock at when the going gets tough (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2010) as clients are insistently sent back and forth from one ministry to another for assistance. This state of affairs could result in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services being uncertain about its mandate and this could also lead to overlaps in rendering social welfare services. It could further be argued that the administration of social welfare services by various government institutions that are working in isolation with no suitable coordination can result in duplication of services as well as confusion in roles, responsibilities and functions. The scattering of the social welfare mandate is said to have led to the fragmentation of the Namibian social welfare sector and to the shelving of the Draft Social Welfare Policy 1996 (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2008).

Moreover, there is a strong need for policy or strategy for social development to take advantage of both the implementation synergies across different sectors and other respective guiding policies (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2012). In this context, a report of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (2010, as cited by Chiwara, 2015) recommends the development, revision, and implementation of relevant social welfare legislation and policies as a strategic priority that could assist in rectifying this chaos. The situation seems to have still

remained the same, after nine years since recommendations were made by the then Ministry of Health and Social Services (2008) stressing the importance of merging Namibian social services under one ministry to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure better service delivery.

Despite the lack of a national developmental social welfare policy, there are some Acts that are guiding social work practice. First of all, as mentioned before, the Namibian Constitution makes provisions for social assistance. Article 95 for example, specifies that the state is required to maintain the welfare of the people by putting in place legislation that seeks to provide health care for the people and also to ensure the social welfare for the people including the weak and vulnerable members of the society (Republic of Namibia, 1995). It has taken social workers in Namibia long to influence political leadership to review and amend the Children's Act No. 33 of 1960. It was only in 2015 that The Child Care and Protection Act No.3 of 2015 was promulgated to replace the Children's Act of 1960. It gives effect to the rights of children as contained in the Namibian Constitution and international agreements binding on Namibia.

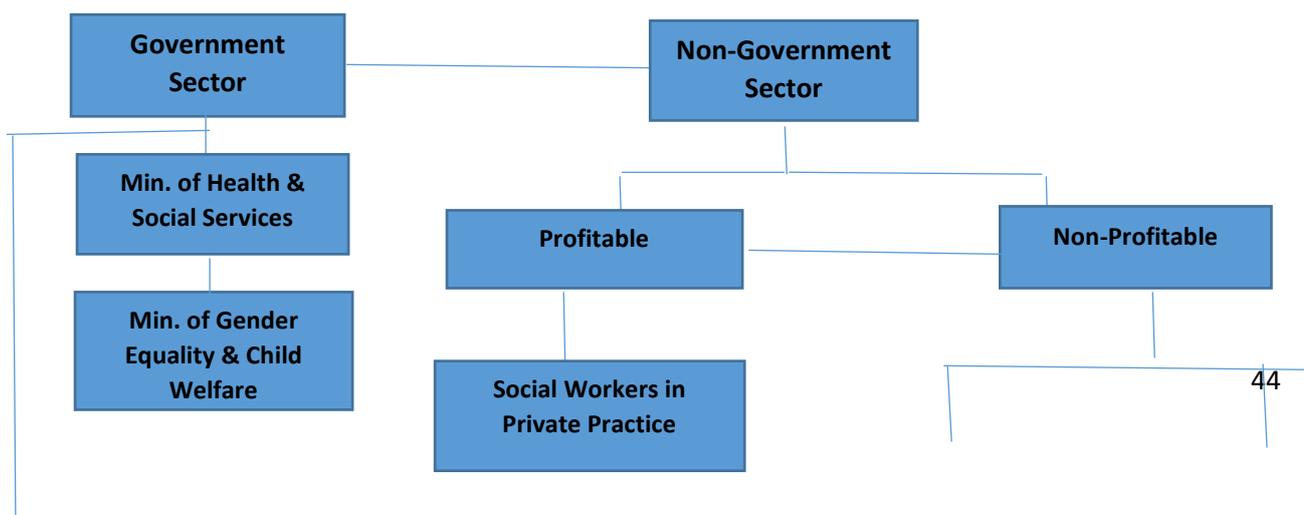
The Act guiding social services for senior citizens is also very outdated since the Aged Persons Act No. 81 of 1967 is still in place. Another Act regulating the delivery of social welfare services is the Social Work and Psychology Act, No. 6 of 2004. It makes provisions for the establishment and constitution of a professional Council for the social work and the psychology profession, known as the Namibian Health Professionals Council (NHPC) (Republic of Namibia, 2004). This Act determines the powers, duties and functions of such a Council. The Namibian Health Professionals Council's responsibilities are to regulate the registration of persons practicing such professions and of persons practicing certain professions allied to such professions; to set out the ethical code, specify the education, tuition, training and qualifications of practitioners of such professions; prohibit the practicing of such professions without being registered; and provide for matters incidental thereto. It is a must that all social workers and social work students have to register with the NHPC every year. The students register from year one and pay a once off minimal amount until they complete their studies.

To continue with the current status of social work, it is worth mentioning the serious lack of human resources. Namibia has a critical shortage of social workers who are split in various government institutions, NGOs and faith-based organisations as well as the few in private practice. As of the 31st of March 2017, there were 689 registered social workers as affirmed by Shituula (2017) from the Namibian Health Professionals Council, serving a population of about 2, 2 million. It was however not possible to establish the number of social workers employed in all government institutions, NGOs, faith-based organisations as well as in the private sector but it is evident that Namibia has a serious shortage of social workers. “The severe shortage of social workers requires urgent attention. It has serious implications on the effective implementation of services” (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2012: 20). Namibia faces a human resource crisis in the public health sector, which is characterised by a shortage of health professionals, high vacancy rates for all categories of staff, high attrition rates (mostly due to resignations), lack of a human resources retention strategy, staff burn-out (and incomplete implementation of the Employee Assistance Programme) and inadequate capacity at local health academic institutions to produce the required number of needed health workers (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2010). For example, there are three health workers per 1000 people in Namibia (Tjihenuna, 2015), while the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 2.5 health workers per 1000 people. The situation is even worse in the case of social workers where the social worker-client ration is 1:13,519 for social workers; in other words one social worker serves 14 000 clients (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2010). The scarcity of social workers has been a persistent challenge in all the 14 political regions of Namibia. It has been established that the Hardap Region with a total population of 68, 249 was served by only two social workers, a principal social worker (middle manager), a social worker (frontline manager) and additional two administrative workers. Three social workers were dispersed in Erongo Region with its 150 809 inhabitants (Conteh, 2008). It is argued that the critical lack of qualified social workers hinders the effective and efficient service delivery to the vulnerable groups in various communities. This serious scarcity of social workers has been felt in almost all fields of social work, for example it has been identified as the main hindrance in caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Namibia. A report by the Parliament Standing Committee on Gender and Family Affairs says the absence of social workers has a serious impact on identifying needy children and inspecting their living conditions (Hoffmann, 2013).

Furthermore, in order to comprehend the current status of social work in Namibia, an attempt is made to sketch a typology of social work providers in the country, the service recipients or users, service delivery, management and supervision of social workers, social work education and relevant associations.

2.4.5 Typology of social work providers

As mentioned already, there are numerous social welfare service providers including governmental, non-governmental, private sector and faith-based organisations. Figure 2.4 depicts the typology of social welfare service organisations in Namibia.



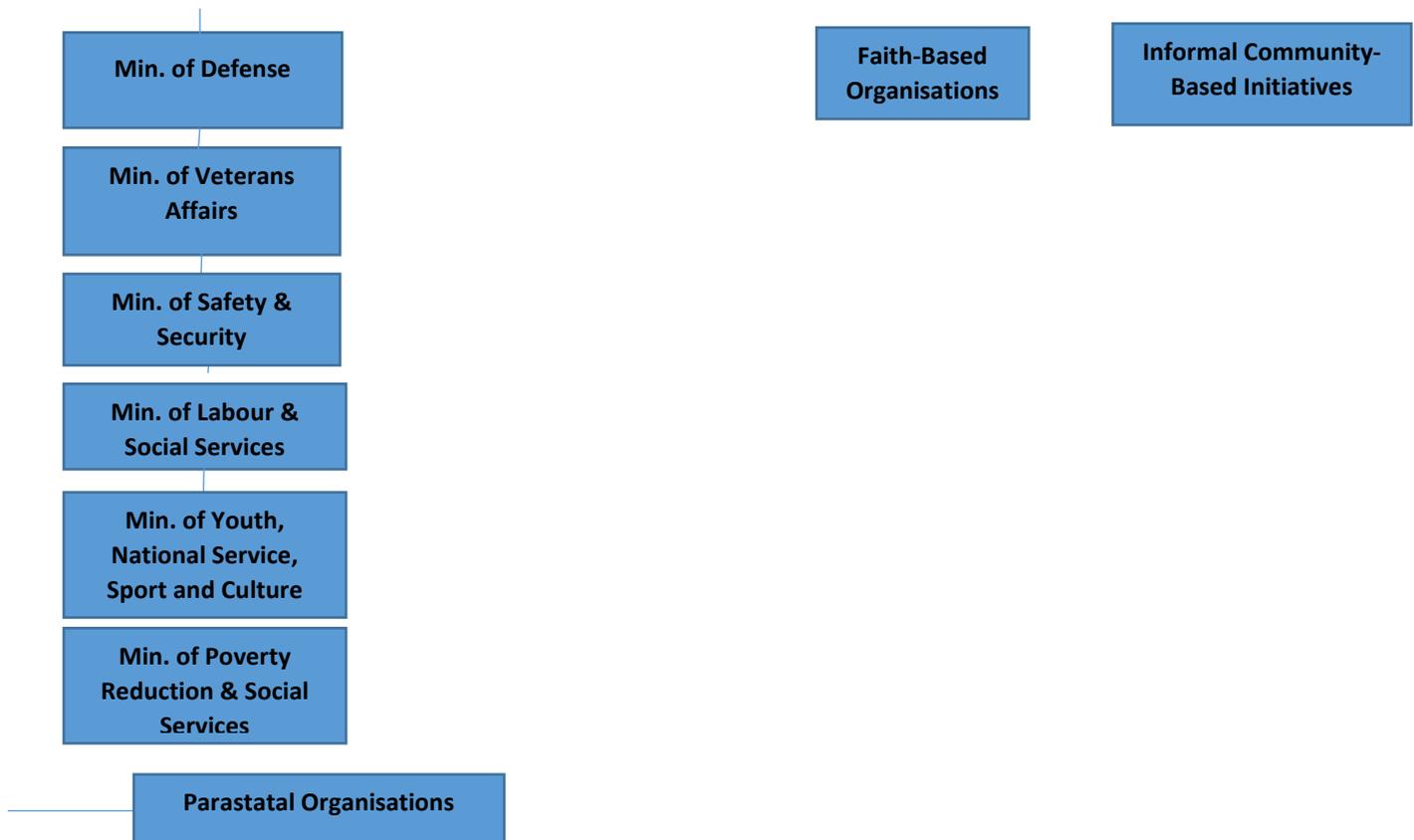


Figure 2.3: *Typology of social welfare organisations in Namibia*

In terms of the typology, social welfare service providers are generally shared in the public (government) and non-governmental sector. The government segment consists mainly of the eight ministries as discussed in section 2.4 in the current Chapter but it could be possible that there might be social workers employed in other entities of the public sector. There is no clear unified inter-sectoral coordination and networking among the various ministerial divisions and the impression is that each sector functions in isolation. Consequently, no ministry is taking the lead in putting a national welfare policy in place to guide social service delivery, as was also indicated earlier in the current Chapter. Furthermore, national standardised quality assurance systems are not in place and the financing of social service programmes depend on the budget allocated to the individual ministry and in many cases social service programmes are second priority. In other words, there is no uniform framework for financing social services and social workers' needs come second. For example, social work being a component in a "Health Ministry", the primary focus of this ministry is health care and not welfare services. This is evidenced by the following sentiments: *"Not that I do not enjoy offering solutions to the problems of dozens of couples who flock to my office every day, but because*

of a list of grievances, among them the feeling that my profession does not receive the respect and recognition it deserves from government. We feel we are the stepchild compared to nurses and doctors,” a social worker in the local newspaper, The Namibian once remarked (Tjihenuna, 2015). The feeling of social workers being neglected was observed by Kaseke (1995:6) when he states that “Developmental Social Welfare Services operate as a Directorate under the Ministry of Health, it is the Health section, which dominates, and a great portion of the budget is allocated to health. Social workers are cousins of the medical staff”.

The crumbling of social service leads to misunderstandings regarding the roles and responsibilities of social workers in the various ministries, which also lead to service users being sent from one office to another. This state of affairs remains a concern still after more than 20 years when Kaseke (1995:19) recommended that the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services needs to develop a national policy on social services so that social workers can operate within clearly defined parameters. The afore-mentioned author further argues that such a policy will serve as a guiding document for developing a framework for financing social services, collaboration with other government departments, developing quality assurance systems and ensuring proper standardised monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. However, the development of such policy is still in the infancy stage.

Besides these ministries, there are also parastatal organisations that although private, are subsidised by the government and they too render social services. This includes organisations such as Telecom Namibia, University of Namibia, Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) and Nampower (national power utility company of Namibia). The social workers in these parastatal organisations are responsible for employee assistance programmes (EAP) as their clientele are the staff members.

The non-governmental sector can be divided between profitable and non-profitable, with the former hosting social workers in private practice. Although the number of social workers in private practice could not officially be confirmed, private social work practice is relatively a new concept in Namibia. However, these social workers are contributing essentially to social service delivery and offer highly specialised services ranging from play therapy, gerontology, substance and drug abuse as well as probation social work. The non-profitable sector can be demarcated as faith-based organisations and informal/community based initiatives. Faith-

based organisations are mostly church initiatives that render services to needy church members as well as community members. One good example is the Catholic Aids Action (CAA) Trust which resorts under the auspices of the Namibian Catholic Church. CAA has grown to be one of the largest organisations, responding to the plight of HIV and AIDS nationwide. Another example is Church Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) Namibia, a network of faith-based and community-based projects providing services to orphans and other vulnerable children.

Namibia has one of the world's highest HIV prevalence rates with a national adult population prevalence of 14% and as high as 23.7% in one of the regions (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2015). Consequently, Namibia has seen the rise of many informal community based initiatives trying to provide social services to especially children and families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. These are initiatives by individual community members who build shelters, day care centres and or soup kitchens. The Helping Hand Welfare Organisation for example, provides support services for victims of gender-based violence and abuse, the sick, the needy, and anyone in need of a helping hand. In addition, the organisation provides counselling at its day-care centre for abused, neglected or needy children.

All the organisations that provide social services, no matter in which category they fall, have to register with the Ministry of Health and Social Services and upon registration the organisations are subsidised by the government (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2017). The number of registered welfare organisations in the non-governmental sectors could however, not be confirmed.

2.5 SOCIAL WORK SERVICES RECIPIENTS

Every service provider, be it government or non-governmental, profitable or non-profitable, identify its own target groups as recipients of social work services according to its mandate. Generally, recipients of social welfare services are vulnerable and orphaned children (OVC), people in need, the youth in conflict with the law, families, senior citizens, people living with disability as well as people living with HIV and/or affected by AIDS. It goes without saying that social workers in all the various organisations cover a wide range of social services in trying to meet the psycho-social needs of service users. These include medical social work, mental

health, substance abuse, statutory work, gerontology, gender-based violence, correctional social work, aftercare and reconstruction services among many others and these services are provided through the social work methods of casework, group work, community work, research and management.

2.6 SUPERVISION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

To maintain quality service delivery, there are some statutory requirements that social workers need to adhere to. The Social Work and Psychology Act (Namibia, 2004a), the Health Professions Councils of Namibia (HPCN) and Namibia Social Workers' Code of Ethics (Namibia, 2008) command the supervision of social workers. The Social Work and Psychology Act (Namibia, 2004a) demands that a social worker may only be supervised on his/her work by another registered social worker. The same applies to student social workers and the Act further requires final year social work students to do their internship at welfare organisations that have social workers so that they can perform under the supervision of social workers. However, with the severe scarcity of social workers, the reality is that there are instances where social workers function without or with minimal supervision. In a study conducted among social workers in the Directorate of Development Social Welfare Services by Muinjangu (2007), it was discovered that the majority (71%) of the respondents were working without supervision, while only a few (29%) received supervision.

In some cases, social workers have to accept supervision from non-social workers, known as inter-disciplinary supervision. This state of affairs is unfavourable and has a negative bearing on social work practice.

2.7 SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

There has been an outcry for the training of more social workers and Namibia has only three universities, namely the University of Namibia (UNAM), Namibia University of Science Technology (NUST) as well as the International University of Management (IUM). The training of social workers is offered at the University of Namibia only. The Department of Social Work was established in 1983 and is housed in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Namibia and it is currently the only institution to offer social work training programmes in Namibia (Matthews, Muinjangu, Nashandi & Rukambe, 2015). The training

programme includes a four year Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), research programmes for the Master of Social Work and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.) in Social Work. The department produced its first doctoral graduate in 2016. The training does not occur in a vacuum but is regulated by the Health Professions Council of Namibia (HPCNA) as well as the Social Work and Psychology Act No. 6 of 2004 to make sure that students receive essential competencies to practice as social workers. The Namibia Qualifications Authority Act (Namibia, 1996) enacted the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) with objectives such as to set-up and administer a national qualifications framework, develop the occupational standards for any occupation, job, post, or position in any career structure and to accredit persons, institutions and organisations providing education and courses of instruction or training of meeting certain requirements (Namibia, 1996).

The Department of Social Work expects students to possess a number of essential competencies, values and standards of professional conduct in order to work with diverse populations and a range of issues within the profession. These competencies include physical, cognitive, emotional, and character requirements necessary to participate fully in all aspects of social work education and the practice of social work. For this reason, the programme conducts a screening of students upon application as well as an on-going review of students throughout the programme to assess students' ability to acquire and develop these essential skills, values, and standards as they initiate and progress through all aspects of the programme, including in the classroom, in their field placements, and in the professional practice. To ensure that students receive high quality and relevant education, and that the academic qualifications are widely recognized, the department develops its credits, exit levels and outcomes as well as assessment criteria in accordance with the requirements as set by the University's Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM).

The BA Social Work training programme has been praised for its strong practical component which complements the theoretical part. *"The training has two components, the theoretical class work combined with a very strong practical component. In fact the practice that the students are exposed to has been the strength of the department. Practical exposure starts from year 1 throughout the training and culminate in 108 days of internship at welfare organisations in the final year"* (Ananias, 2017). This gives students an opportunity to integrate theory and practice; in other words to put theory into practice.

The department relies heavily on stakeholders to ensure that the training prepares students to be competent social workers who will contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the National Development Plans (NDPs). To this effect, the department hosts consultative stakeholder meetings twice a year to tap from the expertise and input of stakeholders in relation to prevalent social issues in the country. Various government ministries, multinational organisations, private companies, parastatals, and non-governmental and faith-based organisations which employ social workers, subsequently are demonstrating support for this workforce through bursaries to students who study social work at UNAM.

At the 2011 National Conference on Education, the need for more social workers was reiterated by national leaders. Recent reports on gender-based violence and psycho-social support needs have reinforced the need to train more social workers. There has always been an outcry from service providers for the University to produce more social workers. According to Sirkka Ausiku (former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare), institutions of higher learning are not producing enough graduates in this field. *“This academic year (2006), the University of Namibia (UNAM) has 14 final-year social work students of which only four are Namibians. The ministry has only employed four UNAM graduate social workers. They are all Zambians. We are trying our best but for now we can only bring in those from other countries. The ministry is currently encouraging learners to consider pursuing a career in social work as the local market is desperately in need of social workers. It is a challenge for the ministry because there is no way we can achieve our goals in this area if we do not have social workers”* (Sibeene, 2006).

The Department of Social Work is working towards fulfilling the demand for training more social workers. According to John Haufiku, the University of Namibia Public Relations Officer, in 2016 the University produced 60 to 65 graduates in social work, most of them being Namibians (Tjihenuna, 2015). In confirmation to this, the enrolment of student social workers at UNAM has increased over the years from an average of 18 students per year in the early 2000s to as many as 60 students in 2009 (Ananias & Lightfoot, 2012).

The Social Work Department is a member of the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) as well as the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

2.8 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Social issues that social workers deal with are complex and keep on changing and hence this requires lifelong learning to update and develop the knowledge, skills and ethical attitudes that reinforce competent practice. Therefore, the Health Professions Councils of Namibia (HPCNA) (Namibia, 2014) has committed to a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) system to inspire excellence in health care provision and delivery. Since 2010 every social worker registered in Namibia is required to accumulate 30 Continuing Education Units or points per year of which at least 5 CEU points should be for ethics, human rights and medical law (the latter not applicable to social workers). The primary aim of this system is to make sure that social workers keep abreast with new knowledge in the field of social work and update their competences to uphold professional ethical standards.

2.9 PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATIONS

Within the context of Namibia's history of colonialism and apartheid that created detached welfare services for various ethnic groups in Namibia, a professional body for social workers never existed for many years. In 2008 the Namibian Social Workers Association (NASWA) was established and it started to create opportunities for professional cohesion and assisted social workers to develop some kind of professional identity. A study by Ananias and Lightfoot (2012) also confirms the role of the Association in promoting social development and cohesion among social workers in Namibia. Namibian social workers believe that national organisations can help contribute to the nation's social development and promote social cohesion by offering networking opportunities. These findings indicate that professional associations can play an important role not only in marketing social work and offering continuous professional development education, but also can help in promoting social development in Africa (Ananias & Lightfoot, 2012).

2.10 SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Although Namibia is classified as a rich upper middle income country and seems to be doing well in most areas, there are some serious concerns in the area of social work more than twenty eight years after independence. Moreover, the sole mandate of social service that was given to the Ministry of Health and Social Services was disrupted after various governmental institutions were created. The latter created confusion in role performance among social

workers. The DDSWS has started with the first draft of The Green Paper but the dream to have a national welfare policy to guide social service delivery in Namibia was cut short. Social work practice is still undergoing metamorphosis and there are no social policies to guide social service delivery (Chiwara, 2015). Consequently, there is no national standardised framework for delivering services and every welfare organisation opts for what best work for them. Therefore, there does not appear to be a social welfare workforce staffing strategy, plan and implementation mechanism that includes all the practitioners in the social welfare sector (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2012). In addition, there is a serious need for re-orientation of welfare services, not only towards the social development paradigm, but also concerning clear roles and responsibilities of the various welfare service providers. It seems like more attention is given to some health areas which are perceived as outside the scope of social workers. For example, managing HIV/AIDS is not only a health aspect but it involves psycho-social elements that need the attention of social workers too. Moreover, there is a clear agenda regarding the roles of various stakeholders in dealing with HIV/AIDS. The National Coordination Framework of HIV and AIDS Response in Namibia 2010/11-2015/16 is a good example of a multi-sectoral and decentralised coordination and management strategy (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2012). More than five years ago, a recommendation was made that the Social Development Policy should have accompanying coordination guidelines/framework similar to the National Coordination Framework of HIV and AIDS in terms of ensuring institutional coordination, programme planning and development coordination, the arrangement of technical committees and partnership committees (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2012). Despite this recommendation, implementation remains a challenge. The consolidation of social welfare services have been planned since 2008 and the restructuring is still not completed. This means that the duplication of social welfare services have not been addressed (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2012). As a result, the roles and functions of social workers within a developmental model, in the Namibian context, are yet undoubtedly demarcated.

The critical shortage of social workers is even complicated by other factors such as the lack of adequate office space, scarce funding to enable social workers to travel within the regions as well as the lack of computer and printing facilities and other office equipment. It was reported that a social worker in Swakopmund (a coastal town in Namibia) does not have an office space

and at times she is accommodated at the Women and Child Protection Unit (now known as the Child Protection and Gender Based Violence Investigation Unit) (Conteh, 2008). It goes without saying that uncondusive working conditions and the disintegration of social workers have a negative impact on service delivery. These factors pose serious challenges to the social work profession in general. Social workers are not content with their working environments, which do not only affect them but their clientele as well as illustrated by the following sentiments: *“The office arrangement has been the same since 2011 when social workers were forced to share space at the health inspectors' offices close to the Katutura State Hospital. Sharing of office space prevents clients from relating their problems in confidentiality, which is a violation of the profession's ethic to respect the clients' rights to confidentiality and privacy”* said the 26-year-old social worker (Tjihenuna, 2015:4).

“It is the fact that the profession is not recognised and the authorities do not understand our role, and as a result, we do not receive enough technical support,” said another social worker (Tjihenuna, 2015:4).

Furthermore, the limited number of social workers prevents them from doing the “real social work” as much of their time is taken up by case work and administrative duties, for example helping clients to apply for social grants. This also hinders their ability to meet the increasing demand for developmental social services and responding effectively to the challenges (Ministry of Health & Social Services, 2012). It can also be argued that social workers seem too few to adequately address Namibia's developmental challenges (Chiwara, 2015). Be that as it may, there are a limited number of social workers to deliver on the social welfare mandate. Consequently, social workers are often overwhelmed by heavy workloads that make their contributions appear somewhat insignificant, considering the demand for social welfare services (Chiwara & Lombard, 2017).

The impression is that the voices of social workers are not clearly heard, and despite being members of NASWA, they still have to achieve professional cohesion and identity that will give them strength and authority to address issues affecting their profession. In this regard, Ananias and Lightfoot (2012) remark that the Namibian Social Workers Association was re-established in 2008 after social workers felt that a professional organisation would be necessary to promote cohesion and to lobby for social workers to practice developmental

social work. But it looks like NASWA is far from meeting this goal as one social worker commented in another study that *“now is the time for NASWA starting to revive as it was almost dead”* (Chiwara & Lombard, 2017). The impression is that the political leadership does not comprehend what social work is. *“One of the grievances is the feeling that the social work profession does not receive the respect and recognition it deserves from government”* (Tjihenuna, 2015). The feeling of social workers being neglected was once observed by Kaseke (1995, as cited by Muinjangu, 2007) when he states that Developmental Social Welfare Services operate as a directorate under the Ministry of Health, it is the Health section, which dominates, and a great portion of the budget is allocated to health. *“The Directorate is completely overshadowed by the health component and although it is part of the Ministry, functionally it does not appear to be part of the Ministry. Social workers are cousins of the medical staff* (Kaseke, 1995: ii). Chiwara and Lombard (2017) confirm that social work is not yet highly recognised. The situation is not different from South Africa as Lombard (2008) observes that one of the main concerns in the social work profession is that the social work role is largely defined by government rather than the profession itself. The fear that such conditions could jeopardise the independence and professional credibility of the social work profession in the country, is not only applicable to South Africa, but this could relate to Namibian social workers too.

Nevertheless, the increase in the number of social work students as well as the first appointment of a social worker in the Office of the First Lady could be evidence that the profession is growing and gaining recognition among politicians. The social work profession is regulated by the Social Work and Psychology Act (2004) as a way of maintaining standards of social work practice in Namibia. Furthermore, signs that the profession is unshakable can be discerned in the statutory registration of social workers and social work students, code of ethics and the Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Similarly, social service delivery is complemented by well-established Non-Governmental and Faith-Based Organisations.

2.11 CONCLUSION

The Namibian context and concepts of social work, as explained in this chapter, show that there are attempts to transform social work from a curative/clinical to a developmental approach. However, the realities demonstrate that social workers still have a long way to go in order to fully incorporate this paradigm. The attempt to develop a social developmental

policy to influence social welfare services delivery has been negatively affected by political and institutional challenges. As a result the whole process has totally come to halt. There is an urgent need for the Namibian Social Workers Association to be more vocal in strengthening the profession to have its rightful position in the Namibian society. The nature and experience of social work in Namibia prompted the need for this study to explore some essential management tasks of social workers as well as how the environment in which social workers operate impact on the execution of these tasks. The study findings may help to strengthen the profession and uplift the management of the profession in total.

This chapter expounded social work in a Namibian context and the next chapter will explore the applicability of the ecological systems perspective in management in social work.

CHAPTER 3

AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL WORK MANAGEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of this study was to describe the ecological systems perspective and its applicability to management in social work. The ecological systems perspective provides a framework for understanding the connections of daily essential management tasks executed by social workers at different levels and the environment in which they operate. In other words, there is a mutual interaction between social workers and the environment which influence the execution of their essential management tasks. Scileppi, Teed and Torres (2000) emphasise the evolving interaction between a person and the environment. This perspective would further develop a framework for understanding the connections of frontline and middle-line social work managers and other personnel in the Directorate as well as the nature of these networks and their impact on the execution of essential management tasks.

Most social workers are employed in public organisations except the few who have started their own private practice, and these organisations operate in environments that influence them negatively or positively. In this regard, Furman and Gibelman (2013) insist that since its very inception, social work has been considered an organisationally based profession, with the majority of its workforce employed within formal organisations. Whether in non-profit, for-profit, or governmental agencies, the practical realities of human service organizations

are a central element of professional social work. In addition, Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) posit that social or human service management takes place both within the non-profit or private sector and the public or governmental sector. Organisations differ in context depending the situation and/or environment in which they function. An organisation is any group of people working together to achieve a common goal (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2012). Lazenby (2016) defines an organisation as an arrangement of people in a specific structure to accomplish some specific purpose and that management is applicable to all kinds of organisations.

The argument is that what happens in an organisation has bearing on social work practice, especially in organisations where welfare services are not the primary focus of the organisation. In the case of Namibia, the social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services are hosted in the Ministry of Health and Social Services whose primary focus is to provide health services. In line with the ecological systems perspective, the previous chapter highlighted the working environment of social workers in the Directorate and how that affects their operation. The nature and complexity of their work and tasks are different from the organisational culture of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Davis, Nutley and Mannion (2009) define organisational culture as a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which governs how people behave in organisations. These shared values have a strong influence on the people in the organisation and dictate how they dress, act, and perform their jobs. It could also be seen as the sum total of the organisation's success in aligning its mission, relationships, capacity, policies, and outcomes. It defines the environment in which employees work. It could be argued that the organisational culture of the Ministry of Health and Social Services in general is not in line with that of the Directorate which is a part of the system (the Ministry). From an ecological systems perspective, the environment of the Ministry could have an influence on how social workers execute their essential management tasks. The conclusion is that Lawler and Bilson (2010) are right when they state that these differences demonstrate that social work operates in an environment that is fraught with uncertainty; it is particularly turbulent and issues of inequality and power are at the core of most of its business.

On a further note Hayes (1993) states that human behaviour often is directly influenced by the type of environment people live in and how it is organised. Hence, social workers operate in an environment that needs social change; they need to understand that there is a need to move from providing service to the clientele to a full understanding of how the office, colleagues, and politics influence the service delivery of social services (Hayes, 1993).

This chapter will describe various theories of management, the development of the ecological perspective, its background, as well as theoretical principles and concepts. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the applicability of the ecological perspective to management in social work. It is further important to touch on the systems theory, as a theory that gave light to the development of the ecological perspective. Nevertheless before that, a brief glimpse on management in social work will be apt.

3.2 DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

This section presents a brief introduction of management in social work because the definition thereof will be discussed extensively later in Chapter 4. The reason for discussing it here is to foreground social work in management context across various theories of management that will be elaborated on throughout this chapter. Importantly, the focus will be on the ecological systems perspective, which is the departure point of this study. This is to make sure that management in social work will not get missing in the proposition.

Within the context of social work, the term management consists of certain functions performed by social workers at all managerial levels in order to accomplish organisational goals. In this regard Lewis, Packard and Lewis (2012) define management as a set of systems and processes designed to help employees accomplish organisational and individual goals. Management in social work from an ecological systems perspective can be conceptualised as various ways of shaping and exerting an influence over the work environment. Social workers in the role of a manager attempt to build and maintain an optimal internal work environment conducive to the efficient delivery of effective services to clients (Furman & Gibelman, 2013). It follows that the work environment can either be highly supportive to service delivery or destructive, or in the worst case scenario, sabotaging service delivery. Hence, social workers engage in management practices in order to remove or minimize the effects of those conditions that might make service delivery difficult. Social workers are involved in management because they want to deliver better services to clients.

Management in social work differs totally from business management, because in business the focus is to make monetary profit. In social work practice, surplus is not in terms of money but “profit” is determined in terms of the benefits or changes any intervention program brings in the lives of the cliental (Weinbach, 2013). For instance, the cost of a well-managed, short-term family prevention program is usually less than the cost of long-term foster-care for children at risk abuse and/or neglect. In other words, if social workers manage a family program that prevent a situation where children have to be put in foster care, this will help in reducing financial burden on governments for foster care.

Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) also emphasise that social service organisations’ primary goal is not to produce goods to sell for profit, but to provide services to vulnerable individuals, groups, families and communities. Hence, management in social work is primarily a proactive activity coordinating work actions so that they are completed efficiently and effectively with and through other people.

As alluded to at the beginning of this section, management in social work will be expanded in Chapter 4 and – in the next section – various theories of management will be discussed.

3.3 THE NEED FOR A THEORY IN MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

A perspective is a viewpoint based on an ideology or theory. Hence, it is significant to explain what theory is and the need for a theory.

According to Payne (1997) as cited by Hughes and Wearing (2017), theory is a social construction, and for social workers it is defined by what they do in the reflexive awareness that develops from interactions with clients, agencies and the social context. In other words, theory provides a conceptual framework, guides action and help people to give meaning to their lives. As Worden (2013) states, theory enriches our sense of how people conduct and find meaning in their daily lives. Hence, theory is needed to enhance the understanding of the world people live in by a systematic process of inquiry and validation of knowledge. Similarly, Dale, Smith, Norlin and Chess (2006) define theory as a set of interrelated concepts, definitions and statements about relationships that can be tested empirically.

Therefore, the need for theory is to:

- Explain why something is the way it is;

- Explain social relationships;
- Predict likely outcomes.

It is important for social work managers to understand how their interactions with others in their social context influence the execution of their essential management tasks; and how the different systems block or help management operations.

3.4 THEORIES OF MANAGEMENT

There are various theories of management that are applicable to human service organisations and these theories help in the interpretation and understanding of the rapidly changing nature of today's organisational environments. There are many theories of management but only some will be discussed here within the context of social work and not in general.

3.4.1 Bureaucratic management theory

Max Weber is considered as one of the first major thinkers to formulate the concept of an ideal bureaucracy in an organisation according to Gerth and Mills (1958) as cited by Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014). Bureaucracy is also referred to as classical management theory and it has two essential elements:

- (i) It entails structuring in an organisation into a hierarchy;
- (ii) The organisation and its members are governed by clearly defined rational-legal decision-making rules.

Normally Bureaucratic organisations have among others, some of the following characteristics according to Weinbach and Taylor (2015:59):

- A vertical organisational hierarchy. The person on top is the boss; power decreases at each lower level of the hierarchy. Everyone's behaviour is monitored by somebody else;
- Well-defined guidelines that limit functions while rules, policies and procedures are in place and enforced;
- Promotion and other rewards are based on demonstrated technical competence. This implies that *"do your job well and you will be rewarded"*; and
- Formal and rigid communication channels. There is strict adherence to the chain of command in communication and in other activities.

Bureaucracy would not be the ideal theory in human service organisations for social workers and other health care providers. In dealing and managing complex human issues, social workers are expected to be very creative and innovative in responding to clients' needs and problems. Gortner, Mahler and Nicholson (1997) explain that bureaucracy can destroy spontaneity and critical thinking, especially where organisations have to respond to the ever changing needs of service users and a turbulent environment, like in the case of social workers.

3.4.2 Scientific management

This is considered as the first management theory and is popularly referred to as the Frederick Taylor's scientific management because Fredrick Winslow Taylor is the name associated with scientific management. This approach uses scientific methods to define the "one best way" for a job to be done. For Taylor, the task of management is to determine the best way for workers to do a job (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014:25). The scientific management theory advocates for the concept of breaking a complex task into a number of sub-tasks and optimizing the performance of the subtasks. However, in social work practice, there could never be "one best way" of solving human problems. Human problems are too complex and multi-dimensional to be solved by one best way (Egan, 2014). Consequently, social workers are encouraged to adopt a divergent approach to problem solving rather than a convergent one; meaning that they appreciate that there are always many different ways to deal with social issues.

3.4.3 The human relations approach

Elton Mayo is most probably the best known theorist of the human relations school of management. The human relations theory of management explains that people's behavior in organisations is motivated and influenced by many other factors rather than money only. Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) for example, are of the opinion that group pressure and not management demands, has the strongest influence on workers' productivity. Correspondingly, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) elaborate that social issues such as group affiliation, recognition, and management consideration as well as the content of the job itself can influence worker productivity. According to this school of thought, the workers' needs are considered and managers who appreciate this theory try to understand the behaviour of workers in formal organisations. It can therefore be argued that the human relations school

of thought can help managers understand their sub-ordinates. The contributions of human relations management theorists are very consistent with social work knowledge base and with its professional values. In fact, many schools of social work rely heavily on content taken from human relations research in discussing the influences of the organisation on individual behavior (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) are in agreement that a human relations approach may add value to the way in which managers in social welfare organisations view their management tasks and functions.

3.4.4 The human resources approach

As far as human resources approach is concerned, workers' motivation for work is influenced by factors such as their desire to grow, to be independent, and to participate in decision-making process. A human resources-based organisation may provide workers with more opportunities for growth, change and creativity. For the workers to enhance their inherent capabilities, the working environment should be favourable. The managers should therefore create structures that would enable workers to flourish (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014: 29). Within the Namibian context, this approach will not be realised in near future given the situation of social workers as reflected in chapter two.

3.4.5 The empowerment approach

From this approach, service users are no longer seen as marginalised and disempowered groups but as participative stakeholders. With reference to this, O'Connor and Netting (2009) state that the empowerment approach requires human service organisations to consciously think about how clients or consumers will be involved in every aspect of organisational functioning. Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) echo the same sentiments and remark that the empowerment approach implies that appropriate organisational structures and policies are needed to promote more participation in decision-making. In order to make this possible, Hardina, Middleton, Montana and Simpson (2007) suggest that the following elements should be in place:

- Formal structures for the participation of service users in organisational decision-making;
- Partnership with service users, staff and the organisation's board members as equal participants;

- Service user involvement in service delivery;
- Bridging of cultural, ethnic, gender and other demographic barriers to ensure effective service delivery;
- Ideological commitment of top managers to the empowerment of both staff and service users;
- Psychological empowerment and motivation of workers;
- Team building and collaboration among staff members;
- Encouragement of staff to advocate for improvements in services and policies;

Maintenance of a consistent funding base to produce effective outcomes;

- Involvement of services users, stakeholders, and staff members in on-going evaluation of services and programs renewal;
- Increasing political power of the organisation as well as the political influence of service users;
- Acknowledgement of the limitations of participatory management; and
- Proactive measures to balance inclusion in decision-making with organisational maintenance.

The central purpose of the empowerment approach is the enhancement of the power of staff members and of the service users.

The above are some of the management theories and in the next session, the ecological perspective which is the theoretical point of departure for this study, will be discussed.

3.5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

Although the ecological systems perspective is the frame of reference for this study, it is impossible to discuss the ecological systems perspective and not mention the systems theory. This is because the systems theory gave an impetus to the development of the ecological systems perspective. Hence, a brief discussion of the systems theory as the fore-runner of the ecological systems perspective will follow. The development of the ecological perspective, its principles and concepts, is discussed hereafter. Later in the chapter the applicability of the ecological systems perspective in management in social work is also discussed.

3.5.1 The systems theory as the fore-runner of the ecological systems perspective

This section will describe the systems theory, its basic concepts, and principles and how it relates to management in social work.

3.5.1.1 Description of the systems theory

According to Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014), Von Bertalanffy (1971) is known as one of the founders of the general systems theory (GST) and most of the theories used by social workers today derived from general systems theory (Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2016). Hence, social work managers ought to be familiar with systems theory and this should influence the execution of their daily essential management tasks. This is in accordance with Hare (2004) that social workers are consequently not unfamiliar with systems theories, as the way social work is defining itself is based inter alia on the systems theory, and that the concepts underlying the systems theory should thus be part of the vocabulary of managers in social service organisations.

A system is a group of separate but interrelated units/elements/parts that form an identifiable whole. The parts in the system interact with one another and these parts are depending on each other to create the larger whole. Various parts (sub-systems) of the system affect and are affected by one another, thus change in one part or sub-system of the whole causes change in all parts/sub-systems of the whole (Oak, 2009; Worden, 2003). Colby and Dziegielewski (2004) also affirm the definition that a system consists of parts that interact so that a change in one part can affect all others and the relations among them.

From the perspective of the systems theory, the functioning of different groupings of the social context are seen as systems in which the functioning of the whole depends on the interaction between the different parts (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). If the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services is used as an example of a system, then the social workers at all levels will be sub-systems while the Ministry of Health and Social Services as a whole is part of the broader Namibian community, which is the upper system. This means that social workers operate within a network of circular feedback loops. In other words, the functioning/mal-functioning of one sub-system in the Directorate or in the Ministry affects other sub-systems in the Directorate/Ministry, which in turn affect the system.



Figure 3.1: *The interrelatedness of various parts of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS)*

Figure 3.1 above demonstrates the observation of Van Rensburg (2007) that a systems theory requires insight in the way an organisation's various subsystems influence one another as well as insight in the way they are influenced by bigger systems of which they are a part. For example, research findings provided insight on how the Ministry being the broader system influences the execution of management tasks by social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (a sub-system). The Directorate in itself has various parts or departments which are interrelated and influence one another in the execution of management tasks.

South African scholars also add their voice to the fact that there is a relationship between organisations and their external environments. Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) confirm that in terms of the systems theory, management of organisations should be viewed as an action with interrelated systems, where actions in one system influence the other systems. These two authors adopt a holistic approach to management in social work. The argument is that managers should understand their organisation in its totality and that their actions have influence on the various systems in an organisation. According to them, this holistic approach

is important in maintaining a balance between the different systems of an organisation. Qalenge (2015) is in support of this stating that the systemic view indicates that all subsystems within the larger system are in continuous interaction with one another to create a state of equilibrium. This state of equilibrium is not only within the organisation and its various parts, but it is also important for the organisations to maintain balance with its environment as well. One of the fundamentals of management is that the manager utilises inputs from the environment in performing his or her management tasks transforming those inputs into outputs to the environment as indicated in figure 3.2 below.

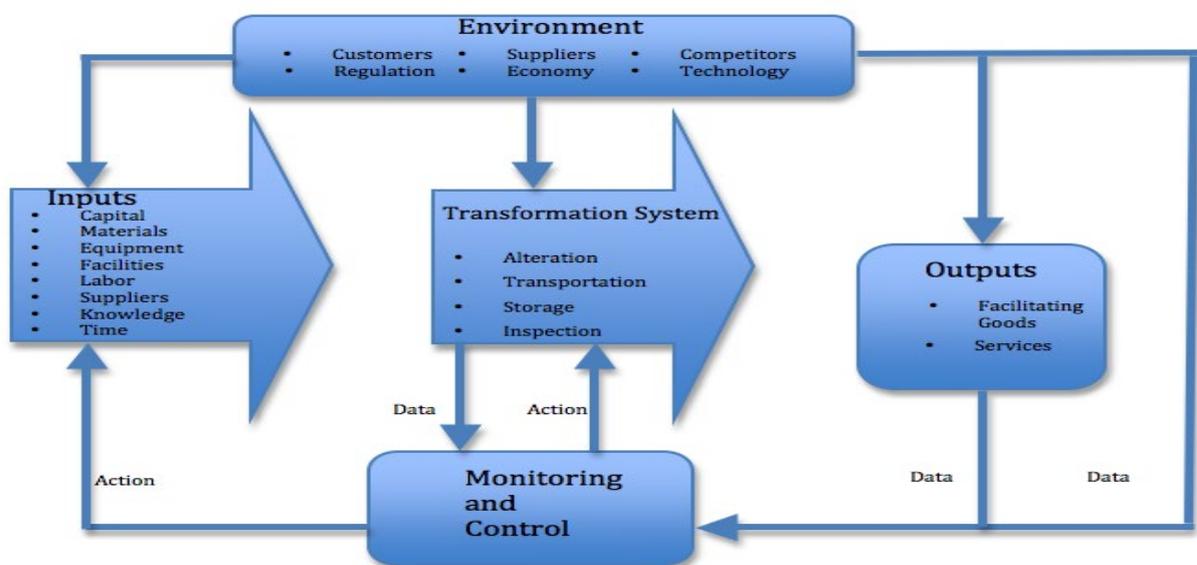


Figure 3.2: Illustrating inputs from the environment transformed into outputs to the environment through the execution of management tasks

Source: Adapted from Nikols (2016)

Chapter 2 painted the working environment of the social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services, as well as in Namibia; the lack of input from the environment and the influence it has on the output to the environment. In other words, the negative impacts on services to clients. *“I did not study for four years to sit in an office where I do not have a computer to work from or my own work station,” says the 26-year-old social worker. I do not see why anyone would be attracted to this job (social work) when you are*

forced to work in an environment that does not allow you to do your work properly” (Tjihenuna, 2015).

From the foregoing quote, the network of circular feedback loops, interrelationship between organisations and its environment is highlighted. If the Ministry of Health and Social Services (being the larger part) as an environment provides its parts, which are social workers, with the necessary facilities and resources, the social workers will be in a much better position to render satisfactory services to their clientele. Moreover, looking at the broader environment, the various service providers (as explained in the previous chapter) work as competitors instead of trying to work together. This is aggravated by an absence of policy on developmental social welfare services and the lack of better coordination of programs among service providers. Participants in a study by Chiwara and Lombard (2017) point to poor collaboration in social welfare services, as social welfare organisations often work in silos, resulting in duplication of services and a failure to adequately respond to social welfare needs.

3.5.1.2 Basic concepts of the systems theory

Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) mention two basic concepts of the systems theory namely;

3.5.1.2.1 A system can be open or closed: an open system has a two-way interaction with the environment, while a closed system does not interact with the environment. In other words, an open system exchanges information, energy, or material with its environment. A closed system receives no input from its environment and entropy or decay sets in. The conclusion is that most, if not all, human services organisations could be seen as open systems since there is feedback loops not only from supervisors to supervisees and vice versa but there is also constant feedback from the service users in terms of evaluation. Most theorists treat an organization as an open system (Stichweh, 2011).

3.5.1.2.2 A system has a preferred state in order to maintain a stable, steady state or homeostasis and reacts to change by making adaptations. The capability of systems to respond to changes varies on a continuum between adaptation and non-adaptation.

Besides the two above-stated concepts, Worden (2013) list the following as basic concepts of the systems theory:

- *Boundaries* which refers to the barriers that define a system and distinguish it from other systems in the environment. Like in the case of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, there are clear boundaries regarding the social services to their clientele;
- *Homeostasis* has got to do with the tendency of a system to resist change and maintain status quo. Homeostasis is a term used to describe a system that is “in constant interchange with its environment” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984);
- *Adaptation*: The tendency of a system to make the changes needed to protect itself and grow to accomplish its goal; and
- *Reciprocal Transactions*: Circular interactions that systems engage in such that they influence one another.

3.5.1.3 The principles of the systems theory

Walsch (2006) mention the following principles of the systems theory:

3.5.1.3.1 The principle of connectedness which refers to the principle that all parts of a system are interconnected. Change in one part of the system will influence the functioning of all parts.

3.5.1.3.2 The principle of wholeness which means that any phenomenon can only be understood by viewing the entire system.

3.5.1.3.3 The principle of feedback which refers to the fact that the behaviour of a system affects its external environment and the environment in return, affects the system.

3.5.1.4 The systems theory and management

In terms of management, systems include people who are the staff in an organisation, organisational structures and processes that work together and influence each other in order to ensure the operation of such an organisation. “According to the systems theory, management of organisations should be viewed as an action with interrelated systems, where actions in one system influence the other system” (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014: 27). The argument is that the systems theory does not only focus on how different units within the

organisation affect the organisation but it is also concerned about the broader environment within which the organisation exists. For example, if there are other organisations that produce the same products as organisation A, there would be a competition to manage the organisation in such a way that it will not lose its customers to other organisations. In such case managers would be expected to react on what is happening within and around its organisation in order to adapt and adjust to changes that are occurring in its internal and/or external environment. Hence, the adaptation and adjustment to internal as well as external environment, is imperative for managers to implement and measure quality. In other words this is good for quality assurance. MacKian and Simons (2013: 469) concur with this statement when they state that “systems thinking is therefore imperative for managers seeking to deliver quality care”. In this regard, Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014) are of the opinion that the power of the systems theory lies in enabling managers in social service organisations to see themselves as part of a greater network, in order to render the best possible services to the service user. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) view the strength of the systems theory in permitting managers in a social service organisation to consider themselves part of a greater network, in order to render the best possible services to the service user, which should be the ultimate goal of management and supervision. Hafford-Letchfield (2009) confirms that each organisation is a complete system in itself, comprising sub-systems which interact with each other and the external environment

To conclude, the systems theory is concerned with the interrelatedness of systems and how interventions in one part may affect the whole. Complex living systems can be organised in hierarchical levels. On each of these levels, the systems consist of subsystems, and form part of a suprasystem. These numerous levels of the system are related and interact with one another, and there is interaction between the levels so that changes in them affect the system as a whole.

3.5.2 The ecological systems perspective

This perspective forms the theoretical basis of this study and hence, the next discussion focusses on the ecological systems perspective.

3.5.2.1 Background

The ecological systems perspective derives from the general systems theory and focus on the intersection of systems and the larger environmental context. Tomera (2001) contends that the term *ecology* comes from the Greek word *oikos* which means a place to live. According to her, ecology is the branch of science that looks at organisms in their environment. The ecological framework rests on the life model which views people and their environments as reacting to and changing in response to each other (Germain & Gitterman, 1980). This view provides a framework to understand the nature of interactions and transactions between people and their surroundings. The emphasis is on what happens between people and their surroundings. For example, as a result of no or little technical support, the operation of social workers is out of balance and the organisational environment is not supportive or responsive to their organisational needs. From an ecological frame of mind, the emphasis would be on examining the fit or lack of fit between staff (social workers) and their working environment. Therefore, a manager who adopts an ecological systems perspective would try to help his/her staff to adapt to the situation and change the environment to be more supportive. Adherence to the full ecological systems perspective includes addressing both the fit of the client to the environment, and the extent of support from the environment (Segal & Steiner, 2012). In case of management in social work, the ecological systems perspective would thus address the fit of social workers to the organisational environment as well as the extent of support from the organisation.

The ecological systems perspective provides the opportunity to see social workers and their environment (the Directorate) as a unit within their unique cultural and historic context (the Ministry). Hence, from this perspective, this study develops an understanding of the interaction between social workers and their organisational environment and how this shape and influence the execution of their essential management tasks. Germain and Gitterman (1996) assert that the ecological systems perspective concentrates on the interaction between the person and the environment and how they shape and influence one another over time. This is supported by Payne (2005) that the ecological systems perspective gives further insight into how the person and environment interact with each other. The ecological systems perspective offers a means to examine the effects of the environment on social organisation and social change, hence, setting a framework for examining the effects of the

Directorate and/or the Ministry on the execution of essential management tasks by social workers at various levels of management.

The ecological systems perspective suggests that there is a relationship between a person and his/her social environment, characterised by needs and resources. Johnson and Yanca (2004) maintain that if those needs are met and there is a fit between a person and his/her environment, then a state of congruence exists. When the environment is not in a position to provide resources, the needs of people remain unmet, leading to a state of incongruity. In other words, this forms a basis for a state of improper fit between a person and the environment. In this regard, one of the two concepts of the ecological systems perspective mentioned by Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2013) which is especially relevant to social workers, and especially to this study, is *habitat*. According to these authors, habitat refers to the places organisms live, and in the case of humans, consists of the physical and social settings within a particular cultural context. When habitats are rich in the resources required for growth and development, people tend to thrive. When habitats are deficient in vital resources, physical, social and emotional development and ongoing functioning may be adversely affected (Hepworth et al. 2013:15).

Since the ecological systems perspective forms the theoretical point of departure for this study, the sketch below, Figure 3.3, outlines the various ecological systems that this study considered in exploring and describing the execution of essential management tasks by social workers at different levels of management.

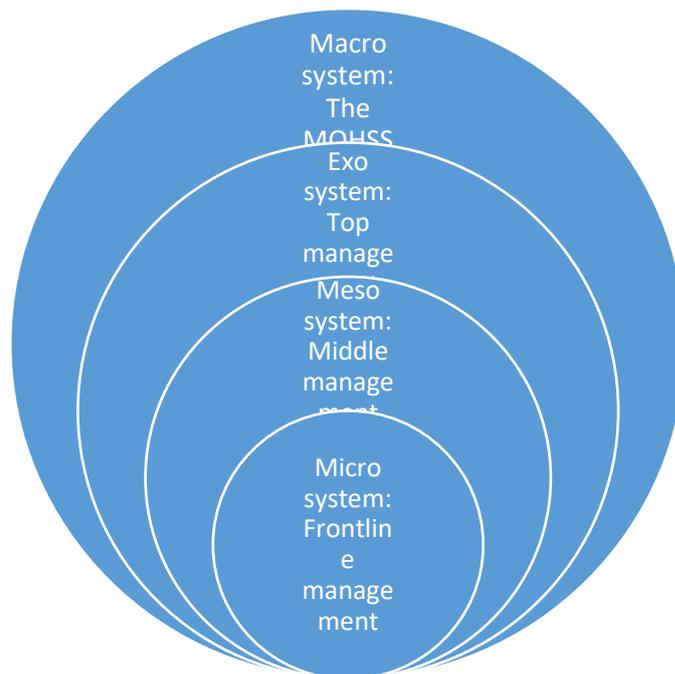


Figure 3.3: *Ecological systems influencing the execution of essential management tasks by social workers at three levels of management*

Source: *Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979)*

As Hepworth et al. (2013) repeat, the ecological systems perspective was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner and he divided the environment into five different levels or systems. However, the focus of this study was on the first four systems only as expounded below.

Micro-system

This is the smallest and most direct system that the person experiences and it includes objects to which the person responds or people with whom the person interacts on a face-to-face basis. In this case, the micro-system represents social workers who interact on a daily basis with their clientele. What is also important here, are the other persons in the setting, the nature of these links, and their direct or indirect influence on the development of the person. In relation to this study, the relationships within the microsystem include interactions of social workers with their supervisors, fellow social workers, and other staff members in the Ministry, and extra-mural affiliates which could be social workers in other welfare organisations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Meso-system

Meso-system refers to the set of links between microsystems representing the social workers at the middle (meso) level of management and it is more concerned with relationships among the systems in an environment. The middle level manager in the Directorate is the supervisor who is the middle person between top management and frontline social workers. The stronger and more diverse the links between the microsystems, the greater positive influence the mesosystem has on individuals (Nash, Munford & O' Donoghue, 2005). For example, if top- and middle managers share the same concerns with frontline social workers, it is highly likely that frontline social workers will be content with their work but that seems not to be the case as demonstrated in the remarks below made by frontline social workers:

“Everything in this Ministry is about health, their minds and thoughts are health because all the managers are either medical doctors or nurses. We are not even sure how long we will be accommodated in these offices. As we understand the Ministry is failing to pay its rent to Red Cross” (Mwafongwe, 2017).

“The middle and top management do not really deal with the situation of social workers, they seem not to really care about us, they have their nice well equipped offices at the Head Office of the Ministry” (Musuu, 2017).

Hence, when needs, and values do not relate, social workers may become unhappy, hopeless and this will impact negatively on service delivery.

Macro-system

The macro-system is the most inclusive broader system and it includes large-scale societal factors such as culture, racism, discrimination, and economic and political conditions. It can be defined further as the wider system of ideology and organisation of social institutions common to a specific social class, ethnic group or culture. The macro-system includes gender roles, social class, cultural values, as well as the attitudes and values of people and policies that govern behavior (Scileppi *et al.*, 2000: 47; Visser, 2007: 25). Any changes in these processes influence people in general. The delivery of social welfare services is affected by a variety of factors in the macro system as expanded in Chapter 2 such as political decisions on

creating more governmental institutions rendering welfare services causing the dispersion of mandate; lack of clear structure for social work practice; and limited access to office facilities and equipment.

The macro-system influences policy development, administration of entitlement programs, and culture. For the sake of this study, the macro-system represents the Government of the Republic of Namibia where decisions are taken that impact on social work practice in general and the social service delivery in particular. The macro system refers to the policy makers as well, and thus also includes the Directorate Head Office which affects the operation of social workers at district, regional and national levels.

3.5.2.2 Assumptions of the ecological systems perspective

An assumption is an expectation, a belief or hypothesis of something that is accepted as true or certain to happen, without proof. Hence, there are certain aspects believed to be proper regarding the ecological systems perspective. Authors such as Bronfenbrenner (1979), Carlson (1997), Chung and Pardeck (1997), Laird (2001), Mackenzie (2006) and Mojab (2007) summarised the following assumptions of the ecological perspective:

The person-in-environment concept is useful to understand the close interrelatedness people and the environments they stay and function in. This has got to do with the person-environment fit, which could be the favourable or unfavourable fit between the needs, capacities, behaviour styles and goals of people and the characteristics of the environment (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). If the fit between humans and their environment is positive, both flourish, while poor fit between humans and their environment cause damage and impairment to both (Francisco-La Grange, 1985). In other words, humans needs, capacities, rights, aspirations, are not protected by the environment and consequently personal development and functioning are negatively affected.

Several of these environments can be viewed as systems where there is a dynamic interaction among them (MacKenzie, 2006). In relation to management, the organisation (Ministry of Health and Social Services, in this case) is viewed as the primary environment and in terms

of this assumption, it is important to explore how supportive or unsupportive the Ministry is towards social workers in the execution of their essential management tasks.

Another assumption is that environments can either offer or prevent opportunities, solutions to problems and the development of human potential. Environments can either create circumstances that offer people opportunities, or circumstances where people are disadvantaged in using opportunities. This assumption is clearly demonstrated by this remark: *"I'm hunting for another job because there is no growth in the profession. The first year we are put on probation and in order to be promoted to principal social worker we have to wait for three years and promotion is not guaranteed as we are competing with many others"* (Tjihenuna, 2015). This statement testifies that the environment does not offer opportunities for personal as well as professional growth for social workers.

In the meeting of needs, problem solving, growth and development of people, environments can either be enhancing or restrictive. This assumption suggests that an attractive environment will avail the necessary resources to social workers contributing positively to their managerial tasks, while a restrictive environment will halt social workers from using resources needed to perform their essential management tasks.

The next assumption is that human beings can use, choose, protest to, redefine, change and be creative with the characteristics of their environments, because they are not passive towards their environments. This implies that social workers cannot remain passive but can influence their environment. Chapter 2 dealt with the challenges faced by social workers but despite those challenges social workers in Namibia remain positive that they can redefine, change and be creative with their environment. *"We social workers we need to make use of the platforms available like the media and ... stand up together and maybe have a workshop where there are social workers only ... we need to write a petition to parliament... to gather as a united front and be more vocal"* (Chiwara & Lombard, 2017). Contributions drawn from Francisco-La Grange (1985) and MacKenzie (2006) suggest that how human beings handle the characteristics of their environments depends on their adaptation in their environments.

The second last assumption is an awareness of space that enables a person to be sensitive of realities. This assumption involves an element of time including the past-present-future-

continuum of each person relating to experiences (past), actuality (present) and aspirations (future).

The last assumption is that of maladaptation. Maladaptation could be seen as a trait that has become more harmful than helpful and it is caused by unfavourable environments, dysfunctional interactions and transactions in the environment, stressful life changes and problematic inter and intra personal processes. The limited number of social workers, as expounded in Chapter 2, is a trait that has become more harmful than helpful. Exacerbated by the stress of operating in the absence of a developmental policy combined with poor collaboration and coordination in social welfare delivery, these might just enhance maladaptation of social workers. The following findings by Chiwara and Lombard (2017:567-568) substantiate maladaptation of social workers in Namibia:

"I'm the only social worker here but ... I really feel that we have to be ... even 10 of us to divide the workload. [Consequently] ... one ends up not giving sufficient support or help to the clients, although you are trying."

"... social workers are scattered in different ministries so we end up duplicating series."

It goes without saying that the above statements paint a picture of professional isolation, hostile working conditions and a lack of interrelation among social workers, pointing to the assumption of maladaptation. In support of this, Ananias and Lightfoot (2012), report that social workers in Namibia traditionally had little social cohesion.

The abovementioned assumptions show that the emphasis of the ecological systems perspective is on the connections between people and their environments where environments can either be accommodating or limiting.

3.5.2.3 Goals of the ecological systems perspective

Francisco-La Grange, (1985) and Laird, (2001) list the following goals of the ecological systems perspective:

3.5.2.3.1 To enhance interaction and transaction between people and their environments so that people learn how to live with and in their environments, making the best of it.

3.5.2.3.2 To make the systems in which people operate, more impressive and caring, so that it can meet needs and to promote growth, development and problem solving.

3.5.2.3.3 To enhance people's abilities in order to help them cope with their life experiences and aspirations.

3.6 RELEVANCE OF THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE TO MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

As indicated in Chapter 2, the Directorate of Developmental Social Services is hosted in the Ministry of Health and Social Services and it is a governmental organisation. An organisation is an arrangement of people in a specific structure to accomplish some specific purpose (Lazenby, 2016). Organisations have three common characteristics, namely, each organisation has a distinct purpose, is composed of people and all organisations develop some deliberate structure so that the members can do their work (Lazenby, 2016).

An organisation can be viewed as a system made up of separate parts which all work together to achieve an overall goal. These components or parts can be defined in many different ways, but perceived as different functions. For instance, the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services, with its various divisions or departments, namely; Substance Abuse, Prevention, Drug Control and Rehabilitation; Family Welfare Program; Specialised Social Welfare Services; Social Welfare Information Services; Human Security Promotion and Prevention of Social Problems could all form distinct components of the whole system, the Ministry of Health and Social Services in this case.

All these different functions are dependent on each other; for example an organisation may have a great team of staff delivering services, but if the finance processes and procedures stop working the whole organisation suffers. Within this context, based on empirical reflections by Chiwara and Lombard (2017: 571) is a remark by one of the participants that *"the money that is allocated for social welfare is the least and there is no money at the end ...*

even to do projects". This is further supported by another respondent in the same study by Chiwara and Lombard (2017: 571) that *"you try to put in a programme and the [ministry] will tell you there is no money."* These statements affirm that the lack or little provision/allocation of funds from one component (Finance and Logistics) has an impact on the job of another part (social workers) and consequently the whole (the Ministry of Health and Social Service) in reaching its overall goal.

In terms of the ecological systems perspective, an organisation is compared to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interrelated responsibilities. The system may be the whole organisation, a division, department or team; but whether the whole or a part, it is important for social workers to understand how the system operates, and the relationship the parts of the organisation have (Meyer & Botha, 2011). According to the ecological systems perspective, the focus should be on the arrangement of and relations between the parts which connect them into a whole rather than reducing an organisation to the properties of its parts or elements.

Today's fast-paced and constantly changing world has not only influenced the way individuals live, but also how organisations operate. No organisation operates in isolation and the ecological systems perspective which emphasises the intersection of systems and the larger environmental context, as explained earlier in this Chapter, has relevance to management of social welfare organisations. In this regard, Achadinha (2016) observes that organisational environment, which is characterised as interrelated, uncertain, complex, unpredictable and unstable, is made up of various sub-environments, namely the micro-, task and macro-environments. Moreover, Myer and Botha (2011) emphasise that systems are open to, and interact with, their environments, and it is possible to acquire new properties through emergence, resulting in continual evolution. All these opinions help to create a framework for understanding the relevance of the ecological paradigm to management in social work practice.

For the sake of this study the macro refers to top management level, meso to middle management while micro refer to front-line management level, with full recognition that these environments operate within a broader socio-political environment which directly or indirectly influence the delivery of services in general, and in particular the execution of

essential management tasks within the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. The politicians seem not to understand social work; the creation of disparate government institutions all dealing with social issues, is a good testimony of their misunderstanding. There is a general feeling among social workers that the Namibian Government does not value social workers or the focus is more on health related issues for those social workers in the Ministry of Health and Social Services. In support of this statement, a social worker who spoke under anonymity says *“is the fact that our profession is not recognised and the authorities do not understand our role, and as a result, we do not receive enough technical support”* (Tjihenuna, 2015). However, an Acting Permanent Secretary disagrees with the fact that social workers are not appreciated or recognised, saying that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare values social workers’ work and contributions, because they address social issues that affect women, children and to some extent men (Tjihenuna, 2015). The encroachment of politicians (Government) in the affairs of social work is not a distress to Namibian social workers only, but their colleagues in the neighbouring South Africa seem to share the same concern. In this regard Engelbrecht and Strydom (2015) remark that one of the main concerns in the social work profession of the country (South Africa) is that the social work role is largely defined by government rather than the profession itself.

This is an era of management for the developing countries like Namibia, in which managers are expected to be skilled in the execution of their essential management skills. The nature of management may be conceptualised from an ecological systems perspective as the process by which an organisation generates a global representation of its own processes. In other words, management depends upon modelling an organisation. Modelling allows management to perform its distinctive information-processing activities such as monitoring, evaluation, prediction and control. The purposes to which these activities are directed define the function of management. The function of management is a product of the interaction between a management system and its environment. This is a consequence of the way that management systems tend to adapt to survive and grow in whatever specific context in which they are operating - this can lead to very different management functions in different environments (Charlton & Andras, 2003). What the authors state here can equally apply to the performance of management tasks and not be limited to management functions only.

An ecological systems perspective provides the social worker with a perception that views organisations holistically, and hence the execution of essential managerial tasks are also conducted holistically (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:5). In support, Senge (1990) explains that ecological systems thinking is used to analyse patterns in an organisation by looking at it from a holistic viewpoint rather than small unrelated manageable parts. The author describes the elephant metaphor explaining that splitting an elephant in two; one does not have two small elephants to take care of. You can only take care of the one complete elephant. An organization is like a living organism and should according to Senge (1990) also be managed as one.

One way in which the ecological systems perspective is implemented lies in how employees explain their situations and to this effect Senge (1990) describes three levels of explanation:

- (i) a reactive explanation based on events;
- (ii) a responsive explanation based on behaviour; and
- (iii) a generative explanation based on structural level.

These three ways of explaining are linked to one another. A System (level 3) leads to a certain behaviors (level 2) which can lead to certain events (level 1). The best way to change events is therefore to change the system, which will lead to different behaviour. For instance, the Ministry of Health and Social Services (system: level 3) is not creating a conducive working environment, lead to social workers being unproductive and hopeless (level 2) causing them to either leave the Ministry for greener pastures or leave the profession altogether. In this regard Kanyinga, the President of Social Workers Association in Namibia, cited by Tjihenuna (2015) says the Ministry of Health and Social Services has witnessed an exodus of social workers who leave for greener pastures. Towards the end of 2014 over 40 social workers left the Ministry of Health and Social Services and many of them went to the Ministry of Safety and Security.

Looking at management, for example, the ecological systems perspective could be useful for social workers to assess interactions that support or stress them in executing their essential management tasks. In doing so, social workers at all three managerial levels become aware of which relationships need to be strengthened in order to improve their performance. While

doing this, social workers should at all times be vigilant of the fact that they need to seek a balance with their environments (internal as well as external).

3.7 CONCLUSION

This Chapter gave an overview of ecological systems perspective by exploring the idea that organisations and their employees are in exchange with the environment and that it is important to maintain balance, or homeostasis. The different theories of management were also explained in this Chapter. Finally, the Chapter described both the general systems theory (as fore-runner of) and the ecological systems perspective with a specific focus on their principles and assumptions.

According to the above discussion it is clear that the ecological systems perspective is useful in understanding management in social work. The perspective provides insight into understanding human service organisations as systems made up of different parts and that these parts influence each other, and that the system is in interaction with its environment. It is apparent that a supportive environment with sufficient resources will promote the functioning of social workers. It is true too, that the opposite could lead to dissolution and maladaptive performance.

In the next chapter, an overview of management in social work, definition of management in social work, and levels of management will be explored by looking at what has been written about them. In addition, the next chapter will also explore the functions as well as the skills of management. All these discussions will be described within the ecological systems perspective.

CHAPTER 4

MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter gives an overview of management in social work, defines management in social work as well as levels of management. Furthermore, the functions as well as the skills of management are discussed. Still, the ecological systems perspective will be integrated throughout the discussions in this Chapter.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

The term management has been associated with the fields of business and commerce and as Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) indicate, the largest body of knowledge on management can be found in the literature on business, commerce and industry. Before 1979, the ideas of “performance and management” were seldom heard of in social work and were mostly associated with business (Spolander & Martin, 2012). However, the 20th era has seen a lot of management developments in the field of social work and the biggest challenge in social work is to blend the functions of management with their daily workload in order for social workers to be effective and efficient in service delivery. Austin (2012) is in full agreement as he states that the last half of the 20th century brought a steady expansion in all of the human services fields in which social workers are involved. Another author who adds his voice to the integration of management in human service organisations is Combe (2014) who states that the 21st century has brought with it a new workplace, one in which everyone must adapt to a rapidly changing society with constantly changing demands and opportunities. Evans, Hills, and Orme (2011) indicate that social work and social welfare organisations, whether in the public or independent sector, are often required to improve performance with fewer resources. As a result they are constantly being asked to be more productive and efficient and respond to an ever-changing environment. Within the ecological systems perspective, it is even more important for social workers to constantly take cognisance of any changes in the environment as these could influence their functioning. Achadinha (2016:64) puts it very clear that the more informed a manager is about the environment, the easier it becomes to manage the changes. It was evident in Chapter 2 that changes in the environment have an impact on social service rendering. For instance, the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare

Services' mandate was split among many other social welfare providers and consequently the finalisation of the national development policy has come to a halt.

Lawler and Bilson (2010) concur that in recent years there have been a number of clearly discernible trends in approaches to management of human service organisations in both the public and non-governmental sectors. However, managing social services has become a priority since the provision of market-related services and policy issues like affordable and equitable service delivery have contributed to the increasing importance of management in social work. An organisation, and especially human service organisations, without management is almost unimaginable. Almost, if not all, every organisational activity involves management and good management makes a real difference to the work done in an organisation and to the quality of services that are provided. Lawler and Bilson (2010) support this statement by arguing that management is increasingly important within organizations and the delivery of social work services, and now form part of the post-qualification framework for social workers in England. It seems like management is not an option for social workers. This is because social workers cannot choose whether they want to execute management functions and tasks or not. In this regard, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) argue that social workers cannot choose to avoid management because they need to understand management and perform a variety of management tasks. They further state that effective social work practice, at any level, requires no less. Austin (2012) asserts that managers in human service organisations carry responsibility for the quality of the services provided for individuals and families.

Other authors who add their voice to the importance of management to ensure effective rendering of social services are Gallop and Hafford-Letchfield (2012) when they remark that social work and social work managers often find themselves in management positions without having had any formal management training. Yet, management skills and knowledge specific to social work settings are essential for effective practice. The suggestion here is that management is no longer considered as a responsibility of top managers only, but all social workers at all levels execute the one or other management tasks to ensure satisfactory service delivery to their clientele as well as achieving organisational goals. All social workers may be regarded as managers within a social service organisation, operating on different levels (Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2014). One of the pioneers in social work management, Skidmore

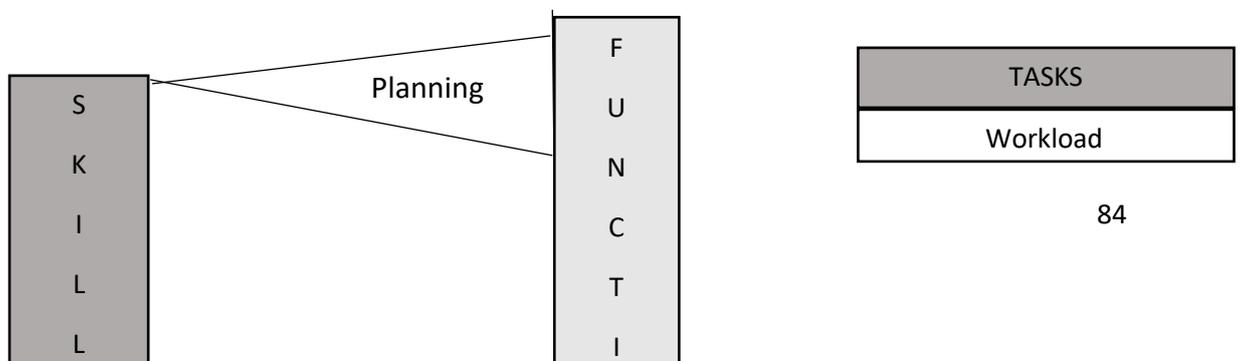
(2013) notes that social work management, both in education and practice, has come to the fore in recent years and is recognised as an essential component in the delivery of social services. On their part, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) are of the opinion that social workers are committed to providing the best possible services to clients and that management, when performed at all levels, contributes greatly to achieving this objective. Southern Africa authors such as Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) also add their views on the meaning of management in service delivery when they conceptualise management within a social service milieu. They state that regardless of the context, certain management processes have to be adhered to if any organizational entity wants to achieve its aims. Lazenby (2016:1) also emphasises that well-managed organisations are more competitive because good managers make sure that the workforce is better trained, leading to higher levels of motivation and commitment. This implies that the core of management is that people equipped as managers should be able to operate effectively in any domain, be it public sector or non-governmental. Moreover, for social workers who operate in ever-changing and turbulent environments as alluded to in the previous chapters, understanding of management skills and tasks is necessary in order to function optimally in these environments. Scott (2015) concurs that executing management tasks is vital for growth, progress and functioning of organisations.

Lawler and Bilson (2010: 4) talk about managerialism which according to them refers to “the development of the interests of management in how organisations are managed, stressing the role and accountability of individual managers and their positions.” To this effect, Skidmore (2013) argues that management needs to be spread in an organisation and should not remain a responsibility of top management only. According to him in the traditional world of work, management’s job was to control and limit people, enforce rules and regulations, seek stability and efficiency, design a top-down hierarchy, and achieve bottom-line results. Managers have to find ways to engage workers’ hearts and minds, as well as take advantage of their labour. The new workplace asks that managers focus on building trust, inspiring commitment, leading change, harnessing people’s creativity and enthusiasm, finding shared visions and values, and sharing information and power. Skidmore (2013) continues that rather than controlling their employees, managers focus on training them to adapt to new technologies and extraordinary environmental shifts, and thus achieve high performance and total corporate effectiveness.

Next in this section is the definition of management, levels of management, management functions, as well as skills.

4.3 DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

Irrespective of the setting, social workers at all levels have to follow certain management processes for any organisation to realise its aims and objectives. Hence, Weinbach and Taylor (2015:6) define social work management as certain activities performed by social workers at all administrative levels within human service organisations that are designed to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals. The authors classify these management activities as planning, organising, staffing, leading and controlling, which will be explained later in this Chapter. The same authors emphasise the need for social work management due to the rising costs of services in areas such as health care and correctional services. This has given rise to demands for better management at all levels within welfare organisations and that the recent changes in human services suggest the need for greater emphasis on management within human service organisations. Management is an important part of social work practice that deserves a careful attention of all present and future social work practitioners. Therefore, for social workers to appreciate the essence of management they should develop an understanding of three key concepts of management that are interrelated to one another. These concepts of management are skills, functions and tasks as demonstrated in figure 4.1 below, which will be discussed in detail later in this Chapter.



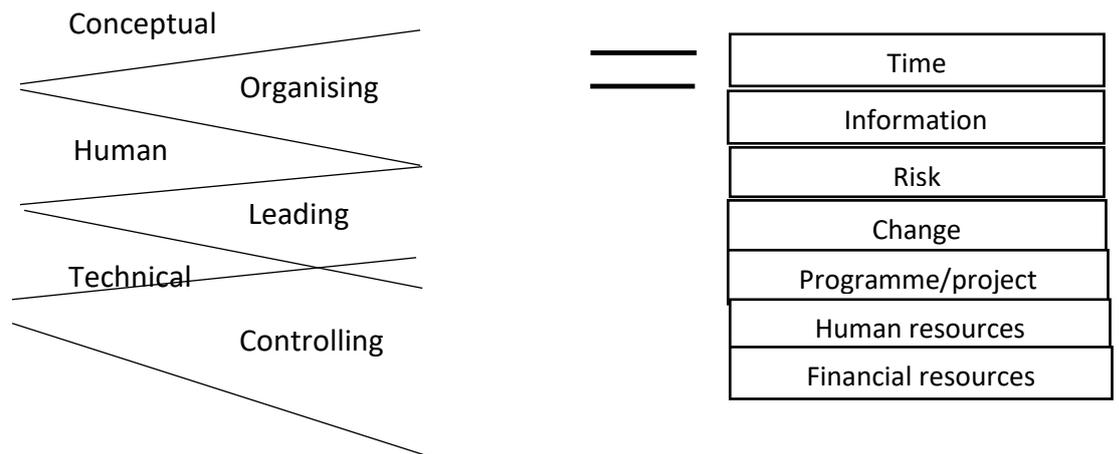


Figure 4.1: *Conceptual framework of management skills, functions and tasks*

Source: *Engelbrecht (2014)*

Furthermore, Lewis, Packard and Lewis (2012:8) describe management as a set of systems and processes designed to help employees accomplish organisational and individual goals. Authors such as Hellrieger, Jackson and Slocum (2002), and Lussier (1997, as cited by Rankin and Engelbrecht, 2014) agree that management involves the utilisation of organisational resources for the effective and efficient achievement of organisational goals by utilizing processes of management functions such as planning, organising, leading and control. Judging from the above-stated definitions, it can be argued that efficient and effective service delivery depends on management to ensure that organisations attain their goals. Lazenby (2016: 3) echoes the afore-mentioned authors, describing management as a process of coordinating work activities through the functions of planning, organising, activating, and control so that these activities are completed efficiently and effectively in line with the organisational goals. According to Lazenby (2016), efficiency refers to the proficient use of resources; using minimum inputs to produce maximum outputs. Effectiveness has got to do with managers making sure that the necessary activities are completed to achieve organisational goals. Hellrieger, Jackson and Slocum (2012) and Lussier (1997) concur that management in social work involves the utilisation of organisational resources for the effective and efficient achievement of organisational goals by deploying processes of management functions. The argument here is that social workers in the Directorate cannot be efficient and effective in

achieving the organisational goal since they do not always have the necessary resources as alluded to in the previous chapters.

Skidmore (2013) blends in a very interesting aspect of management in social work, stating that management is changing from a pyramid to a circle (see figure 4.2). In other words, changing from concentrating absolute power and authority to dictate and control policies and practices in one person, to sharing of power with all staff in the organisation. Consequently, it requires that not only the top social work manager, but all staff at all levels, to increase their management knowledge and skills. Management is concerned with configuring of programs, services, and staff to facilitate optimum efficiency and production of services. Thus, all staff in the organisation cooperates and works together to make decisions that affect structuring of programs and delivery of services. From an ecological systems perspective, an organisation is a system that depends on all its parts to function effectively and efficiently. The indication that all subsystems within the larger system are in continuous interaction with one another to create a state of equilibrium was highlighted in Chapter 3 by various authors, such as Qalinge (2015), Van Rensburg (2007) as well as Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014). Furthermore, Chapter 3 also underlined that the state of equilibrium is not only within the organisation and its various parts, but it is also important for the organisations to maintain balance with its environment as well. Engelbrecht (2015) provides a cogent summary in this regard that the time has long gone for social workers to immerse themselves in self-contained activities and leaving management, administration and supervision to “them” or to “headquarters”. To this end, Coulshed and Mullender (2006) explicitly declare management as essential to all in social work.

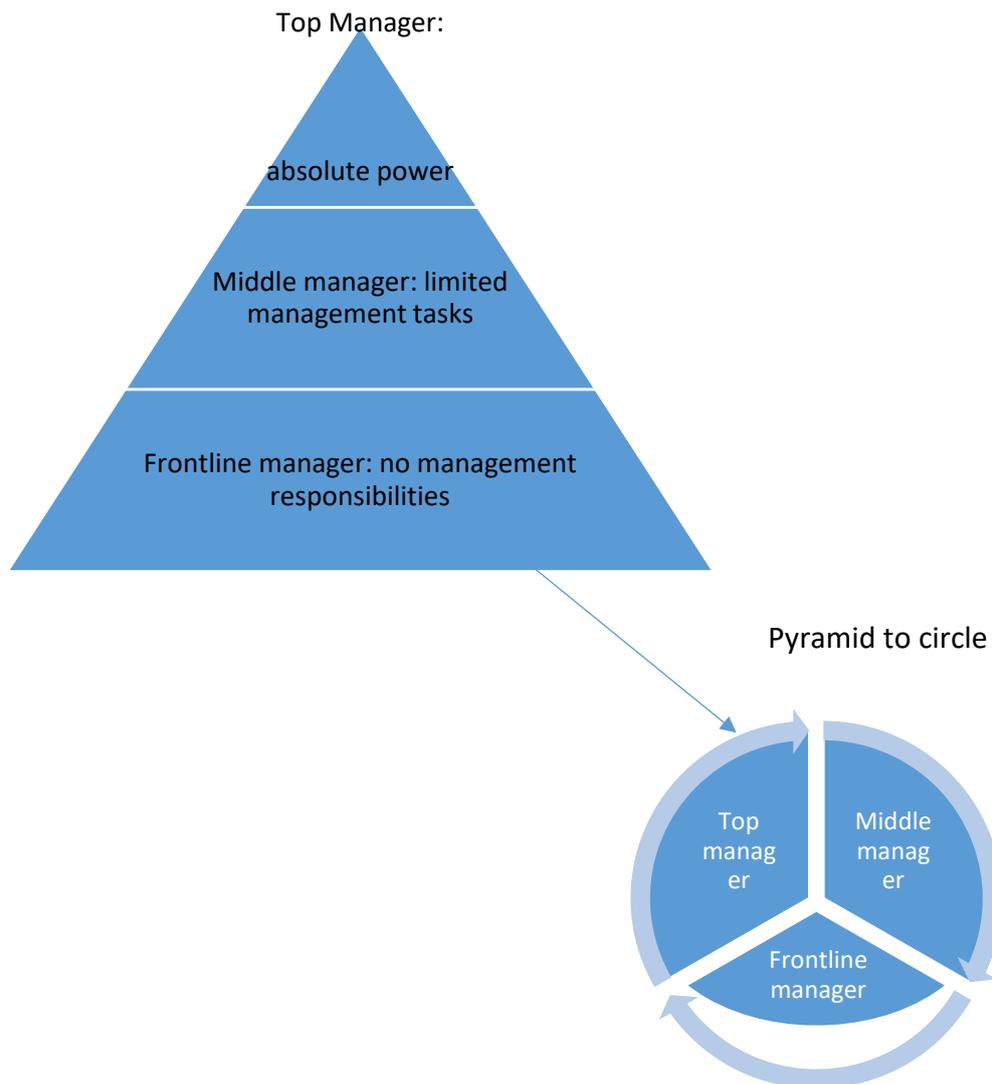


Figure 4.2: Management changing from pyramid to a circle

Source: Adapted from Skidmore (2013)

The circle in the above figure suggests that management is a group of social workers who are managers in their own right, operating at various levels of management in an organisation. Hellriegel *et al.* (2002) note that managers at frontline-, middle- and top management levels are all concerned with achieving organisational goals, by performing various tasks and responsibilities with varying skills and authority as per their position and level in the organisation.

Management in social work aims at achieving the following goals and objectives (Stoner, Freeman & Gilbert, 2003):

Goals:

- The first goal of all managers, whether in business or human service organisations, should be surplus by creating an environment in which staff can attain organisational goals with available resources. Surplus in human service organisations is not in monetary terms like in business but more in the form of prevention programs that seek to avoid potentially more expensive problem. For example, the cost of an HIV infection prevention program is less than the cost of treating HIV/AIDS patients with expensive medications and/or hospitalization (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015).
- The second goal of all managers is that they must be productive. Productivity is the input-output ratio within a time period.
- The last goal has got to do with effectiveness and efficiency of an individual and organisational performance.

Objectives:

- Ensuring that organisational goals and targets are met with least cost and minimum waste;
- Taking care of health, welfare and safety of staff;
- Protecting the machinery and resources of the organisation, including human resources.

What the foregoing suggests is that management in social work can be described as various ways of affecting and applying an influence over the work environment so that social workers can deliver better services to the client system. Social workers in the role of managers attempt to build and to nurture an optimal work environment, one that promotes desirable activities, including the efficient delivery of effective services to clients (Weinbach & Taylor 2015: 6). Again in relation to the ecological systems perspective, it is evident that work conditions could enhance or hinder service delivery.

4.4 LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT

The term “Levels of Management’ refers to a line of demarcation between various managerial positions in an organisation. The number of levels in management increases when the size of the organisation and work force increases and vice versa. The level of management determines a chain of command, the amount of authority and status enjoyed by any managerial position. Each level possesses certain job responsibilities within their position to ensure the effective overall operation of the organization (Glen, 2017). This implies that certain skills and experience determine the level of management. To this effect Furman and Gibelman (2013) posit that direct service workers, including managers, clinicians, and other line-level social workers are the core workforce of human service organisations. These levels of practice are typically distinguished by skill and experiential requirements.

Although Lazenby (2016) concurs with Coulshed and Mullender (2006) that all social workers are managers, the author explains that the general management tasks in an organisation, such as production, human resources, marketing, finances among others identify the different kinds of managers classified as top managers, middle managers and first-line managers (see figure 4.3).

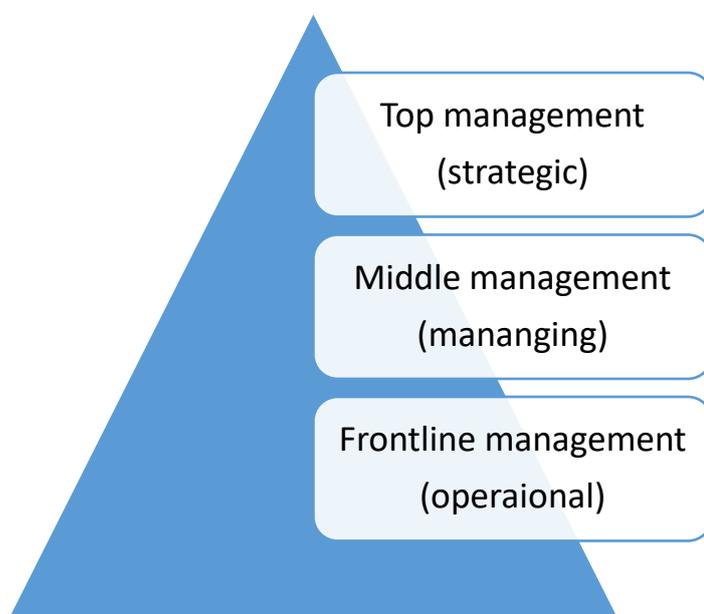


Figure 4.3: *The three levels of management*

Source: *Lazenby (2016)*

Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) also distinguish management levels at top, middle and supervisory. They refer to the latter as lower management level. However, in this study the lower or first-line management level will be referred to as the frontline level and the following three levels of management will be presented:

4.4.1 Top management

The top manager as the name suggests, is the person at the highest level of the organisation and normally this level of management is likely to represent a small number of managers. According to Smit and Cronje (1999), this small group of managers have controlling power of the organisation and the final authority and decision-making of the organisation as a whole. At this level of management, the focus is more on long-term planning, designing the organisation's broad structure, leading the organisation and ensuring control. Usually these people have the responsibility of making decisions, developing goals and plans that influence the whole organisation. In other words, these are the people who have to define why the organisation is in existence. In support of this are Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) outlining three responsibilities of top management. Firstly, they establish the mission, goals and strategies of the organisation, followed by determining what needs to be done to meet those goals. The third responsibility is to establish how to use the organisation resources.

Lazenby (2016) insists that the top manager is in control and has ultimate responsibility and accountability for everything that happens in the organisation. It is the highest level of the organisation, mainly responsible for decision-making, goals and plans formulation. From an ecological systems perspective, the top manager observes how different departments interact with one another as well as how departments use assigned resources in order to achieve organisational goals.

Typically, this level includes the chief executive officer, managing director or director and in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services, the top managers would be the Director and Deputy Director.

4.4.2 Middle management

This layer of management is usually tasked with the oversight function of departments, implementing policies, plans and strategies formulated at the top management level. Middle management is the intermediate leadership level of a hierarchical organization, being

subordinate to the top management but above the lowest levels of operational staff (Daft & Marcic, 2015). The middle management role is primarily for short-term to medium term planning, organising, leading and controlling (Smit & Cronje, 1999).

In Namibia, the middle managers would invariably be social work supervisors and a social work supervisor is a chief and principal social worker in the Directorate of Developmental Welfare Services who is responsible for supervision (Mujingane, 2007). According to Kadushin (1995), a supervisor is an agency management staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, co-ordinate, enhance and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisee for whose work he/she is held accountable. For the sake of this study, supervision will also be considered an essential management task. Kadushin (1995:22) defines a supervisor as a social worker to whom authority has been delegated to coordinate, promote and evaluate the professional service rendering of social workers through the process of supervision.

It goes without saying that at this level the manager is between the top level and the frontline level and is mainly responsible for managing the work of frontline managers (Lazenby, 2016). Hence, there is back and forth interaction from top management to frontline and vice versa. This emphasises the influence that parts (departments) in the whole (organisation) have on one another.

As indicated by Lazenby (2016:5) the middle managers are responsible for finding the best ways, in any specific department, to achieve organisational goals as effective as possible by implementing the policies and the strategic plans formulated by top management. This is supported by Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) who also indicate that middle level of management is responsible for meeting the goals set by top management. But further than that they also set the goals for specific divisions or departments of the organisation and determines what employees in each department should do to reach those goals. In the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services, the middle management accommodates not only the chief social worker, but the control social workers as well.

4.4.3 Frontline management

This is the lowest level of management and these are the people responsible for the execution of the organisation products and services. Frontline managers are primarily concerned with

smaller day-to-day segments of the organisation and focus on the day to day activities of their division/department or team. In the social service non-profit organisations, these roles are usually occupied by social workers and auxiliary workers that have oversight over their programs, activities and general administration linked to their casework management (Reyneke, 2014). However, it is worth-mentioning that the Directorate has done away with auxiliary workers.

In the case of the Directorate of Developmental Welfare Services, frontline managers would be social workers or supervisees. The New Dictionary of Social Work (1998:8) as cited in Muinjague, (2007) defines a social worker as a person registered and authorized in accordance with the Social Work Act, 1998 (Act No. 110 of 1978) to practice social work. For the purpose of this study, a frontline manager is any social worker under the rank of chief and control social worker. Senior social workers who are still seeing clients due to limited human resources, fall in both the frontline and middle-line management.

According to Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014:17), the lower level or supervisory managers (as they refer to frontline managers) ensure that the day-to-day operations of the organisation run smoothly. In this regard, Lazenby (2016) states that frontline managers are responsible for implementing the plans of middle management and focus on the day-to-day activities in departments.

Since the social work profession is characterised by frontline social workers, supervisors and social work managers working in a management structure or organisation (Directorate within the Ministry of Health and Social Services), this study aim was to determine essential management tasks executed by social workers in the Directorate at all the three levels of management within an ecological systems perspective, but the top level of management was later on excluded since the acting Director is less than three years in the position and the Deputy retired before data was collected. With reference to the ecological systems perspective and its relevance to management in social work, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) make reference to the task environment by emphasizing that a successful manager in any organisation cannot ignore the organisation's environment. This is so because the nature of the organisation's environment significantly influences the role of its managers as well as most of the activities that happen within the organisation. Chapter 2 has painted a picture of how the working environment is influencing them, in some cases to the extent where social

workers move from one organisation to another. In relation to the ecological system perspective, Ehlers and Lazenby (2008) identify three systems of an organisational environment that influence social workers at all three levels of management. These systems are demonstrated in figure 4.4 below.

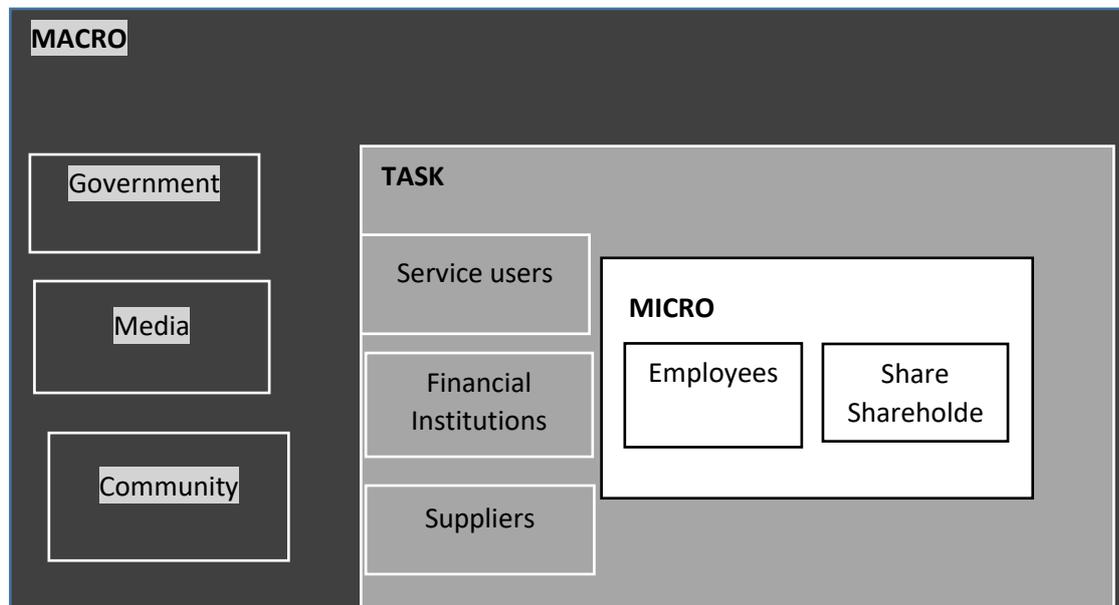


Figure 4.4: *Three systems of an organisational environment*

Source: *Adapted from Ehlers and Lazenby (2008)*

In an attempt to understand management in social work from an ecological systems perspective, the three environmental factors depicted in figure 4.4 will be explained briefly as follow:

The **macro environment** represents the government, media and community and it fits with figure 3.3 in the previous chapter which also represents the Ministry of Health and Social Services at the macro level. What is of most relevance here is political and legal factors since the political/legal dimensions of the macro environment can have unfavourable effects on organisations. In Chapter 2, it was pointed out how political decisions of creating more than one welfare service providers have affected social service delivery.

The **task environment** represents consumers or service users, financial institutions and suppliers. As expounded earlier, one goal of social work managers is to satisfy the needs of

their service users. In the Namibian context, it is hard for social workers to be efficient and effective in rendering social services due to little or lack of resources, and specifically in the Directorate they have to compete for resources with health counterparts. Quotes such as the following from the previous chapter testify how the task environment impacts on the effective functioning of social workers.

“The middle and top management do not really deal with the situation of social workers, they seem not to really care about us, they have their nice well equipped offices at the head office of the Ministry” (Musuuu, 2017).

Lastly the **micro environment** represent the employees, in this case the social workers in the Directorate, and shareholders who would be social workers in all the other organisations as mentioned in Chapter 2 as well as other stakeholders who make the work of social workers manageable. As explained in Chapter 2, the fragmentation of social workers is not creating harmony among social workers, but rather promotes division among Namibian social workers, consequently leading to poor service delivery.

To conclude the levels of management, it is important for social work managers to understand that the organisational environment does not only impact one level of management but that all three levels of management need to harmonise to keep equilibrium in an organisation.

In the next section, a discussion on the functions of management will be offered.

4.5 FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

There is a growing need for social work managers to be both caring and competent through knowledge, attitude and skills in management. Caring is not enough, hence social work managers should appreciate the processes of management functions such as planning, organising, leading and control to obtain optimal accomplishment of organisational goals. However, management functions can be realised through the execution or performance of management tasks. From an ecological systems perspective, these management tasks can be understood as adapting the 4 Ps of Perlman (1967). These 4 Ps are: **place** (Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare structure, the broader Ministry); **policies** (laws, procedures and directives); **personal** (knowledge, skills and attitude of social work manager) and **problems** (challenges faced by social work managers in the Directorate). As discussed in

Chapter 3, an organisation is a system with subsystems with not only reciprocal impact on each other, but these systems are all also influenced by the broader social, political and economic environments.

Generally, the process of management comprises four main management functions as coined by Fayol (1949) namely, planning, organising, leading and controlling as elaborated below:

4.5.1 Planning

“If you are not sure where you are going, you are liable to end up someplace else – and not even know it” (Skidmore, 2013:49).

This quote emphasises the essence of planning in all spheres of life and more specially planning is what managers do to anticipate and influence future strategies. Planning is thus, a process to develop a strategy to achieve desired goals of an organisation, to solve problems and to facilitate action. It is more future-oriented to make sure where the organisation is going. Nel (2014) considers planning as one of the most fundamental management function, involving what the organisation plans to do, how it will do this and therefore setting the strategic direction. To this end, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) underline that planning is decidedly future-oriented and proactive, designing plans to take the organisation from where it is today to where managers hope to be tomorrow, and to avoid costly detours along the way. In other words, planning is imperative in all organizations, as it provides direction, reduces the impact of change, minimises waste and redundancy and sets the standards to facilitate control. O'Connor and Netting (2009) define planning as preparing to resolve problems and address organisational needs.

Moreover, planning is vital in any agency since organisations undergo continuous change in striving for better and effective service rendering. Change could be within an organisation or can be induced from outside, and especially if one looks at these changes from an ecological systems point of view. Planning is a plan describing how an organisation interacts with its environment and changes internally to achieve its purpose (Walker, 1990). Therefore, in terms of the ecological systems perspective, the crux of planning is to focus on matching both internal and external factors; the match the organisation makes between its own resources and the threats or wishes and opportunities created by the external environment in which it operates.

In a country like Namibia where scarcity of social workers is a reality as indicated in Chapter 2, social work managers should appreciate the value of planning as a managerial function to enhance social work practice, avoid unnecessary duplication, and fulfil community needs.

4.5.2 Organising

Organising is the next important function of management after planning. In case of planning the management decides what is to be done in future. Conversely, organising involves ways and means through which it becomes easier to achieve what has been planned. In this regard, DuBrin (2012) indicates that organising involves making sure that the human and physical resources are available to implement the plans in order to achieve organisational goals. Hence, organising refers to a process of identifying and grouping of the work to be performed, defining and determining responsibility and authority for each job position, establishing relationship among various job positions as well as determining detailed rules and regulations of working for individuals and groups in organisation.

Organising could be seen as the process of identifying and grouping of the works to be performed, defining and delegating responsibility and authority as well as establishing relationships for the purpose of enabling people to work most efficiently. Gatewood, Taylor and Ferrell (1995) concur that organising involves the designing of jobs for employees and grouping these jobs together to form departments and to develop and sustain working relationships between these units and employees to implement the plans. Organising is thus, a process consisting of five steps namely:

Step1: Identification of activities which are performed by the organisation. For example, in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services, the provision of counselling in addition to other routine activities.

Step 2: Grouping of activities: once the activities have been identified, then there is a necessity that they are grouped in various departments or divisions. In Chapter 2 for example, the various divisions in the Directorate were highlighted.

Step 3: Assignment of responsibilities: having completed the exercise of identifying, grouping and classifying of all activities into specific departments/divisions, employees are then assigned with the responsibilities.

Step 4: Granting authority: employees are not only given responsibilities but they are also provided with the necessary authority to carry out these responsibilities.

Step 5: Establishing relationship is a very important part of the organising function because employees in any organisation have to know to whom they report to as well as strengthening relationship with other employees in his or her team.

The steps in the process of organising are demonstrated in figure 4.5 below.



Figure 4.5: *The process of organising*

In a nutshell, the organising function entails the operationalising of plans by identifying tasks, allocating them to individuals and groups within the organisation so that plans are turned into actions (Hellriegel et al., 2008; Nel, 2014).

4.5.3 Leading

Leading is also referred to as directing and according to Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014) it entails influencing others to achieve organisational objectives. Leading is the ability to

influence, motivate, and to enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisation (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). Hence, once management has made the plans and organised the structure to deliver on these goals, they must lead the organisation, motivate and communicate with others to perform the tasks assigned to them. Similarly, for any organisation to be productive, the performance of the various managerial functions will not materialise without good leadership. It is in this spirit that Van der Walt (2016:203) accentuates that it is not enough to have only management abilities that ensure that everything is done in the right way, leading is also needed to ensure that while the organisation is doing things right, the organisation is also doing the right things. Be that as it may, leading is influenced by many factors such as personality, experience, interest, position in the organisation and the approach adopted by the leader. Authors such as Cronje et al. (2004), Hellriegel (2012), Lewis et al. (2004), Lussier and Achua (2001) also describe characteristics associated with good leadership. Furthermore, Van der Walt (2016) postulates that good leaders listen to people, are servants of the people and work for the good of others, work with a team, have courage, and are brave, dedicated and committed.

In relation to the ecological systems perspective, leading could be considered as consisting of three bases in a system of give and take. These three foundations are the **leader**, the **followers** who are constantly in interaction with the leader, and the **situation** which is the circumstances in which leading is happening. Internal as well as external factors can influence the situation and in turn the situation affects the managerial functions and tasks. Leading also takes place within the supposition of various theories that are presented next.

The Trait theory is also known as the “great person” theory because of the notion that leaders are born and not made (Van der Walt, 2016). In contrary, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) argue that the suggestion that leaders are born does not hold out much hope for leadership training or education. Moreover, trait theory is based on inherent characteristics such as self-confidence, knowledge, intelligence, etc. and these personality characteristics are not easily measured. Social workers who for instance, believe in the potential of individuals to change and grow, would not just agree with the assertion that “leaders are born”. Likewise, traits might differ from one person to another and people might develop some traits after taking a

managerial position. Subsequently, researchers turn their interest towards exploring the behaviour of leaders (Nel, 2014) and hence the next leadership theory.

The Behavioural theories were developed in the 1950s and 1960s and were based on the assumption that if one could identify exactly how strong leaders act differently from weak leaders, then one would know what good leadership behaviour is (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). The argument is that people could be trained and educated to behave in a manner which is seen to be consistent with good leadership. Different from traits, it is easier to measure behaviour, for example, communication, because it could be observed/seen, noted/recorded and verified. Behavioural theories consist of two sets of norms, namely:

Theory X which takes a command-and-control approach of management. It assumes that people are by nature lazy, lack ambition, dislike responsibility and prefer to be led. A manager then takes responsibility of directing the employee's efforts (Van der Walt, 2016). In addition, Nel (2014) argues that managers who apply Theory X believe that people are motivated mainly by money, are lazy and not cooperative. This theory has a negative outlook on followers.

Theory Y, in contrast, is positive in the sense that people would be seen as possessing inherent, undeveloped potential for growth, imagination and creativity. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) affirm that Theory Y assumes that people are willing to work and to accept responsibility, as they want to control their own behaviour and they are capable of creative solutions to problems. Unlike Theory X leadership which commands and controls, Theory Y leaders empower by releasing the potential of followers. The task of the Theory Y manager is to arrange conditions in the organisation so that employees can achieve organisational goals by directing their efforts (Van der Walt, 2016). The next theory of leadership discussed is the contingency theory.

The Contingency Theory advocates that no leadership is better than another one. It takes the view that there is no one best leadership style and that the effectiveness of any leader is found in the way he or she is able to match his or her own leadership style to the specific requirements of a situation (Van der Walt, 2016:217-218). In other words, leadership is

affected by the needs of a given situation. In line with this, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) contend that the trait and behavioural approaches to leadership did not place sufficient emphasis on the different situations in which managers must function. This statement makes sense in the case of social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. For instance, when social workers were operating in a situation where they had full mandate, they managed to draft a national policy on welfare services. The situation changed (mandate on welfare service delivery was split among various service providers) and that affected the finalisation of such policy. However, a study by York (1996, cited in Fischer, 2009) generated some interesting data regarding social workers and situational leadership. Social workers in the study placed emphasis on support of workers, no matter the situation. This means that despite the situation or working condition, if social workers have the necessary support from managers, they will be able to perform.

There are three contingency approaches namely:

Fiedler's Contingency Theory which proposes that effective group performance depends on the proper match between a leader's style of interaction with employees and the degree to which a situation gives control and influence to the leader (Nel, 2014). In other words, performance depends on the degree to which the situation permits the leader to take control and influence his or her followers. This implies that a leader is not in a position to change his or her leadership style.

House's Path-Goal Theory states that the responsibility lies with the leader to assist his or her followers in the path to achieve the goal, by providing direction and support (Van der Walt, 2016). Normally, employees accept leadership when they experience the leader as an instant source of support and a means of future satisfaction.

Hersey and Blanchard's Theory includes understanding the level of the worker's maturity. Maturity can be defined as "the worker's willingness and ability to assume responsibility for the task at hand" (Latting, 1986:16). The two main aspects here are willingness and ability. The employee's maturity level is assessed and then the manager chooses the best managerial style for the situation. Van der Walt (2016:223) adds that the level of directive and supportive

leadership behaviour should be based on the level of maturity or readiness of the followers. In contrast to Fiedler's theory, Hersey and Blanchard's theory holds that a leader can and should adapt his or her leadership style accordingly.

Contemporary Theories is the last leadership theory and it has been developed because the focus has shifted, with leading not only confined to top managers but extended to managers at all levels who are able to influence others in the organisation (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom, 2007). Nel (2014) identifies six contemporary theories and they are briefly presented.

Principle-centred leadership pays less attention on personality but focusses more on values, principles and attitudes as factors that influence the leaders' behaviour and relationships.

Transformational leadership which according to Werner (2003), is the ability to influence employees to achieve more than was originally expected or thought possible. A transformational leader has the ability to instil trust, admiration, loyalty and respect among followers and to "transform" a situation, because followers are willing to go above and beyond what the leader expects them to do (Van der Walt, 2016:225).

Transactional leadership is more concerned about the employees' self-interest, and they are rewarded when they comply with their jobs' requirements.

Shared leadership is a dynamic interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals or both (Koccolowski, 2010: 24). From an ecological systems perspective, organisations and environments are becoming more complex and challenging, hence, the need for employees and managers to lead one another in order to achieve organisational goals.

Facilitative leadership which is closely related to the shared leadership advocates that managers should be able to actively include staff on all levels to have facilitation skills to achieve organisational goals.

Appreciative leadership as invented by Whitney, while Trosten-Bloom and Kadar (2010) adds a positive dimension to leadership and puts emphasis on the power of the positive. It borrows from the strength-based approach and posits that appreciative leaders assume that all staff, despite age, gender, race, culture, education and experience, have intrinsic strengths and a passion to fulfil. Consequently, they want to bring forward and cultivate that strength and potential.

A quote from Dr François Maritz (cited by Meyer, 2016:58) with regards to leading as a managerial function states that *“if team leaders could learn but a single lesson, it would be that they can and must trust the potential at their disposal.”*

4.5.4 Controlling

Controlling is an important function of management and it is needed in all the other functions of management. It will be useless for organisations to have good plans but not have standards to measure the real work performed by staff members. That is why DuBrin (2012) affirms that control involves measuring the real work performance of employees against a predetermined standard with the purpose of taking corrective action if there is a significant difference. Therefore, control has got to do with checking that activities are performed as planned and that the desired results are reached. Controlling is covered under monitoring and evaluation in the next chapter when some managerial tasks are presented.

4.5.5 The interrelation of management functions

The four functions of management as expounded above are interrelated; one cannot be carried out in isolation with the other and they are inescapably linked as depicted in figure 4.6 below.

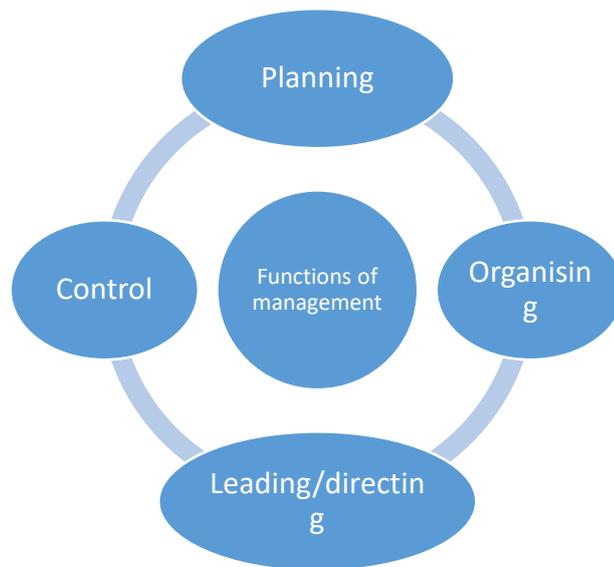


Figure 4.6: *The interrelatedness of the four functions of management*

Besides the interconnections of functions of management, the argument is that management is no longer a responsibility of the top managers only; everyone in the organisation assumes ownership for management and as Weinbach and Taylor (2015) state, the dichotomy “we – they” reduces. However, important to note is that even though management occurs at all levels in an organisation and is gradually shared among staff members, the tasks performed within the various managerial functions are not exactly the same. For example, organising is a managerial function carried out by everyone: for the top management it might involve dividing the organisation into units or assigning staff members into multidisciplinary teams. A middle level supervisor might organise by developing a weekly schedule for providing case supervision to his or her supervisees. For a social worker (frontline manager), organising might entail designing a personalised travel itinerary for conducting home visits. All three individuals need to understand and perform the managerial function of organising, but their specific organising tasks are different (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). Consequently, in terms of the ecological systems perspective, managers at all three levels of management should be aware of what is happening in various departments (systems) of an organisation since the performance of managerial tasks has an impact on the execution of day to day essential management tasks.

The next session elaborates on managers and managerial skills.

4.6 MANAGERS AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Managers and especially, human service managers are concerned with the existence and survival of an organisation. Environments in which many human service organisations function are facing serious challenges and obstacles (these were also indicated in Chapter 2) and managers need to develop skills to endure these impediments. It is against this context that it is important to describe a manager as well as the skills a manager needs to possess in order to help organisations survive environmental challenges.

4.6.1 Managers

All organisations exist for one ultimate goal and that is to supply quality goods or services and the job of any manager is to make sure that the organisation achieves this goal. In this sense, Lazenby (2016) defines a manager as the person in an organisation that tells other employees what to do and how to satisfy the needs of the customers. A manager is also someone who works with and through other people by coordinating their work activities in order to achieve organisational goals (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). In other words, a good manager works with his/her staff and surrounds himself or herself with competent people. Thus within an ecological systems perspective, a manager is that person in an organisation who is aware that despite the fact that his or her basic managerial tasks have remained the same over years, even though the organisational environment is always changing. He or she should further develop an understanding that every new change presents new challenges to deal with. An effective manager will assist his or her staff to appreciate and find contentment in their work, who in turn, will provide satisfactory service to their clients. This is why it is vital that managers should be equipped to take responsibility for quality service delivery. Managers require specific skills to make their work easier and the skills are presented next.

4.6.2 Management skills

According to Hafford-Letchfield (2007: 27), good managers at all levels need to continue to develop greater levels of skills including new ones to respond to the challenging policy environment within which social work is delivered. Spolander and Martin (2012) further assert that the introduction of market-like mechanisms to the provision of services and broad policy themes such as affordability, fairness, intergenerational justice, social mobility, increased choice, and personalisation of care, have inevitably influenced the way in which managers in social work organisations conduct their everyday business. Managers need to

develop a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing them as mentioned already in 4.6.1, alongside creativity and the willingness to consider more radical approaches and solutions.

In fact, Spolander and Martin (2012) proffer that managers need competencies to ensure organisational success and stability. It goes without saying that given the turbulent environment and the growing complexity of human services organisations, as mentioned in the previous chapter, social work managers need to continue developing management skills. In this regard, Reyneke (2014) insists that the manager's competence and skills greatly influence the success or failure of the organisation. Reyneke's (2014) view is supplemented by Smit and Cronje (1999), who argue that if managers do their work well through coordinating the efforts of different individuals, the organisation will be successful and this success is measured by the extent to which the organisation achieves its goals and objectives. Hence, managers who appreciate the ecological systems perspective would always remind themselves that it is not enough for a manager to know his or her roles and tasks, but most importantly, to be vigilant of their surroundings. In this regard, Lazenby (2016:8) states that managers must be able to assess the relationships between the different parts of the organisation and the external environment in order to position the organisation for success.

Management skills refer to the knowledge and ability of individuals in managerial positions to fulfil some essential managerial tasks and these skills are classified as follows:

4.6.2.1 Conceptual skills

Conceptual skills are linked to the capacity to think creatively about, analyse, and understand complicated and theoretical ideas, and this is mostly associated with the top level of management. Conceptual skills refer to the ability to think, conceptualise and analyse abstract and complex situations (Lazenby, 2016). Why the top level of management? Earlier on in this chapter, Figure 4.3 indicated that top managers are responsible for strategic planning as well as developing the organisational structure and policies. Smit and Cronje (1999) highlight that conceptual skills demand higher-level thinking and a holistic view of the organisation and are linked to the strategic thinking and planning processes of an organisation. At the highest level of management, managers need more conceptual skills and

to a lesser degree interpersonal and technical skills (Reyneke, 2014). Since it demands a holistic view of the organisation, from an ecological systems perspective, conceptual skills will put a manager in a better position to study the various parts on an organisation and its environment when developing the plans, organisational structure and policies. For instance, top managers in the Directorate will acknowledge the existence of other service providers when trying to finalise the draft developmental social welfare policy.

Since management is considered as an “art” requiring managers to be creative and innovative thinkers, they need to have good conceptual skills. Managers need to be able to do more than just observe what is occurring around them; they need to be able to accurately identify its origins, interpret what it means, and to put it in perspective (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). In other words, using well developed conceptual skills, managers especially at the top level of management and who apply the ecological systems perspective, need to be able to look at the organisation as a holistic system. This will allow them to see the interrelationships between its divisions and/or departments as well as to recognise how the organisation fits into and affects its overall environment.

4.6.2.2 Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are also referred to as human skills and encompass a manager’s knowledge and ability to work with people. Without people, there will be no need for the existence of management and managers. A successful manager will understand that the biggest asset of the organisation is its people; hence the importance of human skills (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015).

Interpersonal management skills are important for all hierarchical levels in the organisation and the manager is expected to treat his or her staff with respect and dignity. One important element of this skill is communication as Smit and Cronje (1999) state that the manager must be able to communicate, understand human behaviour and motivate groups and individuals to maximise their potential. The interpersonal skills enable managers to lead and motivate employees to accomplish organisational goals.

Basically, interpersonal skills are the life skills used every day in organisations when staff communicate and interact with one another. Once more, a manager who follows an ecological systems perspective would always need to take into consideration how things in the whole organisation are put together in order to make better decisions.

4.6.2.3 Technical skills

Technical skills are the knowledge and abilities needed to perform specialised tasks related to a certain level of management. In the case of a director of an organisation (top level of management) for example, how to construct a budget, write a grant proposal, or design and implement a fair programme evaluation are important technical skills (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015).

Technical skills refer to those capabilities that contribute to the manager's ability to do the job he or she is trained to do. According to Kroon (1995) and DuBrin (1987), technical skills involve the ability to use methods, processes, procedures or techniques in a specialised area. A manager in the middle level of management will for example need to be skilled and knowledgeable in supervision, while a manager at the lower management level might need skills in time management in order to keep appointments with his or her clients.

Although some management skills might be more applicable at a specific level of management, it could be concluded that these skills cannot be separated. Good management requires conceptual, technical skills and people's (interpersonal) skills. For example, writing a proposal for funds (technical) would not guarantee that funds will be obtained, the manager will still need communication and negotiating skills (interpersonal). Above all, the manager must have good analytical skills to assess the situation that warrants fund raising. The suggestion that all social workers are managers is probably, at first glance, not a welcome one. Many practitioner skills in social work are also managerial ones, and all social workers increasingly work for managerialist agendas, so the difference may be one of degree rather than of kind (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006: 13). The understanding here is that a middle or top manager will not show the same degree of empathy to his or her subordinates as what the frontline manager will display towards clientele because a middle or top manager will avoid to start treating a fellow colleague as a client.

In conclusion and with the ecological systems perspective in mind, it goes without saying that human service organisations need social workers with knowledge and abilities to do the job (technical skills), who are competent to work in teams with sound listening and communication competencies (interpersonal skills), and most notably, they must have the ability to evaluate the correlations between various systems of the organisation and the environment (conceptual skills). It is worth noting that in Chapter 3, a human service organisation was presented as an open system consisting of a set of interrelated as well as interdependent parts and that these parts are organised in way that constructs a unified whole. The organisation and its environment can be regarded as an open system with dynamic interactions between the two (Lazenby, 2016:9). Therefore, within this dynamic open system operating in an ever changing environment, a social worker manager is expected to synchronise various work activities for enabling the organisation to meet its goals.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted the importance and relevance of management in social work practice. The levels of management were highlighted and social workers at all levels of management are expected to possess management skills that enable them to do managerial functions through the execution of daily essential management tasks such as workload, supervision, time management and many others, which are discussed in the next chapter. It is through management that social workers ensure that organisations meet their goals and mission by rendering service by grasping any changes that occur in the environment and respond accordingly. The next chapter presents some essential management tasks executed by social workers.

CHAPTER 5

SOME ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The survival of an organisation and its ability to deliver on its mission should be a concern of every manager. Building organisational capacity and strengthening management systems in order to respond to changing public policy, donor or funding systems and evolving service and stakeholder expectations is non-negotiable in social work but this is an area often neglected (Letts, Ryan & Grossman, 1999). To ensure the survival of organisations, managers are expected to execute some essential management tasks on a daily basis.

Most of the time management tasks are confused with management functions. The latter as mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, refers to the worldwide accepted processes of management, namely planning, organising, leading and controlling. On the other hand, management tasks are those day to day tasks that managers execute. For example, when a manager plans, the pertinent question is what are the tasks that he or she performs to carry out that plan? Management tasks are the actual tasks that managers perform in social service organisations, drawing on specific skills and functions. In other words, there is interrelatedness between functions, skills and tasks as demonstrated in figure 4.1 in Chapter 4.

Coulshed and Mullender (2006) consider social workers as practitioner-managers and point out that being a manager consists of more than undertaking managerially dictated duties; there are specific tasks involved, enabling themselves and others to get work done and carrying forward the overall aims of the organisation. They highlight ways in which managers' tasks are distinct:

- Top and middle managers as well as frontline managers control resources and exercise authority.
- The frontline manager is a specialist in delivering the services from his or her particular domain, whilst a top and middle manager's tasks relate to the organisation as a whole or at least one section of it.

Although frontline managers keep an eye to the future when planning their work on a particular case, top and/or middle managers have a macro interest in the future of the whole

organisation, ensuring that it will remain a going concern to meet future needs while also dealing with ever changing current circumstances. Again, this correlates with the notion of the ecological systems perspective that the reciprocal interaction between various systems in an organisation together with the nature of the environment will influence the execution of day to day management tasks. Even though social work and management processes share a concern for problem-solving and enabling individuals, groups and communities, the degree of authority in organising people to get work done is greater for frontline managers.

Weinbach and Taylor (2015: 7) refer to management tasks as management activities and they list among others, the following managerial tasks: analysing situations and conceptualising what is happening, identifying problems and opportunities for addressing them, balancing competing skills, setting priorities for themselves and others, working effectively with others who may not share all of the same values, representing the organisation to staff members and in the community and serving as a role model for paid staff and volunteers, etc.

In the opinion of Smit and Cronje (1999), managers are responsible for handling activities which determine their classification in the organisation. These activities are sometimes grouped together to form management tasks. For example, handling finances responsibly, and reducing expenses whenever possible, could be grouped together to form financial management task.

The essential management tasks executed by social work managers could be determined by the context of the organisations and the list of these tasks could be endless. Above Weinbach and Taylor (2015) listed fourteen management tasks while Pretorius (2014) names five essential managerial tasks, namely, workload management, time management, information management and risk management.

The list of managerial tasks is endless but this study focussed on the five management tasks as outlined by Pretorius (2014) but to contribute to new knowledge in the field of management, especially in Namibia, three more tasks were added to the list, that is, supervision, programme and project management as well as monitoring and evaluation. In Namibia, as far as could be determined, no research on essential management tasks in social work has been carried out, hence it was important to establish which essential management tasks social workers in the Directorate execute on a day to day basis. Given the picture of

social work in Namibia as highlighted in Chapter 2, it is one of the reasons why this study was carried out, for instance, to explore how workload as a management task is performed given the scarcity of social workers in Namibia. Chapter 2 also demonstrated how changes in the political environment affect the operations of social workers, henceforth, it was important to determine how social workers manage change not only in the Directorate but also in the broader Ministry. Of course, the list of essential management tasks was not exhaustive and that is why an empirical study was necessary to find out which management tasks are executed by social workers in the Directorate and also to determine how social workers execute these tasks and why they consider them essential. The how part aided in describing these tasks within an ecological systems perspective.

Thus, this section presents literature on eight essential management tasks, and also how they relate to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services.

5.2 Some essential management tasks

This section discusses some essential management tasks that social workers are expected to execute.

5.2.1 Workload management and measurement

Contemporary social workers deal with complexity, not only within their social work task, but within organisations as well, while they are still expected to retain professional discretion. Social work is considered a stressful profession and there is also external pressure for social work managers to perform. For social work managers to carry out their tasks efficiently and effectively, the organisation should be able to provide a conducive working environment. Moriarty (2004) concurs that within most of the social service professions, there is evidence that the demand for services is increasing and changing, and this results in added pressure on service delivery, hence workload management has become an important and recognised task within human service organisations to manage and measure work carried out by social workers. Orme (1995) affirms that workload management happens at all levels within an organisation.

Workload management in social work should be comprehended within an overall context of fast changes in human service organisations that impact on the professional activities of social

work managers. To this effect, Edwards, Hallett and Sawbridge (2008) identify the following three factors explaining a need to manage workload effectively and transparently:

One, high levels of workload have been connected with negative impacts on practice and outcomes.

Two, high workload levels have been associated with increased stress in a profession that already suffers higher than average levels of stress, and thirdly, high workload carries implications for the workforce in terms of the interaction between stress, burnout and turnover.

Upon close scrutiny, the above-stated factors suggest that workload management influences the effective functioning of social work managers and the organisation should have a sound system of workload management in place. Workload in the workplace means not only the amount of work, but it also involves an environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available. In other words, it is not just the amount of work that makes a difference in employee satisfaction and success, but also the extent to which employees have the resources such as time, office equipment and facilities as well as support to do the work well. It is important to understand this from an ecological systems perspective that a working milieu which is conducive will contribute greatly to work performance, while it is true that if the environment does not provide necessary resources, productivity will be hindered.

Within the Namibian context, the Namibian Government adopted the social development approach as outlined in the United Nations World Summit on Social Development in 1995 (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1997). Consequently, social workers were challenged to abandon the curative or remedial outlook and adopt a developmental approach as they also have to contribute to national development goals according to Namibia's Vision 2030 (Republic of Namibia, 2012). Social development is a process of planned social change for promoting human welfare that attempts to harmonise social policies with measures designed to promote economic development (Midgley, 1995). Despite moving towards a developmental line, social work in Namibia is still facing challenges and social workers are not well grounded in this approach. The challenges could be attributed to the lack of human resources, and lack of a national policy on social services. The Legal Assistance Centre (2012)

confirms the acute shortage of social workers in Namibia, with a ratio of one social worker to 13,519 people. Given the population density of two people per square kilometre, this unequal ratio makes it even harder for social workers to execute their work sufficiently. It is further reported that social workers in Namibia are burdened with administrative tasks, leaving little time for remedial and developmental social work (Midgley, 1995; Patel, 2005). Ananias, Black and Strydom (2017) confirm that social workers' overemphasis on inherited remedial and casework-oriented approaches prevents a shift to developmental social work practice. According to these Ananias, Black and Strydom (2017), with the exception of few public and non-government organisations involved in developmental social work in Namibian communities, the shift to community-oriented developmental social work has been very slow. This is mainly due to lack of coordination and information sharing between the state and private sectors.

The above-described state of affairs is a clear indication that social work managers in the DDSW are under increased pressure to deliver effective and efficient services. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the Directorate to have clear workload management and measurement procedures. In this regard, Stevens (2008) concurs that the social issues that social workers deal with compel organisations to explore the development and/or enhancement of formal and flexible workload management and measurement policies, processes and procedures.

It is evident that if workload management and measurement is poorly managed, it will have implications for social work service delivery as Stevens (2008) reveals that poor workload management has some negative consequences such as the negative impact on practice and outcomes of services by social workers. This also increases stress among social workers which in turn affects their levels of job satisfaction and productivity. Lastly, poor workload management is also associated with burnout, poor retention and high turnover rates of social workers.

Research done by Mabengano (2003) among social workers in Namibia confirms that working conditions and poor workload management contribute to social workers leaving their jobs for greener pastures. One respondent stated that *“working conditions were bad and there was too much workload for the workers”* while another one remarked that *“working conditions were terrible considering the vastness of the region, resources and workload”*.

The description above emphasises the essence of effective workload management, especially in the Directorate where social workers are few and have to work under difficult circumstances with limited resources. An important part of a manager's job is making sure that everyone in his or her team has the right amount of work. Normally managers are tempted to give the workhorse more projects than others especially if he or she will get them done the fastest or to ease up on someone who is struggling. But managers need to be fair when it comes to allocating work. To this effect, Morgenstern (2016) says that managers often do what is easy in the short-term and ask the most "talented person" to do the hard work. The problem is that then nobody else learns how to do the tasks, and the manager is not building the capacity of the team, hence, it is important to look at how managers can make sure that work is evenly distributed. Pretorius (2014) describes three stages of implementing workload management systems, namely: *Planning* which involves setting clear goals in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as board members, employees, service users and donors. Mills and Ivery (1991) maintain that employees provide reality checks. Other authors, who have added their voices to the essence of engaging employees in workload management are Moriarty (2004), and Tooman and Fluke (2002). The latter suggest that when employees are involved in the planning and understanding of how systems will benefit them, implementation is likely to be smoother and their commitment and job satisfaction can be influenced positively.

On the other hand, with regards to the value of involving service users, Pretorius (2004) maintains that there is little evidence in literature about the inclusion of service users in developing workload management. However, Stevens (2008) is of the view that the involvement of service users might provide a significant perspective on their experiences of the contact with employees and the development of services. In addition Itzhaky and Bustin (2005) are of the opinion that in social service organisations, the term "client participation" is often used to describe explicit efforts to involve service recipients in organisational decision making, planning, and evaluation.

The next stage in implementing workload management systems is *analysis*. It deals with examining the type of services rendered by the organisation, the profile of service users, challenges experienced by the organisation, needs expressed by employees, assets and

resources available, skills and experiences of the employees as well as the location where services are delivered (Frost, 2007; Stevens, 2008).

The following analysis is a *process of developing and implementing*, an approach to managing workload, including developing a valid and reliable measurement of workload (Pretorius, 2014). King, Meadows and Le Bas (2004) suggest the following factors in the process of developing and implementing an approach to managing workload: frequency of contact with service users, response difficulty (complexity of cases), intervention type, competence/seniority, caseload maturity (rate of new cases), location of clients (allowing traveling time), and other roles other than case management. The argument is that all the above stated factors are determined by the availability of time, and time management as a managerial task is discussed in the next session.

To conclude this section, it is evident that workload is an essential management task and social work managers need to develop a workload management outline to ensure effective and efficient work delivery. From an ecological systems perspective, all managers and social workers from all levels of management should be involved in workload management to ensure that policies and procedures are ready to cope with unforeseen changes in the environment.

5.2.2 Time management

Time management can be considered as the way one divides his or her time between specific activities and tasks. Time management is about managing how you use your time (Manktelow, 2006). Good time management enables employees to work smarter. In other words, not working harder but getting more done in less time. Failing to manage time can have negative effects such as missed deadlines, inefficient work flow and low staff productivity, poor work quality, poor professional reputation and a stalled career and finally high stress levels.

On the contrary, effective time management can have benefits like greater productivity and efficiency, a better professional reputation, less stress, increased opportunities for advancement as well as greater opportunities to achieve important life and career goals.

Time management is especially important for human service organisations because they so often must operate under time pressures (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). Weinbach and Taylor (2015) further emphasise that effective time management requires managers to know how to manage their own time and model time management for their subordinates and that they display characteristics such as knowing how to rank-order their tasks so that they can focus most of their energies on the most important ones, the ones that must be completed first. This is in agreement with Covey's (2015) principle of "*first things first.*" Good time managers plan ahead and allow enough time to perform important tasks. They meet deadlines and remind others to stay on track. In addition, they keep up with information as it is received and delegate tasks that are of lower priority to others, whenever possible.

Time management is crucial in human service organisations because human service practitioners operate under pressure; they have to meet deadlines for court reports, have to manage heavy caseloads as a result of human resource shortages and deal with human problems that are complex. In Namibia, where social workers are overloaded and function under an unstable environment as described in the previous chapters, time management is a must. This study therefore brings out how social workers in the Directorate manage their time. To help manage time effectively, Pretorius (2014) identifies the following three important time management aspects:

- i. *Setting goals* is a requirement for good time management. A goal is a desired end towards which an activity is directed (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney & Strom-Gottfried, 2012). Thomack (2012) states that without goals it is impossible to set priorities. When setting goals it is useful to apply the acronym SMART (Hepworth *et al.*, 2012) which stands for:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Relevant

T = Time-bound

This simply means that goals should be clear and specific, and one should be able to assess them and when goals are specific and measurable, it is easy to achieve them. Goals set should also be relevant to the mission of the organisation and most importantly indicate when goals need to be completed.

- (ii) Another important time management aspect is *prioritising*. Social workers engage in too many activities and tasks on a daily basis and prioritising these tasks will help them to focus on what is important and will contribute significantly to the achievement of goals. Prioritising enables workers to have control over their time and to be more proactive rather than reactive. Thomack (2012) suggests three useful ways to prioritise which are; what must be done, what could be done and what needs not to be done. Pretorius (2014) suggests a practical technique to assist with time management as demonstrated in figure 5.1 below.

	Due soon	Not due soon
Important Tasks		
Unimportant Tasks		

Figure 5.1: Practical technique to prioritise tasks

Source: Pretorius (2014)

The development of an action programme refers to a comprehensive to-do-list and is considered to be an effective way to coherently prioritise, manage and evaluate daily tasks (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006). In the era of advanced technology, the action programme can be stored electronically, making it easy to make changes and consequently save time and for social workers it will mean keeping clients' information confidential by creating different folders for their various activities which can be filed on a password protected computer.

Activities have to be well organised in periodic cycles such as daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006).

Delegation is another effective skill in time management and it is a relatively simple way for managers to free themselves of time-consuming chores, give employees opportunities to develop and increase the number of tasks accomplished by the team (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2012).

To conclude, time management is a critical skill that is required to be successful in the human services field, especially in the DDSWS where social work managers have humongous amounts of work and responsibilities. Social workers in the Directorate face heavy caseloads accompanied by a lot of paperwork and service coordination that is expected from case managers. The amount of time available to handle such a heavy workload remains a challenge and that is why time management is so important.

5.2.3 Information management

Information management has to do with a cycle of organisational activities, namely the gaining of information from one or more sources and the distribution of that information to those who need it. Human service practitioners and especially social work managers ought to understand the essence of communication in organisations. Good communication is essential in social work in providing information, supporting, problem solving and bringing about change. The manager plays a significant role in the management of information, communication flow, and maintaining the existing systems within organisations (Smit & Cronje, 1999).

Information management is a method of supporting organisations in the environment that they face in the 21st century (Corbitt, 2003). Social workers are expected to keep records and documents of their work, and recording, documenting and storing of information have always been part of the social work practice.

The management of information is changing especially now in the era of information communication technologies. Organisations are moving from the industrial age to the information age where many of the fundamental assumptions of the industrial age are becoming obsolete (Hughes et al., 2012). Pretorius (2014) adds that we now live in the information age or information-based society, and, today, information is a valuable resource

and an asset, that is freely available to those who have access to it. Although information management is evolving, and technology is viewed as a useful tool, social workers in the Directorate seem not to develop with time. Social workers still keep files on shelves and in old steel cabinets clearly marked casework, group work, community work, correspondences, etc. It will be exciting to see social workers in Namibia storing their information on their computers in the near future, but to come there social work managers have to overcome some challenges such as the lack of office equipment. Chapters 2 and 3 highlighted the poor working conditions for social workers in the Directorate where in some instances office equipment such as telephones and computers are lacking. There is also a serious shortage of office space for social workers in the Ministry.

All staff members in an organisation at all levels of management are responsible for information management in an organisation. According to Powell (2003), the responsibility for managing information rests with the organisation's management and with managers at all levels and Powell (2003), lists the following benefits of information management to an organisation:

- Contributing to the efficiency of the organisation. This has to do with the collection of good quality information that is available and easily accessible. This information is also distributed appropriately to those who need it.
- Making the organisation more effective. This means that well-constructed information is made available to staff members so that this contributes to learning.
- Facilitate creativity within the organisation. In relation to the ecological systems perspective, managers need to be innovative, develop new ideas, relationships and practices in order to thrive in changing environments. New information helps in developing new insights and stimulates innovation.
- Empower employees and partners. As the saying goes, information is power and well informed employees will make better informed decisions in their work, hence, it is the responsibility of managers to make sure that information is provided to all staff members and not only selected few.
- Facilitating creativity within the organisation. To prosper in changing environments, organisations have to be innovative, develop new ideas, relationships and practice.

- Empowering employees and partners. When information is privileged to only a few people in an organisation and not readily available to all it deters participation and restricts the capacity to make informed decisions.

In this era of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), information management will be ever evolving and this puts demands on social work managers to move with times to be more efficient and effective in service delivery. Within the ecological systems perspective, managers should always be abreast of what is happening in the various departments as well as in the organisation at large so that they can participate in decision making about issues that concern their departments.

5.2.4 Risk management

Managing risk is a daily challenge for all social workers throughout the world as they deal with different characteristics coming from diverse backgrounds but since social work is a value-based profession, one expects that social workers should be in a better position to manage risk. Managing risks raises issues about values and ethical codes which have long been fundamental to social work education and practice throughout the world (Hepworth, *et al.*, 2012). Ethical awareness is fundamental to social work practice where respect for human rights and diversities, and a commitment to promoting social justice are central; hence it is concluded that the ability and commitment of social workers to act ethically should be one of the essential aspects of risk management in social work.

Risk management is a broad term that refers to efforts to protect clients, practitioners, and employers. Risk management includes the prevention of lawsuits and licensing board complaints (Reamer, 2014). Pretorius (2014) explains that social work is governed by risk assessment and risk management. Managing risk in organisations is about the application of policies and procedures to the tasks of identifying, analysing and assessing risks, determining the degree of exposure to risk that organisations can accommodate, and taking appropriate steps to avoid litigation, loss of reputation or injury (Francis & Armstrong, 2003). Within the Namibian context, social work is regulated by the Social Work and Psychology Act No. 6 of 2004 and the Health Professions Councils of Namibia (HPCN). Risk management is important to enable organisations to minimise negative outcomes which can arise in the delivery of welfare services. In social work, the particular risks for which human service organisations and

individual practitioners can be held accountable relate mostly to their statutory duties. Statutory duties involve fundamental considerations about risk to children and vulnerable adults.

Hopkin (2014) states that the regulation of social service professionals and social service organisations is an attempt to assess and manage risks in the profession as well as to impose standards of professional practice. To this effect, Webb (2006) mentions that the process of risk assessment is relatively well developed in the social services and medical professions. According to Webb (2006), risk assessment attempts to determine the probability of injury or harm occurring in the future, and also tries to predict its eventuality in an attempt to prevent reoccurrence and to protect vulnerable groups. In terms of social work, risk assessment means careful analysis by the manager of what in the work environment could cause harm not only to clients, but also to the staff, so that the manager can decide if enough precautions are in place or should do more to prevent harm. The following statement could be evidence that risk assessment in the Directorate needs more attention:

“Occasionally we have people coming here carrying weapons threatening to kill us because of what we do with no security guards at our offices to protect us, our (social workers) security concerns have not been taken seriously by the top management in the Ministry” (Tjihenua, 2015:2).

The point is that risk assessment helps managers to know what safeguards are needed to be in a better position to manage risks.

However, risk management in social work practice seems not to be well documented and Haines (2016) postulates that the management of risk in social work is relatively underdeveloped as compared to risk assessment in business as an example. Davies (2000) affirms this by stating that risk management is an area that has little development in social work writing. This could probably be the case in social work as compared to business where profit making is the main reason why business organisations exist. Risk implies future uncertainty about deviation from expected earnings or expected outcome. A risk is not an uncertainty (where neither the probability nor the mode of occurrence is known), a peril (cause of loss), or a hazard (something that makes the occurrence of a peril more likely or more severe). A risk is often normatively defined in probabilistic and mathematical terms as

it relates to the expected losses which can be caused by a risky event and to the probability of this event happening. It is mapped to the probability of some event which is seen as undesirable. The harsher the loss, as it relates to the likelihood of the event, the worse the risk (Webb, 2006).

The engagement of social workers with their clients (individuals, couples, families, small groups, communities, and organisations) puts them in a situation to face risks on a daily basis. Effective risk management protects clients, social workers, as well as the image of the organisation, while risk that is managed poorly can harm clients and others. In social work practice, risks arise when social workers do not adhere to prevailing professional ethical standards and other relevant laws and regulations. Risks can also occur when social workers fail to obtain or use proper education and training, when they are impaired and/or when supervision is limited or non-existent. In social work practice, key risks may involve client rights, informed consent, confidentiality, conflicts of interest or value dilemma, boundary issues and dual relationships.

Webb (2006) identifies four major components of risk management, the first one being the identification of risk. Tchankova (2002) describes the identification of risk as a process that reveals and determines the possible individual, organisational risks as well as conditions arising risks. Questions such as, “how are the organisational resources threatened”, and “what can prevent the organisation from achieving its goals?” can assist in risk identification.

The second component involves analysis and assessment in terms of levels of impact. This involves the analysis of sources of risk, which are those elements in the organisation that can facilitate positive or negative outcomes. Furthermore, analysis and assessment in terms of impact involve hazard factors (conditions or circumstances which increase the chance to lose and their severity); perils (something close to risk which causes negative or non-profitable results); and resources exposed to risk (objects facing losses or gains),

The development and implementation of risk-reducing measures is the third component which is concerned with the development and implementation of appropriate strategies and measures to address, minimise or prevent the risk.

The fourth component of risk management is about monitoring the risk and it entails regular monitoring of risk-reducing measures. This requires consistent feedback to middle and/or top management.

In conclusion, social workers could use a variety of methods to manage risks, namely consulting a supervisor, adhering to social work professional Code of Ethics, and using supervision. From an ecological systems perspective, social workers should always identify and analyse possible risks within the organisational environment and follow the risk management process to deal with risks.

5.2.5 Change and transformation management

As mentioned in previous chapters, organisations are open systems, and as such, social welfare organisations as well as social workers do not operate in isolation. Social workers are employed in organisations and the latter are part of a broader society where increasing changes occur. Within an ecological systems perspective, the need for change and adaptation is influenced by the government's decisions and changes in its political agendas. Chapters 2 and 3 revealed how changes in the Namibian Government influenced social service delivery and the general operation of social workers. Therefore, it is critical for social work managers to be ready at all times to reorganise and adapt in response to change, be it within or outside the organisation, in order to preserve the integrity of the organisation. In this line of thought, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) affirm that different areas of change tend to affect the work environment in human service organisations. Change is sometimes challenging but necessary, and has to be managed (Breuggemann, 2014). There are rapid changes that take place in the environment that must be successfully managed and integrated into corporate strategies, plans, structures and systems (Meyer & Botha, 2004).

The starting point for any discussion on change and transformation must involve the concept of paradigms. A paradigm is the general organising principle governing perceptions, including beliefs, values and techniques that describe what exists, where to look, and what the person can expect to discover (O'Connor & Netting, 2009). In other words, a paradigm is a frame of reference, a view, a perspective or simply the way people see things. Figure 5.2 demonstrates examples of paradigms.

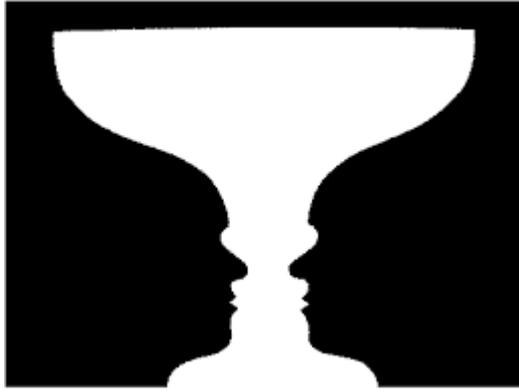


Figure 5.2: *Illustration of paradigms*

Source: *Adapted from O'Connor and Netting (2009)*

The first look at figure 5.2 could either be a white vase or two black faces looking at each other. Depending on the perspective, one might at first only see one of the pictures. During the change process, the same scenario might occur where managers miss out on information if they believe that the way they see something is the only right perspective. The argument here is that managers should be able to make others see the picture of the future, market the benefits of the new paradigm and repeatedly motivate others to fight for the achievement of the future paradigm.

Before defining change and transformation management, it is important to create an understanding of what is change and transformation. Change is a new state of things that is different from the old state of things. Change only takes place when something changes its state or form over time (French & Bell, 1995: 3). Transformation is a change in form, outward appearance, character or disposition (Meyer & Botha, 2004). Rumelt (1994, cited by Meyer & Botha 2004) describes transformation as the non-incremental and simultaneous change of an organisation's strategy and structure, systems and processes, measurements and controls, culture and expectations, costs and capabilities. Thus, change management is the process of mobilising resources through the planning, co-ordination and implementation of activities and initiatives to bring about the desired change (Meyer & Botha, 2004). To this end, transformational change requires fundamental efforts to shift the beliefs, values and linear steps to organisational change to new ways of doing things (Stead & Stead, 2014). In other words, change management refers to the task of managing change (Nickols, 2016).

Breuggemann (2014) mentions three types of change, the first one being incremental or first-order change which has a strong element of being proactive, and Breuggemann (2014) underlines that social workers have to be vigilant and proactive in a responsible way. The second one is transitional change which requires the reorganisation or undoing of previous ineffective or unsuccessful ways or methods of work and the implementation of new strategies (Hafford-Letchfield, 2009). The third type of change is called transformational or second-order change. This kind of change appears to be complex, intense and distressing. Hafford-Letchfield (2009), notes that transformational change is comprehensive, revolutionary and often radical and affects all levels in an organisation.

Other authors who have added their voice to change management are Weinbach and Taylor (2015), who have noted that with the changing social work environment and the people it serves, change management is a key management task. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) define change management as the process of managing and supporting the transition of an organisation in response to the environmental, technological, geopolitical, funding and maintaining the continuity of operations with as little disruption as possible.

In Namibia, changes started to take place since 1990 with the restructuring of social welfare services and one of the challenges still faced by social workers is to have a standardised national welfare policy to assist them in managing their services and the changes that affect their operations. Social work in Namibia is still undergoing transformation and currently there are no social policies to guide social welfare service delivery in Namibia (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2010). Moreover, Ananias and Lightfoot (2012) reported that studies show that Namibian social workers could play leading roles in developing programmes, projects and policies to reduce income inequality through the use of the social development approach. However, the move towards developmental social welfare displays some challenges. For example, social welfare was reorganised and consolidated by giving a comprehensive sole mandate to the Ministry of Health and Social Services as the ministry in charge of welfare services. In 1996, the Ministry embarked on developing a national developmental social welfare policy. However, this policy was never finalised as the social welfare mandate was split and distributed among the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Veteran Affairs (Ananias & Lightfoot, 2012). In 2015, another ministry was created,

namely, the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare which is another change in social welfare delivery in Namibia. The argument is that the mobilisation and organising of resources for development in Namibia would be facilitated more effectively if the social objectives and strategies which are scattered in various sectoral plans could be coordinated within a unifying and systematic conceptual and organisational framework (Namibia, 1997). More than twenty years after this observation, Namibia still does not have a national policy to guide social welfare service delivery. In this regard, Chiwara and Lombard (2017) confirm that the policy development culminated in a draft Green Paper in 1996 and a draft White Paper on social welfare in 1999, but the policy drafts became inapplicable. These two documents were thus abandoned as a result of institutional and structural challenges.

As a result of this, and given the socio-historical past, social welfare services in Namibia are in constant transformation and change. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, and in the previous chapters, social welfare services in Namibia are still unsteady, putting more pressure on social work managers to reflect seriously on their work and finding constructive ways on how to manage change and transformation.

In conclusion, all managers at all levels should be involved in the process of managing change and transformation and when dealing with change they should be fully aware of the environment in which the organisation operates. Moreover, social work managers should enhance their skills in transformation and change management. From an ecological systems perspective, when dealing and managing transformation and change, it is critical for managers to be aware of the organisational setting. Lewis *et al.* (2007) maintain that it is evident that in the often unsettled environment of social service professionals, good leadership, employee empowerment, and participative management as well as transparent regular communication are inherent change tools.

5.2.6 Supervisory management

As alluded to in Chapter 2, the Social Work and Psychology Council, established by an Act of Parliament in 2004, regulates the practice of social work in Namibia, hence the requirement that social workers should practice under supervision (Namibia, 2004). Supervision is a key support activity which has a long and rich history in social work practice. It is not only necessary for the professional development and growth of social workers, but it is also an important managerial task to promote staff competence and to ensure that the work of the

organisation is carried out effectively. Engelbrecht (2014) underlines that the terms, format, structure and tradition of supervision have developed and remained constant worldwide over the past 80 years in the social work profession. According to Engelbrecht (2014), supervision promotes the strengths of social workers by means of on-going supervision, through a developmental approach to supervisory activities in the best interests of service users, hence supervision is an important managerial task.

Historically supervision has been defined in terms of clinical or remedial social work, but with more emphasis on developmental approach to social work, it means that there is no longer a “one-size-fits-all” supervision definition. In this respect, Barker (1995) notes that the definition of supervision should correlate with the context and Tsui (2005) also proposes various approaches to supervision such as the normative approach which attempts to answer the questions relating to what the supervisor should actually do. In addition, there is a pragmatic approach which attempts to define action guidelines for supervision and lastly an empirical approach which entails the collection of empirical data about the roles, styles and behaviour of supervisors.

This implies that a combination of various approaches contributes to finding a more inclusive definition of supervision depending on the context. For social workers in Namibia who seem to still follow the curative clinical approach despite the official adoption of a developmental approach, there is a challenge to contextualise supervision. Therefore, there is a need to stress the importance of social work supervision in the Directorate of Developmental Welfare Services. The lack of proper guidelines and standards of supervision in the Directorate could be seen as a concern. Kaseke (1995) states that the Directorate lacks standards for supervision and there is no universal way of applying supervision. A study by Muinjangu (2007) reveals that the Directorate lacks guidelines and policies on supervision, and that creates confusion regarding qualifications needed to become a supervisor.

Currently, every supervisor has his or her own way of carrying out supervision. The main important reason why supervision is so vital in Namibia is for professional survival. If social workers want to survive professionally, then much attention should be paid to supervision. The same study disclosed that the majority (71%) of social workers indicated that they were working without supervision, while only a small percentage (29%) were working under

supervision (Mujinjangue, 2007). This is however, in contradiction with the Social Work and Psychology Council which requires that all social workers should work under supervision.

The pioneer of supervision in social work, Kadushin (1995), defines a supervisor as an agency member who is given authority to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate on-the-job performance of supervisees for the work he/she is held accountable.

Supervision is a formal arrangement through which supervisees review and reflect on their work. It is related to ongoing learning and performance. Social work supervision is an interactive process in a positive and non-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives of supervision. It entails educational, supportive and administrative functions that promote efficient and professional social work services (Engelbrecht, 2015).

Administrative supervisory function: enables the practitioner to learn, grow and develop professionally so that he/she can render more effective services, and that they act professionally according to the organisational and professional ethics.

Educational supervisory function: has got to do with staff development through continuous professional development as mentioned in chapter two. The manager's educational supervisory task is to teach practitioners relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes through coaching and mentoring that contributes to increased professionalism.

Supportive supervisory function: social workers work in turbulent environments and face a variety of job-related stresses. Resources are needed to help them deal with the stress. The supportive supervisory task helps practitioners to adjust to job-related stress.

In conclusion, supervision is a vital managerial task in social work practice since it:

- Promotes professional and personal development;
- Provides learning opportunities so as to enhance quality of work;
- Builds professional confidence, creativity and new ways of thinking; and
- Encourages motivation for work.

In the context of the ecological systems perspective, organisational dynamics, the environment, supervisor and supervisee experience as well as various theories and models

on the fundamentals of supervision, these are all factors that can influence a social work manager in executing his or her supervisory task.

5.2.7 Program and project management

Although in practice the words, program and project are used interchangeably, there is a difference between the two and both need to be managed effectively as they are also interconnected. The aim of all social welfare service organisations is to render comprehensive services to their specific client-system. To achieve this aim, proper strategic and operational planning is required, and in particular, client- or community-focused programs and projects should be developed by social work managers. Social workers and social work managers are constantly involved in program development and designing projects (Herbst, 2014). Before project and program management are discussed in detail, it is important to define the two terms.

Program

A program is a collection of multiple projects that are managed and coordinated as one unit with the objective of achieving (often intangible) outcomes and benefits for the organisation. Programs are structural containers for long-term commitments, services and/or activities designed to directly or indirectly address human needs. A program is a set of activities designed to fulfil a social purpose (Netting, O'Connor & Fauri, 2008). In this respect, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) define a program as a complex and integrated system that has been created to address some problem. Thus, program management is the process of managing several related projects, often with the intention of improving an organisation's performance (Lewis *et al.*, 2012).

Project

A project is an arrangement of distinctive, complex, and linked activities having one goal or purpose and that must be completed by a specific time, within a specific budget, and according to specifications. Thus, a project refers to a series of planned tasks which aim to reach specific objectives within certain time and budgetary constraints (Weyers, 2011). Hence, project management refers to the steps a manager follows to complete a specific task

and numerous sub-tasks according to a specific schedule and through continuous monitoring (Flanagan & Finger, 1998). Furthermore, project management involves the managing and monitoring of the process of implementing a project within the specified limitations of the organisation. In social work practice, project management is concerned with improving performance with very limited resources in dynamic and changing internal and external policy and social environments (Spolander & Martin, 2012). This relates to the ecological systems perspective and has relevance to social workers in the Directorate who have to cope with limited resources in an environment where the health component is priority number one and statements such as “social workers being cousins” in the Ministry and “the health component dominating” as expressed in previous chapters are indications of how the environment can influence the execution of managerial tasks.

Given the above-stated definitions, the conclusion is that programs are ongoing, replicable and are developed to address a specific problem while projects are temporary, limited and unique. An example of a program in a human service organisation could be a program to reduce poverty amongst unemployed adults living with HIV/AIDS, while there would be several projects within that program for example baking and catering, shoemaking, making baskets, selling second-hand clothes, needlework, food gardening and beadwork.

In other words, projects should speak to organisational programs and both need good management to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. In this regard, steps in program management are discussed next, and then followed by a discussion on project management steps.

Following are the steps in program management (Cole & Barker, 2009):

Step 1: Assess the context refers to making an assessment of the external and internal environment to establish the need to be met.

Step 2: Clarify and confirm core purpose and broad objectives: after assessing the environment, the organisation then needs to clarify and confirm its own purpose and broad objectives to see whether the need can be met with the available resources.

Step 3: Collect information: as much information as possible needs to be collected on the identified need in order to determine how the need is to be met.

Step 4: Set objectives: in order to attain the identified need, the manager should set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) objectives.

Step 5: Plan: this involves spanning the activities and staff to be allocated to perform those activities.

Step 6: Implementation entails deploying staff and resources to actually put the plans into action.

Step 7: Monitor against short-term targets: short-term and long term targets are set and certain interval actions are monitored against the short-term goals.

Step 8: Monitor against long-term targets: entails the collection of information about the progress of an activity while it is happening.

Step 9: Review has to do with taking all the gathered information and putting it into a usable form for review.

Step 10: Evaluate: evaluation is the final step in program management and shows whether the program has actually achieved its goals/objectives. Evaluation also looks at how resources were used.

With regards to project management, Greer (2014) outlines the following five crucial steps of project management:

Step 1: Initiating is the initial step where the problem is identified and defined, and the needs are analysed. A feasibility study is carried out to test the viability or practicability of the project and a cost benefit analysis is normally an important exercise at this stage. After asking why, the project manager should work on a general statement of what the project is about and makes a list of possible constraints (more about project constraints later in this chapter).

Stage 2: Planning: after the feasibility study is conducted, then the project manager can start planning the project by performing the following tasks:

- Defining the project,
- Putting together the project parameters and setting the indicators for success,
- Listing the tasks to be completed and allocating them to the various individuals,
- Working out a time schedule for the project,

- Conducting a cost analysis of the project, and
- Formulating an action plan.

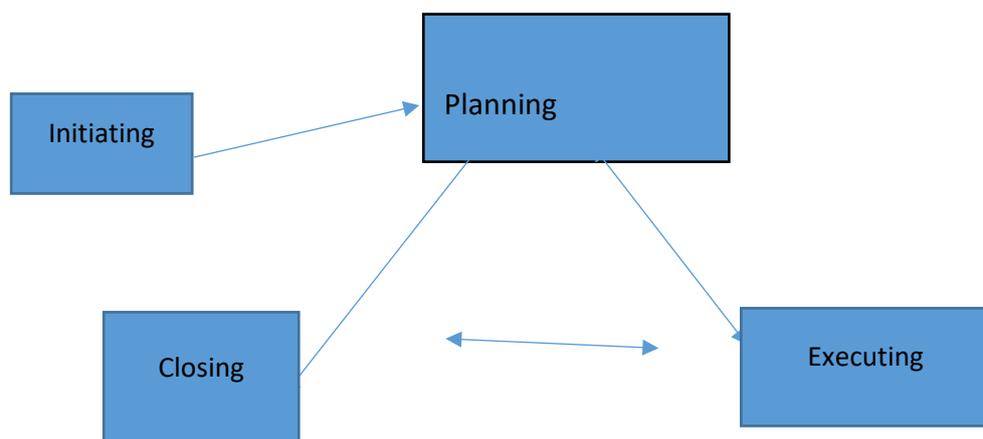
Stage 3: Executing is the carrying out of the project. In this stage, the plans developed in step 2 are implemented and the manager assigns project tasks to project team members. At this stage, the monitoring of key milestones of the project is vital and can be done through various monitoring and evaluation tools. The manager has a huge responsibility of managing and resolving problems, motivating team members and building an environment for success.

Step 4: Controlling includes monitoring the project and correcting deviations. To carry out monitoring, the project manager needs baselines for comparison like the schedule baseline (GANTT CHART) and cost baseline (budget). He/she needs to constantly monitor the schedule/budget and to also monitor the quality of tasks completed.

Step 5: Closing involves the termination of the project, delivery of the project output (if there is any) and evaluation of the project. Evaluation is concerned about “lessons learned” by asking the following questions:

- What did the project team do right?
- What does the project team need to improve?
- What would the project team do differently next time?
- What new or different approaches might be worth trying?

The above-stated steps are connected to one another and during project management there is a back-and forth movement in the steps (Figure 5.3). For instance, while in step three, a need might arise to go back to step 2 and determine whether planning was done correctly or not.



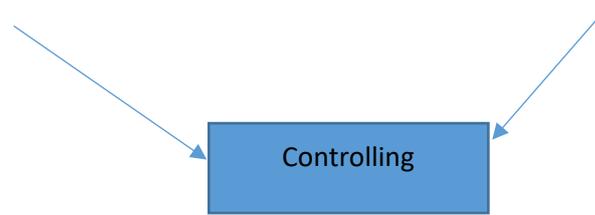


Figure 5.3: *The five steps of project management.*

Source: *Adapted from Greer (2014)*

In managing programs and projects, Haugan (2012) reminds us that there are elements that managers need to take into account which may impact the outcome of programmes and projects. These elements are normally referred to as triple constraints of all projects and they are time, resources and performance. Constraint is defined as a constraining condition, agency, or force that limits the system's performance in a given context/environment (Mayer, Painter & Lingineni, 1995). Time is the only project constraint which managers cannot control. Unlike resources which can be reserved, or performance which can be adjusted, time always moves at a steady pace. Therefore, project managers should accurately project the amount of time required for teams to meet their goals under expected conditions as well as follow the project team's progress against a series of indicators.

At some point during the steps of a program or project, managers have to deal with resource constraints and resources include budget, labour, human and facilities. If the resources are carefully managed, they may have negative effects that can cause project delays, rushed projects with elevated amounts of mistakes, high stress levels and even the loss of good employees.

Furthermore, Haugan (2012) mentions performance as the third constraint of managing projects. Performance refers to the scope of the work that has to be carried out on a project. It covers the sum of all the products and/or services to be provided. In other words, performance describes what is being done and how much of it. For a project team to function well, everyone must be GREAT:

- Goals – project team members should be conversant with the programme/project goals/objectives
- Roles – they should know their roles
- Expectations – know what is expected of each member

- Accountabilities – who is accountable for what?
- Timing – when must this be done, how do my responsibilities affect other team members?

Quality in the centre of the triangle symbolises that the quality of any project depends on the project's performance, resources, and time spent on the project.

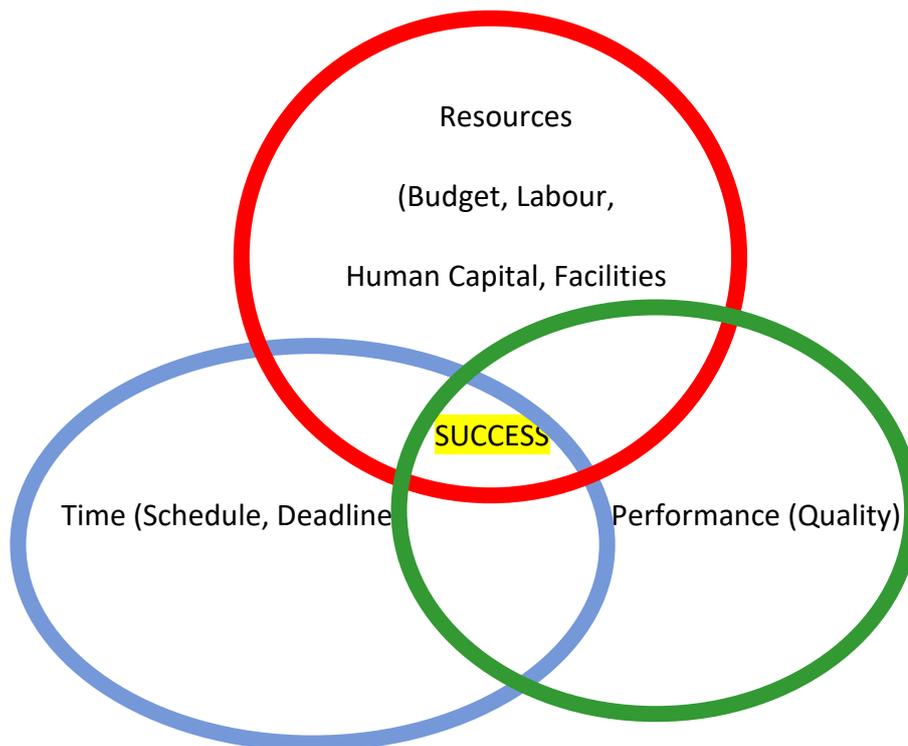


Figure 5.4: *The triple constraints of program/project management*

Source: *Adapted from Symonds (2017)*

In conclusion, social workers and managers who follow the ecological systems perspective will always take into account the organisational climate and culture and the influence it has on executing program and project management tasks. Two important components of program and project management are monitoring and evaluation which are discussed next as essential management tasks.

5.2.8 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) is an important component of management in social work practice and it is no longer seen as integrated in the rest of the other managerial tasks, but is considered as an essential management task on its own. M & E helps social workers to track

the effectiveness of their work and to assist with quality improvement. It helps organisations to better understand what work and resources are still needed. Before further discussions on monitoring and evaluation, it is vital to describe each term briefly.

Monitoring refers to the collection and analysis of information about a programme or project while the programme or project is ongoing. In other words, it is a continuing managerial task that aims to provide the management and social workers with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. There are four reasons why managers and social workers need to monitor progress on a regular basis. Managers need to assess the effectiveness of change strategies and interventions. Social workers are increasingly required to document the efficacy of services (Thyer, 2002). The second reason according to Corcoran and Vandiver (1996), is to guide clients' efforts towards goal attainment. Evaluating progress towards goals enhances continuity of focus and efforts and promotes the efficient use of time. Another reason for monitoring progress is to keep abreast of clients' reactions to progress or lack thereof. When they believe that they are not progressing, clients tend to become discouraged and they may lose confidence in social workers. By assessing progress periodically, social workers will be alerted to negative client reactions that might otherwise undermine their engagement with clients. Lastly, monitoring aids managers to concentrate on goal attainment and to evaluate progress. These efforts tend to sustain clients' motivation to work on their problems (Hepworth *et al.*, 2013).

Evaluation, unlike monitoring, is the periodic, reflective assessment of an organisation, programme or project that might be conducted internally or externally. Evaluation methods have evolved to include the extent to which interventions influence both intermediate and final outcomes (DePoy & Gilson, 2003). In the final analysis, evaluation assists you to answer the essential questions related to the effectiveness of intervention strategies and to document changes in client conditions (Bloom, Fischer & Orme, 2006; Corcoran & Gingerich, 1994). This information is critical to the feedback loop so that it can improve both the social worker's and the program's effectiveness and ensure ethical practices. Evaluation is not a one-time event, but an exercise involving assessments of differing scope and depth carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs for evaluative knowledge and learning during the effort to achieve an outcome.

Based on the above description, monitoring and evaluation can help managers and the entire organisation to obtain from past and ongoing activities, relevant information that can be useful to fine-tune the program/projects, re-designing and further planning. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation enable social workers to assess if work was going in the right direction, determine progress and success as well as how to improve future efforts. It goes without saying that managers should apply information collected through monitoring and evaluation to improve strategies, programs, projects, and activities. Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation focused on assessing inputs and implementation processes, but today the focus has shifted from assessing the contributions of various factors to a given development outcome. Gargani (2012) supports this statement by stating that monitoring and evaluation has become a much specialised intervention or managerial task in terms of the social benefit sector, and that monitoring and evaluation should be a collaborative attempt between social workers and evaluation specialists such as academics and consultants.

According to Marshall and Suarez (2014), M & E represent a broad range of activities used to assess the performance of an organisation in meeting the needs of diverse stakeholders. Lewis *et al.* (2012) affirm the importance of active involvement of all stakeholders, including all staff involved in the program/project and external experts in the field of evaluation. Furthermore, M & E encompasses recording, data collection of implemented programs as well as how implementation was carried out.

To conclude the discussion on monitoring and evaluation, it is clear that it has become an important management task and that social workers have to rely greatly on M & E if they want to be efficient and effective in delivering social services. M & E is also important in program and project management, especially if social workers want to ensure sustainability. Given the environmental complexities of both the organisations and the clients that social workers serve, M & E should be a day to day task performed by social workers.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter described various essential management tasks and their relevance to social work practice. It is clear that the various tasks cannot be executed in isolation from one another. They are intertwined and all contribute to efficient and effective service delivery. Moreover, organisational dynamics and environments have an influence on the execution of

management tasks; the environment can either support or hinder social workers in their operations. The next chapter presents the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study empirically explores some essential management tasks executed by social workers on frontline and middle levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services in Namibia. The study aimed to understand what the managerial tasks performed by social workers were, how the tasks were performed and why these tasks are essential. Moreover, the study sought to hear the voices of social workers and how they experience the execution of these management tasks, hence, the research aim was tested empirically through this research study. Neuman (2000) states that social sciences and their interpretation of social research often involves the study of people's beliefs, behaviour, interactions, institutions and their environment, hence, the appropriateness of the ecological systems perspective to develop an understanding of how the working environment impacts on the execution of some management tasks.

This study sought to provide new knowledge in an area which was not known. Fouché and Delport (2011) affirm that research is a process of scientific enquiry that can take many forms but strives to answer a research problem by offering insights into the topic. Research is a process that starts with an identified issue or problem to be explored or resolved and arriving at conclusions that provide satisfaction to the researcher and other stakeholders. It is important to appreciate the research process and methodology in order to develop insights regarding the processes of the study. Furthermore, understanding this process ensures that the researcher obeyed ethical guidelines as presented by Stellenbosch University, and that thorough scientific methods were observed in conducting the study. Consequently, the methodology employed in the research process sufficiently answers the research questions and aims which were formulated at the proposal development stage and finally forming the structure for the study process. The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of the nature and scope of the essential management tasks executed by social workers at all three levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia within the ecological systems perspective.

Delport and Fouché (2011) outline some steps common to the research process, and hence, this chapter is divided into the following four sections:

- Research design and approach,
- Research process,
- Research ethics, and
- Limitations of the study.

Each section is deliberated based on its application to the research study as well as explaining some of the decisions made during the research process.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The research design and approach give the framework of the research processes and steps while undertaking the research and thus inform the decisions that were taken by the researcher. Furthermore, it provides an indication of how participants were engaged and how the research will be conducted (Mouton, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the research design, research approach and research strategy are sketched in this section.

6.2.1 Research design

De Langen (2009) defines the research design as a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. It is a plan that explains how, where and when data are to be collected and analysed. In other words, the research design is a scientific inquiry about making observations, interpreting, analysing the observations as well as drawing conclusions on these observations.

The aim of this study was to examine essential management tasks performed by social workers at frontline and middle levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia. In order to achieve this aim, the researcher had to ask what management tasks were executed, how they were executed and why they are essential for social workers. For this study to offer answers to these questions, the research employed exploratory and descriptive research designs. The exploratory research design is suitable when the researcher is examining a new interest or social phenomenon, such as essential management tasks executed by social workers (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006; Fouché & Delport, 2011). The essential management tasks of social workers at frontline and middle levels of management encompass a relatively new topic. As the review of literature reveals, there is limited research and literature available in this field, especially from an ecological systems perspective and even less so in the Namibian context. Therefore, exploratory research was apt, although according to Rubin and Babbie (2014), it cannot always provide conclusive answers for the research but merely point the way towards an answer, hence it was for this reason that the exploratory research design was combined with a descriptive design. Descriptive research provides a more accurate and detailed description of the phenomena being examined, which complements the exploratory design (Grosser, 2016). It was necessary to combine these two research designs as there was limited information on the research topic, as well as the fact that the research aimed at exploring essential management tasks of social workers by describing their experiences in executing these tasks. The section below details the application of this research design by looking at the approach which was applied.

6.2.2 Research approach

Research approach refers to the framework that directs the research by outlining the plan for how data will be collected and analysed (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research is the approach

normally linked with the social constructivist philosophy which underpins the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analysing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions (Creswell, 2003; Rubin & Babbie, 2014).

The researcher was interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of social workers' experiences on the execution of their managerial tasks and thus, this study adopted a qualitative approach. Moreover, the combined research designs, namely, exploratory and descriptive, are relevant to the qualitative approach. Qualitative research seeks to tell the story of a particular group's experiences in their own words, and it is therefore focused on narratives. As such, qualitative research tends to be more exploratory in nature, seeking to provide insights into how individuals understand aspects of their worlds (Kruger & Mitchell, 2007).

A qualitative approach was chosen due to the fact that little was known about the essential management tasks executed by social workers at all levels of management. Qualitative research is a wider term for research methodologies that explore, describe and explain persons' experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification. Qualitative research also tends to view data in the form of words, rather than numerical information. Whittaker (2009:9) indicates that the primary focus of qualitative research is to understand individuals' own accounts of their perceptions, views and experiences.

Qualitative research was applied because little was known about essential management tasks executed by social workers at all levels of management in Namibia, and especially in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. The themes, sub-themes and categories were organised based on the narratives of 27 participants (20 social workers at frontline, 7 social workers at middle level of management). These themes, sub-themes and categories assisted in addressing the question "what is happening in the participants' lives?" The way these themes and categories were categorised, are addressed in Chapter 7.

6.2.3 Research strategy: face-to-face interviews

As expounded in the previous section, the qualitative research approach was used in order to enable the researcher to encourage descriptive and rich data that captured the narratives of

participants in their own voices and language. In order to obtain insights into the perceptions and experiences of social workers, a face-to-face research strategy was employed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Conducting in-depth face-to-face interviews provided the researcher with an opportunity to focus the conversations with participants so as to elicit rich data for analysis. A semi-structured interview schedule was applied during the face-to-face interviews with participants and further explanations on the research instrument are provided later in the present Chapter.

6.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

6.3.1 Selecting a researchable topic

Selecting a researchable topic is the starting point of any research process. As was discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to identify and select a research topic which is researchable. The research problem can also be described as the need for a topic to be studied (Fouché & De Vos, 2005: 90).

After various consultations with the supervisor, it became clear that there was a need for research in the area of essential management tasks performed by social workers at all levels of management. Mouton (2006) emphasises the need to consult a study leader or supervisor as this person usually has wealth of experience in areas of interest that could form good research topics. The selection of a research topic can be influenced by observations in the field or from an obvious lack in the literature (Fouché & Delport, 2011). In this case, the lack of knowledge and limited literature about the essential management tasks executed by social workers in the Ministry of Health and Social Service gave rise to the selection of the research topic.

In order to determine whether a topic is researchable or not, Creswell (2003) suggests that the following factors need to be considered:

- Time, resources and availability of data. Enough time was given to study this field of essential management tasks. The research proposal was finalised and accepted in 2017 which was the same year of registration and two years were spent conducting this study (2018 and 2019). Resources were sufficient and the availability of data on the topic was a bit of a challenge as management in general is more associated with the fields of business, commerce and economics, let alone management tasks.

However, with the guidance of the supervisor, the researcher managed to obtain adequate data. Different fields such as economics, business, and health care also generated several studies done on management tasks.

- The second factor mentioned by Creswell (2003) is whether the topic has an adequate degree of personal interest for the researcher. There were various reasons that confirmed that the topic had adequate degree of interest for the researcher. Firstly, the researcher was teaching social work management at the University of Namibia by the time the topic was selected. Secondly, the researcher's Master's thesis was on supervision in social work which is also part of management in social work, hence, the research topic was found to be significant and meaningful. During data collection, participants were considered as experts on the execution of managerial tasks and the researcher's main function was to listen, probe and learn from their experiences.
- Lastly, what needed to be considered was whether the results of the study would be of interest to others. The participants indicated that they would be interested in the findings of the study as well as to broaden their knowledge about management tasks. The supervisor also showed interest in the results of this study.

6.3.2 Literature study

As Fouché (2005) posits, literature study is the comprehensive reading of the existing body of knowledge or literature on the topic of interest in order to get a solid understanding, and also prevailing arguments for and against an area which is under study. A literature review is undertaken to provide the researcher with rich data on the research topic. To this effect, Creswell (2003), notes that literature enriches the researcher's understanding and helps to clarify and crystallise the research question. With regards to a literature review, Delport and Fouché (2011) highlight four purposes of a literature review in qualitative study which are:

- It demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research question;
- It demonstrates that the researcher is thoroughly knowledgeable about related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study;
- It shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need; and lastly
- The review refines and redefines the research questions by embedding those questions in larger empirical traditions.

The researcher studied literature by reading relevant academic journal articles, books, government gazettes and welfare policies in order to get a comprehensive picture of management in social work in general, and specifically on management tasks from an ecological systems perspective globally, regionally and in the Namibian context.

An in-depth study and engagement with the international and local literature was synthesised and this forms part of Chapters 2 through to Chapter 5 on the various variables of the topic. Additionally, Namibian legislation, policies and frameworks were read for more background on the legal and regulatory environment in which the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services operates, as well as the environment in which social workers at all levels of management execute their essential management tasks.

Literature review informed emerging questions which provided the basis of the overall research question and sub questions for the empirical study. Likewise, the research questions then informed the research design that allowed the researcher to answer the research questions. A literature review is an ongoing process that commences in the early stages of any study and continues throughout the study. It is important that literature is reviewed regularly as new information becomes available. This was also the case in this study as from 2017 to 2019 significant new studies and literature on essential managerial tasks performed by social workers became available.

6.3.3 Developing the research instrument

At the beginning of the research process, the researcher took a deductive direction as the researcher started with an abstract concept and vague ideas about management tasks. At some point in the study process, especially during the literature review, the direction changed into an inductive approach as the researcher discovered the empirical domain and started to develop meaning about management tasks in social work. Deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific (Babbie, 2001), while inductive theorising uses specific instances to draw conclusions about entire classes of objects or events (Leedy, 2001). Thinking inductively enabled the researcher to refine and elaborate into particular meanings of the research topic in order to build a theory to conduct the face-to-face interviews with the participants.

The researcher applied a semi-structured interview schedule which was based on and resulted from the literature study (Gulati, 2009). A semi-structured interview schedule is a set of prepared questions designed to be asked more or less as worded and it has a standardised format, which means that the same questions are asked to each interviewee in the same order. Semi-structured interviews are defined as those organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (Greeff, 2011). The research instrument allowed enough room to probe and adapt to the situations of participants, as the interview questions were based on themes already derived from the literature. The face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to explore, probe, engage, test, and develop initial ideas on some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle level of management. Furthermore, to ensure that the research instrument was reliable, the same instrument was used for all 27 interviews with social workers at the frontline and middle management levels in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services.

Therefore, for this study, an exploratory and descriptive approach using a semi-structured interview schedule for individual face-to-face interviews by the researcher herself was most appropriate for providing rich data on some essential management tasks and this allowed participants to express their perceptions and experiences. Durrheim (1999) emphasises the importance of participants to express their perceptions and experiences in their own language.

6.3.4 Population and sampling

Sampling means taking any portion of a population or universe to be representatives of the population and this is representative of the population under investigation (Strydom, 2011). There are no set rules about the sample size in a qualitative study, but smaller sample sizes are usually used (Whittaker, 2009:34). Babbie and Mouton (2001) further state that sampling is the process of selecting observations through some rigorous method, either probability or non-probability methods. Probability is a precise science of selecting the elements based on a formula, whereas non-probability sampling relies on the researcher's knowledge, available population and then selecting the most appropriate representative for inclusion in the research (Strydom & Delport, 2011). In the case of this study, non-probability sampling was

appropriate since the researcher applied purposive sampling which is one type of non-probability sampling.

Moreover, this research was exploratory in nature and purposive sampling ensured that participants were experts in management tasks. Purposive sampling (also known as judgmental) is used in exploratory research as it helps to select cases with a specific purpose in mind and these are cases that are especially informative (Neuman, 2011). The researcher intended to select exactly those participants who possessed attributes of the population. Therefore, the researcher's judgment supplemented non-probability purposive sampling at both phases to identify 20 social workers in the frontline and 7 social workers in the middle level of management. Specific criteria were applied in selecting research participants. Strydom and Delport (2005: 328) point out that the researcher should critically think about the parameters of the population before a sample is chosen. Chapter 1 pointed out the following parameters:

Frontline social workers:

- Three and more years of work experience in the Directorate
- Should be working as frontline social workers
- Should be willing and available for the semi-structured interviews

Middle managers:

- Three and more years of work experience in the Directorate
- Should be serving as middle manager in the Directorate
- Should be willing and available for the semi-structured interviews as well

Interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants after appointments were made telephonically. In few cases, appointments had to be rescheduled because participants were not available. The researcher ended up with 27 participants and not 32 as initially intended; all the 20 participants in the frontline were interviewed but the researcher did not manage to include all 10 participants from the middle level of management. With regards to the remaining 2 in the top level of management, one position was left vacant after the Director was acting in another capacity as the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Director went on retirement before data collection started. The social worker who was acting as the Deputy Director did not meet the inclusion criteria of three years working experience in that specific

position and thus could not be interviewed. The researcher interviewed 7 participants only in the middle level of management since the interviews became repetitive after the 5th face-to-face interview with middle managers and the information also correlated with what frontline participants had provided. The researcher reached information redundancy and stopped after participant number 7 and therefore 7 social workers in the middle level of management were interviewed. The researcher did not see the need to continue with interviews since no new additional information was coming forth. The researcher ascribed this to the fact that research participants were from the same Directorate and they were working under similar conditions. The above-sketched situation is called saturation of information in research. In relation to this, Greeff (2011) posits that saturation of information is the point in the study where the researcher begins to hear the same information repeatedly being reported and no longer learns anything new.

The sections below elaborate on the sampling techniques employed by the researcher and the rationale for each.

6.3.4.1 Selecting the participating organisation

In the selection of participating organisations, the researcher opted for the Ministry of Health and Social Services despite the fact that there are other public institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations who employ social workers. This decision was influenced by the fact that this Ministry was the very first and only Ministry which was employing social workers immediately after independence in 1990. Moreover, it is one of the government institutions with a high number of social workers along with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

After selecting the participating organisation, a personal appointment was made with the Director of the Directorate to inform her about the reasons why the Directorate was selected as a participating organisation. In order to formalise the process, a letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services to inform them about the envisaged study as well as to obtain consent to carry out the study.

6.3.4.2 Selecting the participants

The research used non-probability purposive sampling to select the 20 frontline social workers and 7 social works in the middle level of management to participate in the two phases of the research. Sampling is defined as the “selection of elements from the study population to be included in the study” (Strydom, 2011:194). Non-probability purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who met the sampling criteria as outlined in point 6.3.4 in the current Chapter, and thus only selected participants who provided the most relevant data for the study. Participants were chosen because they represented the population group and possessed the characteristics, opinions, ideas, knowledge and experiences about the subject of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Additionally, each phase of the research had a specific target group and criteria. Twenty (20) participants in Phase One and seven (7) in Phase Two were selected from different departments in the Directorate including medical social workers since they are also hosted in the same Ministry and every participant was interviewed for 45 minutes to 1 hour. The phases were independent from each other and the second phase did not depend on the data from phase one; hence one phase did not influence the other one. Since the researcher used the same semi-structured interview schedule, the phases were executed simultaneously.

It was easy to recruit the participants as amongst others, the researcher was familiar with the structure of the Directorate, and furthermore, in the Social Work Department at the University of Namibia, the researcher was the stakeholders’ meetings coordinator and the researcher kept a list of all the stakeholders including social workers. After permission had been granted, the researcher contacted, via Email, the then Acting Director of the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services to inform her about the envisaged study. The Acting Director provided a list of names of social workers in various departments in the Directorate. From the two lists the researcher contacted potential participants telephonically to explain the nature of the study, and to determine the willingness and availability of social workers to be interviewed. In this case, telephone calls were preferred above emails because not all social workers had access to emails and the researcher believed that it was better to call and talk to the person. When the social worker showed willingness to be interviewed during the telephone conversation and it was determined that he/she met the inclusion criteria, and then an appointment was scheduled for the interview in his or her office. The researcher knew almost all the social

workers and given the small number of social workers it was easy to know who had been long in the Directorate. Based on these aspects, it was equable to decide whom to contact taking into account the criteria for inclusion. The fact that all participants were based in Windhoek where the researcher resides and their offices were in the same vicinity made the collection of data through face-to-face interviews easy-going. Therefore, there was no need for the researcher to travel to areas outside Windhoek.

6.3.5 Pilot study

Before getting started with data collection, it is important to test the data collection tools with real world sample populations in order to adapt and optimise the research instrument.

The pilot study is a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project (Sarantakos, 2005). Mitchell and Jolley (2001:292) posit that a pilot study helps the researcher to fine-tune the study for the main inquiry. Furthermore, Strydom (2011) mentions four important aspects of the pilot study which are briefly explained below:

- The first aspect is to study the literature. As was revealed in step 5, studying the literature is an ongoing process as was the case in this study. The literature study during the pilot study does not bring about a detailed study of all available research, but lays the orientation in the specific research area.
- The second aspect of the pilot study is the experience of experts. Strydom (2011) considers interviewing experts as an important part in qualitative research, for the purpose of identifying themes and to do a more thorough literature review. The researcher spoke to her research supervisor who is knowledgeable in qualitative research and management in social work.
- Another aspect of the pilot study has to do with the feasibility thereof. It is here that the researcher can already form an opinion on the openness of the participants and their willingness to co-operate. It was found in this study that interviewing participants was easy since the topic was not sensitive. However, in some instances it was necessary for the researcher to explain some essential tasks to participants. There were only two participants who declined to be interviewed.
- The fourth and last aspect of the pilot study is the testing of the measuring instrument. Whittaker (2009: 38) suggests that if a researcher uses a structured or semi-structured

interview schedule, it is useful to “test” the schedule with someone who would fit the sample. The researcher did this with two participants, one from the frontline social workers and the other one who represented the middle level social workers. This proved to be a valuable exercise as the semi-structured interview schedule allowed participants to share their experiences. The use of a digital voice recorder worked well and since the topic was not of sensitive nature, the two participants who were selected for pre-testing of the data collection had no objection.

The pilot study enabled the researcher to make some minor language and grammar changes and adjust the interview schedule. Participants included in the pilot study could answer the questions with ease. The semi-structured questions were simple and clear and the semi-structured interview schedule worked well. However, the two participants in the pilot study did not understand some of the tasks very well, especially risk management as well as change and transformation management. The researcher explained what these management tasks entailed and subsequently, pilot testing prepared the researcher to carry a summarised document of the various management tasks to explain some of the tasks to participants in case it was necessary. This was useful since there were some instances when it was necessary to elaborate on some management tasks.

Lastly, the two social workers who participated in the pilot study were part of the total number of participants and their responses were included with the rest in Chapter 7. It was necessary to include them to maximise the sample size.

6.3.6 Data gathering: conducting interviews

The research was conducted in two phases as expounded below:

Phase one explored the profiles, perceptions and experiences of social workers in the frontline management level in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Service, in an attempt to provide a rich description of the nature and scope of the essential management tasks they execute and how these tasks are performed.

The second phase explored the profiles, perceptions and experiences of social work managers in the middle level of management in the same Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Service. This was equally done in an effort to provide a rich description of the nature and scope of the essential management tasks they execute and how these tasks are performed.

These two phases were fundamental in data verification; they provided comprehensive insights into the execution of some essential management tasks by social workers in the frontline and middle levels of management. Equally, this rich data was used to inform recommendations for the enhancement of management in general and management tasks in particular in the said Directorate.

Although data gathering took place in two phases, one interview schedule was developed and applied for both phases of data collection in order to collect qualitative data on management tasks performed at various levels of management.

Furthermore, the research followed mainly a deductive approach but included inductive elements. A deductive approach refers to starting with abstract concepts or a theoretical proposition that outlines the logical connection among concepts, whereas when theorising in an inductive direction the starting point is observing the empirical world and then reflecting on what is taking place and thinking in more abstract ways (Neuman, 2011). A deductive research approach was employed to develop the interview schedule for the data collection. This assisted in the development of themes and categories in the analyses of the research. An inductive research approach was used to interpret the research findings. In the empirical study, the researcher also used an indicative approach to consult additional literature as a means for a literature control, hence a movement between a deductive and inductive approach of logic of reasoning was apparent in the study, although the main approach was deductive in nature.

All interviews were captured using a digital voice recorder, with the permission of participants, and after recording, the data was then transcribed into interview transcripts.

6.3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The research design was qualitative, explorative and descriptive in nature, ensuring that rich qualitative data was recorded through a digital voice recorder. Immediately after recording, data was transcribed verbatim and then organised for analysis. As Greeff (2011) suggests, the researcher must transcribe and analyse the interviews while they are still fresh. Essentially, the researcher sought to analyse the data by coding the data into subthemes and categories (which were based on the literature study and interview schedule).

During the data analysis process, the researcher was influenced by Braun and Clarke (2006) and drew on the following process: familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for sub-themes and categories, reviewing sub-themes and categories, naming sub-themes and categories. The researcher adopted an analytical thought process as the researcher started familiarising herself with the data contained in the verbatim transcripts. The analytical thought process guided the central research question, namely “what are some of the essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle level of management?” as well as the research objectives. Coding and recoding, guided by the literature study and interview schedule was a continuous process aiding the researcher to constitute sub-themes and categories from the research themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the researcher may code and recode data many times in order to develop as many sub-themes as possible. These sub-themes and categories were presented as findings which were then contrasted and compared with the literature in turn.

The narratives selected as extracts in the presentation of empirical data were the most “rich” and descriptive in the explanation of the management tasks as performed by social workers in the various levels of management from an ecological systems perspective. These extracts are thus presented as examples of the common trend expressed by participants. Accordingly, the most representative responses, based on content and response to the questions, were included for demonstration in Chapter 7.

As the researcher was transcribing the data, it was necessary to remove any habitual and jargon language, non-verbal signs and repetition of words or sentences by participants. This was an important part of the data analyses and interpretation and it is called denaturalising. This specifically refers to the researcher’s focus on the content provided by participants rather than paying attention to how it was expressed and the accompanying emotions of the participants (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). Grammatical errors and sentence construction were corrected where necessary to contribute to a clearer understanding of the information provided by the participants. The researcher was, however, careful during denaturalisation to prevent changing the meanings and interpretations that participants gave to their situations.

6.3.8 Data verification

Data verification is a process in which different types of data are checked for accuracy and inconsistencies and it helps to determine whether data was accurately translated. Data verification contributes to the trustworthiness of the research findings through empirical means to satisfy the measurement tool used and the topic explored (Creswell, 2003). It is to some extent challenging for qualitative studies to ensure reliability and validity because these concepts are used to measure the consistency and scientific quality of a quantitative study (Shenton, 2004).

In this research, reliability and validity were enhanced by the researcher's member checking by means of feedback and validation from participants. This member checking was done during the interview process. Since the researcher had rapport with the participants, she was able to conduct the interviews in a professional, but informal and relaxed way. During the interviews the researcher restated, paraphrased and summarized participants' responses to determine the accuracy of the researcher's understandings. This allowed participants to comment and reflect further more on their experiences and views. The ultimate aim of member checking was to provide findings that are authentic, original and reliable.

The following specific concepts are normally used to evaluate reliability and validity in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and they are further discussed in relation to how they prevailed in this study.

6.3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is to demonstrate that the research was conducted in a manner that the subject is accurately identified and described, showing the complexities of the issues (De Vos, 2011). The researcher needs to determine the boundaries or parameters of the research and state them from the onset and show how this impacts the findings (De Vos, 2005; Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Already in the proposal development stage of the study, the researcher reviewed relevant literature not only on management in social work but on management tasks as well. Equally, the researcher considered various research approaches and designs that would be suitable to the study. Revising relevant literature, refining the research problem and thereafter choosing

the exploratory and descriptive designs, which are compatible with social work was an attempt to ensure credibility.

Following the choice of the research designs, in-depth interviews were conducted with individual participants using an interview schedule as the method of data collection. Moreover, the research designs and methodology are indicative that the study was rooted in scientific conduct as opposed to the researcher's own will and impressions. In other words, the research design and methodology applied scientific procedures and best practice in social science research which further reinforced the credibility of the study.

At the point of introducing the study to the Acting Director of the Directorate and subsequently obtaining consent from the relevant office in the Ministry to carry out the research, the researcher started building rapport with the top management structures of the Ministry and Directorate through telephone calls, sending emails and visiting the Ministry. This is called developing an early familiarity with the culture of the participating organisation as well as participants (Shenton, 2004). Early familiarisation somehow eases the process of engagement during data collection since the researcher becomes a familiar face which advances the credibility of the researcher and the process.

Lastly, to conduct the empirical study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Department of Social Work Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) of the University of Stellenbosch and adhered to ethical codes. Strydom (2011) states that each university, institution of high learning and research institution has ethics committee often referred to as institutional ethics committees. Furthermore, the researcher has explained the limitations of the study and therefore lessening misinterpretation of research findings. Thus, effort was put to ensure the validity and credibility of the research.

6.3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. The researcher employed multiple and different sources of data and theories to increase the generalisability of the research findings. This triangulation in research means the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain substantiating evidence (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

This study concerned itself with the rich descriptions and narratives from research participants, and Li (2004) underlines that thick descriptions enable judgements about how well the research context fits other contexts. Rich and extensive sets of details concerning methodology and context should be included in the research report (Li 2004), which was also the case in this study. The literature review carried out also created multitudes of data from various sources and this was used to clarify and describe the main concepts explored in the study such as essential management tasks as executed by social workers in different levels of management, and how these tasks are being performed and why they are essential in social work practice. Thereafter, the empirical study explored these amounts of data which were represented within the literature review context.

6.3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time (Bitsch, 2005). In other words, this is about the ability of the study to be replicated in similar contexts and yet providing similar results. In the replication of the study, the data should be similar, despite the changed social context and phenomenon being researched (De Vos, 2011).

The fact that this study was conducted in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia within a governmental organisation provides a description of the environment within which the study occurred. In addition, the study was conducted by gathering data in two phases, which were run in parallel, with the frontline social workers and then the middle managers who met specific criteria as described earlier in this Chapter. In case another researcher wants to conduct the same study, this information is captured adequately in this research report in order for the study to be replicated. However, this does not guarantee that another study might necessarily produce the same results because Shenton (2004) cautions that dependability can only be secured if there was a static that is present. It means that time would have to come to a standstill to guarantee the same results. Most importantly, the dynamic environmental factors within the organisational system as well as the broader external environment (ecological systems perspective) could impact the experiences of social workers in executing their essential management tasks; hence results of any subsequent study are destined to reveal different results.

6.3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research results can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The findings of this research were derived from the data collected from research participants and they are not ideas and thoughts of the researcher. In this study, confirmability was ensured by including verbatim narratives from participants, as presented in Chapter 7 of this report. These verbatim excerpts were shared to support the researcher's objective arguments, conclusions and recommendations.

The second phase of the research aided with the data verification for phase one by ensuring that the same themes were kept since the same semi-structured interview schedule was applied in both phases. Similarly, the literature review added a rich data which underpinned the analysis of findings as shared by the study participants.

To conclude this section, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability contribute to the reliability and validity of the research by verifying and checking that the research process was undertaken in a sound, scientific and systematic way.

6.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research ethics governs the standards of conduct for scientific researchers and it is important to adhere to ethical principles in order to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants. Ethics in research refers to "a set of moral principles which are widely accepted and guide the behaviour and conduct of the researcher towards the participants (Strydom, 2011; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This section discusses ethical guidelines as followed in this study.

5.4.1 Ethical guidelines

Ethical guidelines and considerations are particularly important in social research since the focus is on the study of human behaviour in the social environment, hence every researcher is expected to consider and follow particular research protocols and ethical guidelines. Consequently, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University Departmental Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) (see Annexure 6) for conducting research with social workers (humans). Prior to each interview, the researcher explained the ethical considerations of the study and asked participants if they consented. Participants indicated their consent by signing the written consent forms (see Annexure 4), which were filed and

kept in the researcher's office. The researcher does not share the office with anyone and although colleagues in the Department have access to her office, they are professional social workers too, hence, confidentiality of the information was ensured.

Creswell (2003) outlines some ethical aspects that researchers normally take into account and some of the ethical aspects are elaborated on to illustrate how they were applied in this research.

6.4.1.1 Informed consent

Voluntary participation, also linked to informed consent is an ethical principle that pronounces that the researcher should never coerce anyone into participating, but all research participation must be voluntary (Neuman, 2011). It is not enough to obtain permission but participants need to know what they are being asked to participate in. Strydom (2011) equally emphasises that the provision of adequate information to study participants in order for them to make informed decisions about participation ensures that there is no coercion in research participation.

The researcher approached all social workers in the Directorate personally and requested for their inclusion in the study after the study protocols were explained to all potential participants. They were also informed that they can withdraw their participation at any point during the interview. Informed consent was sought from each of the participants as the research ethics were explained to participants at the beginning of each interview. After agreeing to participate in the research, participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the start of the interview (see Annexure 4). Informed consent is the participant's ability to decide to take part or not in the study in light of all the information (Strydom, 2011; Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

6.4.1.2 Deception of participants

The deception of participants is the intentional misrepresentation of information and/or facts, or withholding of information, or even lying to participants in order to exploit the participants for the researcher's own gain (Neuman, 2011). In this study, participants were given honest and clear information about the study so as to maintain this ethical consideration.

6.4.1.3 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Privacy refers to the intrusion of the researcher/research in some way into the personal life of the participant. This is usually done through a breach of confidentiality or the disclosure of the identity of the participant, which is a breach of anonymity (Strydom, 2011: 61).

Information shared by participants was not disclosed other than in this report. Nevertheless, the comments made by the participants may never be linked to the participant's name, thus maintaining anonymity. Moreover, a coding system was developed to differentiate the participants. For instance, social workers in the frontline level of management were assigned numbers 1 - 20 and therefore coded as FSW (frontline social worker), while the social workers in the middle level of management were assigned numbers 20 - 27 and coded as MSW (middle level social worker). The numerical values increased up to the number 20 for each participant in the frontline level of management whereas for the middle level participants, numerical values increased from 21 to 27. This was done to ensure that anonymity was kept.

6.4.1.4 Release of findings

Strydom (2011) articulates that the findings must be released in written form and these should be compiled as accurately and objectively as possible. In this study, the findings are written up in this report. The report will be submitted to the Ministry of Health and Social Services through the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services and the Stellenbosch University examination office will make copies available through the library and online source for the university's thesis publications. Publications that may arise out of this research will be co-authored by the researcher and the supervisor, Professor Lambert Engelbrecht of the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University.

6.4.1.5 Actions and competence of researcher

The researcher must observe ethical responsibility throughout the entire research process. To this effect, Strydom (2011: 63) maintains that researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed research.

The researcher's experience in interviewing is based on her professional training as a social worker, and having practiced as a frontline social worker for close to 10 years. The researcher's experience in direct services, and more than 12 years as an academic in the Social

Work Department added the much needed confidence and validity during the individual interviews with participants. The adequate mentorship and guidance from the supervisor, Professor Lambert Engelbrecht enhanced confidence and competencies in the researcher. Therefore, the researcher was adequately skilled to embark on the research and to appreciate ethical obligations. In addition, the researcher observed the Namibia Social Workers Association (NASWA) Code of Ethics for social workers.

6.4.2 Personal reflections

Reflexivity relates to the analytic attention of the researcher's role in qualitative research and refers to a certain level of consciousness. Reflexivity entails self-awareness, which means being actively involved in the research process (Lambert, Jomeen & McSherry, 2010). Researchers are part of the social world that they study and hence researchers should continuously do self-introspection on the role of subjectivity during the research process. In this regard, Hesse-Biber (2007) postulates that reflexivity is a continuous process of reflection by researchers on their values and of recognising, examining and understanding how their social background, location and assumptions affect the research process. This indicates the importance of reflexivity in research as there could be bias and values that researchers bring into the research process. Based on the concept of reflexivity, the researcher made conscious effort to suspend the researcher's experiences in the Ministry (as the researcher previously worked there) to ensure that data collected was a true reflection of the narratives of research participants.

There was no personal interest from the side of the researcher in this research (besides academic achievement) as such and the interpretation and analysis of data was done empirically. The researcher tried to remain objective throughout the research process and observing ethical considerations as expounded earlier in this chapter contributed to the researcher remaining unbiased. Also, consultation with the research supervisor through emails, telephone calls and WhatsApp created platforms for the researcher to reflect on essential issues during the research process. All these enabled the researcher to put aside her own values, experiences and opinions.

Although the researcher knew most of the participants personally, given the small number of social workers in Namibia, the researcher was extremely aware and very careful in adopting an ethical and reflexive approach during interviews and the whole research process.

6.4.3 Limitations of the study

Limitations are potential weaknesses in any research study and they are out of the researcher's control. This research was qualitative in nature and Delpont and De Vos (2011) posit that qualitative research design is open to levels of bias and presents various limitations due to the nature of the methods often applied. Both the participants and the researcher are likely to present bias during data collection and analysis. For instance, in this study, participants shared narratives on their experiences and working environment in executing management tasks and thus being biased. Despite this, qualitative research was the most appropriate research approach to explore *what* management tasks are executed by social workers, *how* they perform them and *why* they consider these managerial tasks as essential.

6.4.3.1 Emerging field and scarce literature

Social workers in Namibia in general are well acquainted with the various fields of social work such as medical social work and correctional social work among others but management in social work is not a common field. When conducting the literature review, the researcher observed that more literature on management is from the field of business and economics. Management in social work is an emerging area which started to enjoy scholarly attention in the 21st century. As the field of social work furthers its long legacy of preparing leaders to respond to critical societal challenges, new mechanisms are needed to address the shortage of experienced and skilled managers for the 21st century (Uehara, Barth, Catalano, Hawkins, Kemp, Nurius, Padgett & Sherraden, 2015). The literature review and crafting the literature chapters revealed gaps in the literature on management tasks executed by social workers. There was further a scarcity in literature on the ecological systems perspective and managerial functions. The study also revealed that there was no literature on management tasks performed by social workers in the Namibian context and hence, little was known about management in social services and the social work practice.

6.4.3.2 Face-to-face interviews

The research was qualitative in nature and hence the data collection instrument used in the study was an interview schedule with semi-structured questions. It served to guide and directs the interviews. Using a semi-structured interview schedule in qualitative approach

allowed the researcher to explore, clarify and probe for more information, and these allowed for more in-depth data collection and understanding, but it had its limitations and these are discussed in detail later in this section.

Research participants were also at liberty to express themselves in their own different voices. On the contrary, face-to-face interviews are not cost effective. It is time consuming and the researcher travelled with her own car to the participants' offices where all interviews took place. At times the participants were not available due to other office duties despite the fact that appointments had been made well in advance. There were also some minor disruptions, for example when the interview was in progress especially in the hospitals this was from nurses or patients who were referred to the social worker at that particular moment.

As mentioned, the qualitative approach allows participants to express themselves extensively, so a lot of information was thus collected, which was a bit of a challenge to the researcher to interpret. Developing various themes aided the researcher to consolidate information. The researcher's previous experience with interviewing and supervising the Research Project in Social Work (this is a module in the social work programme at the University of Namibia) of final year students as well as being a co-supervisor for MA social work students contributed in dealing with the large amount of information. Despite this, the researcher experienced limitations during data interpretation and analysis, especially when sub-themes and categories were developed. This is when the researcher realised that some information was missing, and to deal with this limitation, the researcher was fortunate enough to be accorded two extra appointments to clarify some crucial issues.

The next section expounds on some specific limitations of the study.

6.4.3.3 Use of audio recorder

The use of a voice recorder allowed the researcher to focus more on what the participants were narrating as the taking of notes was very minimal and free conversation between the researcher and participants was possible. Prior to the interview, the research explained the need to record the interview, namely to capture participants' responses and to avoid missing important quotations. In that way, the researcher obtained informed consent to use a voice record. The voice recorder was placed on the desk between the researcher and participants to ensure that both voices were captured. The only limitation the researcher experienced

was with one participant where the location was not free from background noise. Some parts of the interviews were not clear when the researcher was transcribing the interviews and as such, the researcher called the participant to clarify the recorded information.

6.4.3.4 Sample size and research site

Purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling was applied in this research. Although each individual in the population, who met the criteria for inclusion, theoretically had an equal chance of being selected for the sample, it limited the availability of participants, particularly with the inclusion of thee (3) years in the current position, in order to act as an expert participant. Given the limited number of social workers in the Directorate, it became a challenge to include 10 middle managers, but since saturation was observed when the same responses (which correlated with the 20 social workers) were generated by 7 middle managers, the limited number of middle managers who were included cannot be regarded as a limitation which influenced the discourse of the findings.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Research is a process that follows certain steps and various steps that are applicable to this study were discussed in this chapter. The starting point of any research is the identification of a research topic and determining whether a research topic is researchable. The research approach and design, goals and objectives of the study, literature review, sampling and method of data collection all form part of the research methodology. Coding of the data is necessary in order to organise the data into themes and categories. In the last phase, which is the writing of the research document, the trustworthiness of the study, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study should be addressed, as was done in this study. The next chapter presents the findings of the empirical study, as well as the interpretation and presentation of the data.

CHAPTER 7

EMPIRICAL STUDY FINDINGS ON THE ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS EXECUTED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN NAMIBIA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an interpretation of the empirical findings from the data collection undertaking. As expounded in Chapter 6 describing the study's methodology, the study was qualitative in nature. It employed exploratory and descriptive research approaches while applying semi-structured interviews to draw rich data from participants. Data collection was done through face to face interview schedules (see Annexures 5). The total sample size was 27 interviews with 20 and 7 participants from the frontline and middle level of management respectively, selected from the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Table 7.1 below visually presents the synopsis of the research phases. As expounded in Chapter 6, the phases were not executed in sequence but they were carried out simultaneously. The phases were independent since phase two did not depend on the data of phase one. The researcher applied the same semi-structured interview schedule in both phases and hence the phases did not influence one another at all.

Table 7.1: Research Phases

Phase	Participants	Code	Number of participants	Data collection method
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1	Frontline social workers	FSW	20	Semi-structured interview schedule
2	Middle level social workers	MSW	7	Semi-structured interview schedule

The social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services were selected for this study because this Ministry is one of the primary employers of social workers in the country. Another reason for selection was because it was the very first ministry to employ social workers after independence. In the sampling of participants for inclusion, 20 social workers in the frontline and 7 social workers in the middle level of management who had been in their positions for more than three years were included in the study. Participants were based in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia where the researcher was living too. All participants were interviewed separately using the same semi-structured interview schedule as can be found in **Annexure 5**. The responses of the participants of both phases are however, presented in an integrated manner in order to synthesise the findings.

This chapter discusses the collected data in relation to the literature review of Chapters 3, 4 and 5 as a basis to understand and analyse the empirical study findings. The data presented in this chapter is in line with the essential management tasks as outlined in the semi-structured interview schedule. In order to address the initial research question, the gathered data is clustered in themes and categories. Accordingly, the explanation of the study's empirical findings is presented as follows:

- Presentation and analysis of the biographical data of participants;
- Discussion of emergent themes and categories contrasted with the literature review; and
- Representation of verbatim narratives from participants.

The analysis and interpretation are presented meaningfully to produce some essential management tasks executed by frontline and middle level social workers. The analysis relies comprehensively on literature sources on social work management and tasks trying to make the findings relevant to the Namibian context.

Thus, this chapter achieves the second and third objectives of the study, which were to empirically explore essential management tasks executed by social workers at the front and middle level of management within the said Directorate as well as their experiences in terms of the nature and execution of these essential management tasks.

The following is the presentation of the study's empirical findings:

7.2 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The researcher made initial contact with the Acting Director in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services who then provided a list of all social workers in the Directorate at national, regional, and district level for inclusion in the study based on their understanding of the aim of the research. Thus, Table 7.2 below outlines the demographic data of social workers who were interviewed in the study.

Table 7.2: Biographical data of research participants

CODE	AGE	GENDER	YEARS IN POSITION	QUALIFICATION	POSITION/LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT
FSW 1	30-40	Female	3 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 2	20-30	Female	3 Years, 7 months	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 3	40-50	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 4	20-30	Female	5 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 5	20-30	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management

FSW 6	30-40	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 7	30-40	Male	3 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 8	30-40	Female	6 Years	MA Social Work (Health Care)	Mental Health Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 9	20-30	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Mental Health Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 10	30-40	Female	7 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 11	30-40	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 12	20-30	Male	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 13	20-30	Female	3 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 14	30-40	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 15	30-40	Female	8 Years	MA Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 16	30-40	Female	6 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management

FSW 17	20-30	Female	3 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 18	30-40	Female	5 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 19	20-30	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
FSW 20	30-40	Female	4 Years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Social worker Frontline Management
MSW 21	50-60	Female	7 years	Diploma Social Work	Control Social worker- Middle Management
MSW 22	30-40	Female	7 years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Senior Social worker- Middle Management
MSW 23	50-60	Female	10 years	Advanced Diploma Social Work	Chief Social Worker - Middle Management
MSW 24	40-50	Female	9 years	Diploma Social Work	Control Social worker- Middle Management
MSW 25	30-40	Female	14 years	MA Social Work	Senior Social worker- Middle Management
MSW 26	50-60	Male	8 years	BA (Hon.) Social Work	Medical Senior Social worker- Middle Management
MSW 27	40-50	Female	26 years	Diploma Social Work	Senior Social worker Middle Management

***FSW = Frontline Social work**

***MSW = Middle Level Social worker**

Following is an analysis of the research participants as presented in the above table:

7.2.1 Age

In relation to age, the majority of participants (13 out of 27) are between the ages of 30 and 40 years, followed by those between 20 and 30 age (8). The age category between 40 and 50 as well as between 50 and 60 had three participants respectively (6). The last two age categories represent the middle level of management ranging from senior-, chief- and control social workers.

7.2.2 Gender distribution

With regards to gender, only 3 out of the 27 social workers were male. However, this is not surprising since social work has been considered as a “helping and caring profession,” and generally helping and caring are terms associated with females. In fact, statistics indicate that women outnumber men in social work fields of practice and females outnumber males as students and graduates of social work. The female dominance in social work most probably has been influenced by the origin of the profession. Historically, social work started as charity services to the needy ones and strong female leaders, such as Jane Adams and Mary Richmond gave birth to social work as a profession (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2009). For the purpose of this study, gender distribution was irrelevant in exploring and describing management tasks. However, this could serve as reference in future research.

7.2.3 Highest academic qualification

Apart from the two participants with a Master’s Degree in Social work, the rest of the participants had the basic BA (Hon.) degree in Social Work. There were however, two participants with a Diploma in Social Work. It is interesting to note that even the Master in Social Work, is not in social work management. This indicates that there is slow progression from social workers in upgrading their studies. This is consistent with findings by Chiwara (2015) which indicated that the majority of participants in the study had not taken up further studies. Moreover, Ananias and Lightfoot (2012:205) expressed a lack of continuing professional development activities in Namibia.

7.2.4 Years in the position

In profiling participants, the researcher included a question on the number of years in the position. The majority (9) of participants has been serving for four years at the frontline level of management while five of the participants have been on the same level (frontline) for three years. For the rest of the participants, the years that they have been in their positions vary

between 6 and 14 years while the longest was 26 years. This suggests that the Directorate has a large number of young social workers who still need to accumulate experience in social work.

As pointed out in section 7.2.1, those in senior positions are close to the retirement age and the criteria for moving up to the next level could not be determined during the study. This could have implications for the Directorate.

7.3 EMERGING LITERATURE THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Some essential management tasks which were defined in this study were produced through literature review as spelt out in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The literature review was followed by the researcher developing a semi-structured interview schedule to probe the in-depth descriptions of the essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle level of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services. The semi-structured interview schedule was then tested in the pilot study with two participants, one from the frontline and the other one from the middle level of management. The pilot study enabled the researcher to make some minor language and grammar changes and adjustments to the interview schedule. Participants included in the pilot study could answer the questions with ease. The semi-structured questions were simple and clear and the semi-structured interview schedule worked well. However, two participants in the pilot study did not understand some of the tasks very well especially risk management as well as change and transformation management. The researcher explained what these management tasks entailed. Subsequently, pilot testing prepared the researcher to carry a summarised document of the various management tasks to explain some of the tasks to participants in case it was necessary. This was useful since there were some instances when it was necessary to elaborate on some management tasks.

Lastly, the two social workers who participated in the pilot study were part of the total number of participants and their responses were included with the rest in this Chapter. It was necessary to include them to increase the sample size.

The gathered data is presented based on the themes that developed from literature and the categories that developed from the data of the study, and this is presented below.

Table 7.3: Exposition of the empirical study: Themes and categories

Literature themes	Sub-themes	Categories
Workload Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload division • Working environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to manage workload • Workload measurement
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management tools • Time management and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • The value of time management
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to information dissemination management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of information management
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business interruption • Environmental risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellness
Change and Transformation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers' experiences of change • Change and change meaning: a top-down driven policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural change
Supervisory Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of supervision • Structure of supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision and accountability

Program and Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Funding for programs and projects 	N/A
Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measurement • Impact evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory framework

The emerging themes from the study findings are: Workload management, Time management, Information dissemination, Risk management, Change and transformation management, Supervisory management, Program and Project management, and lastly, Monitoring and Evaluation. The data categories consist of how these management tasks are executed and interpreted in terms of their essentiality in social work practice. In the next section, each emerging theme is deliberated separately, but before that, a brief explanation on Section 2 of the semi-structured interview schedule follows. In this section, participants were asked to describe their managerial job in the Directorate, what they exactly have to manage as well as why they thought these tasks were essential. The study reveals that although participants could describe their job and the services they render, they had difficulties to deliberately list managerial tasks. In most cases, if not in all cases, participants could not differentiate between management functions and tasks. This confusion could be seen in the statement below:

“I run community projects and plan various activities to commemorate various days such as mental health day, family day, etc. Yea, so management tasks that I perform are for example planning, organising, and coordinating the events.” FSW 1

Further probing on what exactly the participant has to manage when planning a project, still exposed the lack of knowledge about managerial tasks as affirmed by the following response:

“Well, when doing a project, planning is very important because if you do not plan, chances are that the project will fail.” FSW 2

Another participant in the Mental Health Centre was able to elaborate on her job in the Directorate but still could not highlight the day to day management tasks as she explained that:

“My work entails a lot of report writing and orientation of newly appointed medical interns. I have to do presentations about the role of a social work in the medical setting. You know, we work in a team, this is a multi-disciplinary approach and I have to explain the role and work of social workers to the nurses, doctors, psychologists and other team members. So my management tasks involve leading, planning and overseeing social work students too.” FSW 21

Moreover, it is evident that it is not only social workers at the frontline management level who are not familiar with managerial tasks, but the same goes for social workers at the middle level of management as displayed by the statement below:

“In my division I’m responsible for the older persons programme, managing of housing units as well as care takers. It is my task to make sure that the senior people are in a good living environment by managing care takers. I’m also responsible for logistical management, meaning that the housing units have all the facilities and equipment.” MSW 1

The aforesaid statements imply that social workers are not well-grounded to identify specific management tasks and to articulate their tasks in terms of planning, organising, leading and controlling as management functions. However, this does not mean that they do not perform management tasks because when section three of the semi-structured interview schedule was discussed, it became evident that they do execute some specific management tasks, although they were not aware that these were actual management tasks, and thus they did not identify and articulate it as such. Therefore, the participants could not link the specific management tasks they perform to management per se, and they perceived these tasks as part of their normal interventions. This is thus typical of how intervention and management in social work are intertwined (Engelbrecht, 2014), and this findings differ from typical business management. This obliviousness is discussed in the next section which addresses some management tasks that the study sought to explore. The purpose was to ascertain

whether social workers carry out specific management tasks, how they execute them, as well as their essentiality to social work practice.

7.3.1 Theme 1: Workload management

As explained in Chapter 5, the social issues that social workers deal with are complex, making it stressful in carrying out their responsibilities. Above all, social workers operate in a turbulent environment with limited resources. O'Connor and Netting (2009) paint the environment in which human service organisations operate as an uncertain and turbulent sea of forces. The working environment of social workers in Namibia was highlighted in Chapter 2. The organisational environment in which social welfare organisations operate has an impact on service delivery, and by implication on workload management.

Workload is not only about the amount of work but it is also about the availability of resources. Moriarty (2004) concurs that within most of the social service professions contexts, there is evidence that the demand for services is increasing and changing, and this results in added pressure on service delivery. Therefore, workload management has become an important and recognised task within human service organisations as a way to manage and measure the work carried out by social workers. Orme (1995) affirms that workload management happens at all levels within an organisation.

The research findings reveal that all participants at frontline and middle level of management execute workload. The amount of work differs from division to division but participants' work assignments include among others the following:

- Social work with individuals including individual counselling and family therapy;
- Social work with groups;
- Social work with communities;
- Attending meetings and workshops; and
- Completing intake and referral forms.

Interestingly, all participants, even the social workers at the middle level of management who are seniors deal with cases, with the exception of only two participants who are in the Human Security Promotion and Prevention of Social Problems Division as per the testimony below:

“I’m a senior social worker with more than ten years working experience but due to the shortage of social workers I have to see clients. So my workload involves seeing clients, supervising six people under my supervision, engaging in community projects like planning the day on the prevention of suicide.” MSW 4

There is evidence that the demand for services is increasing and changing, and this results in added pressure on service delivery, thereby making workload management an important and recognised task within human service organisations to manage and measure work carried out by social workers (Moriarty, 2004). Orme (1995) affirms that workload management happens at all levels within an organisation.

One of the two middle managers who do not engage with clients described her job as follows:

“We are responsible for four key elements in the Directorate, namely, performance and growth of staff, adherence to professional ethics, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the social welfare programmes at a regional level to support the National Poverty Reduction Action Programmes. We’re also responsible for capacity building of social workers at regional and state level. We’re also responsible for quality assurance, which entails the development of guidelines, manuals and tools for the operation of social work. It is further my responsibility to strengthen service delivery capacity through staff development, student practical work and the promotion of the profession of social work.” MSW 27

Before moving on to the discussion of sub-themes, it could be reasoned that from the statements above, workload management in the Directorate is not comprehended within the overall context of the Directorate as there seems to be pressure on some social workers in different divisions. It could be argued that such conditions could impact service delivery in a negative way as some social workers can suffer from exhaustion and burnout. This argument is more evident in the next section about sub-themes

7.3.1.1 Sub-theme: Workload division

Dividing workload amongst staff members can be challenging and especially in the situation where the lack of human resources is a reality like the case in the Directorate. One important responsibility of any manager is to make sure that everyone on his or her team has the right

amount of work. In practice, managers have the tendency to allocate most of the load to the workhorse or hard worker than others. This is especially the case if this staff member gets work done fast or sometimes it is to ease up another worker who is struggling. Besides that, some workers cannot say no while others are great at saying no. This leads to unfair distribution of work. How do employees make sure that work is evenly distributed? Workload division is not simple and Morgenstern (2016) cautions that there are real risks involved in not distributing the workload in an equitable way.

This sub-theme about the division of work also addresses the *how* and essential part of the semi-structured interview schedule and the participant discourses show that there is a need for social workers to know how to manage workload.

“We are few social workers, we are overloaded and we have to manage the work load by dividing the work among ourselves, for example, everybody gets a chance to do the intake of new clients. We rotate, one week I will be at intake, and another week my colleague takes over. Mind you that while attending to new cases you still have your old cases that need your attention and there are meetings to attend too.” FSW 14

In order to try and balance the workload, participants also make use of delegation as a way of managing workload as the statement below states:

“Okay when it comes to workload we have so many clients which we are dealing with; my duty is to make sure that everybody has got equal share. We are divided in many wards, about 6 to 8 wards and then they have got different departments and basically every social worker is situated at a certain floor where he/she is doing his/her work and from there we make sure that everybody is doing his/her job, but sometimes it can be that the particular social worker can be overloaded with work, but in that case we are flexible; also he/she can refer his/her clients.” MSW 6

The participant above could however not elaborate how everybody is getting equal share and that could still remain a challenge given that every ward is unique and some are busier and demanding than others. Furthermore, having “so many clients” as participant MSW 6 alluded to, and noting the shortage of social workers as described in Chapter 2 suggests that workload as a management task needs serious attention in the Directorate.

Edwards, Hallett and Sawbridge (2008) suggest that workload management influences the effective functioning of social workers and the organisation should have a sound system of

workload management in place but the study findings show that the Directorate does not have a framework to manage workload.

“New clients will come and sit in the queue, so for example, while I see one client another social worker will attend to another client, and when I’m done I will take the next one. That is how we divide ourselves trying to manage our work. And the language also sometimes is a problem; it is really tough for some social workers who only speak a certain language then the client’s don’t have the choice but to see that social worker but we at least try to balance... What makes things worse is the fact that there are no guidelines to help us on how to manage workload.” FSW 5

From the above-cited statements, it can be concluded that workload management in the Directorate is executed on an *ad-hoc* basis, meaning that arrangements are made when a situation occurs and there is no planning in advance. A phrase like “but sometimes it can be that the particular social worker can be overloaded with work, but in that case we are flexible also he can refer his clients” means that the social worker who is overloaded remains at the mercy of other colleagues and there is no assurance that others are always “flexible” and willing to help out. This is a strong indication that the Directorate needs to develop a workload management system as suggested by Edwards *et al.* (2008). Such a system will not only aid the Directorate to better manage workload and lead to effective and efficient service delivery, but will also reduce pressure on social workers. Pretorius (2014) argues that a formal, systematic and flexible workload management process is necessary to prioritise, allocate, monitor, measure and balance workloads effectively and efficiently.

7.3.1.2 Sub-theme: Working environment

Chapter 5 indicates that workload in the workplace means not only the amount of work, but it also involves an environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available. In other words, it is not just the volume of work that makes a difference in employee satisfaction and success, but also the extent to which employees have the resources such as time, office equipment and facilities as well as support to do the work well. From an ecological systems perspective, there is a connection between a person and his/her environment and this association is characterised by needs and resources. A working milieu which is conducive will contribute greatly to work performance,

while it is true that if the environment does not provide necessary resources, productivity will be hindered. This is in line with what Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2013) state, that when working environments have resources, people tend to thrive; while lack of vital resources may adversely affect functioning and productivity. It could further be argued that difficult conditions also negatively impact on the morale of staff members and the following quote from a social worker affirms this:

“I did not study for four years to sit in an office where I do not have a computer or my own workstation. We are forced to work in an environment which does not allow you to do your work properly”. FSW 8

Similar to the above, the research findings reveal that social workers in the Directorate are working under difficult circumstances as exposed in some of the statements below:

“I think at national level, currently we have a situation of limited space where we have to share offices. But we do have access to internet, computers; while one of the districts they don't have access to Internet and computers. Offices are full, sometimes you feel like there is clashing of personalities because of the limited spaces. We had to make provisions because of the budgetary limitations.” FSW 10

“Office spaces are really overcrowded; sharing offices and equipment is stressful. Luckily we have at least printers and so on. Other regional offices don't have anything at all. Or they don't have ink for the printers.” FSW 17

“Because of the budget that was cut, we do not have drivers and that is one resource problem that we don't have drivers. So the social workers who have driver's licenses have the permission to drive government cars and so they help the other social workers to do their work. So for a long time there were no telephones at the office so they had to use their own cell phones; that was also a big problem but now at least they have I think 3 or 4 cell phones also which they have to share amongst one another with a limited credit. If the credit is finished in the middle of the month they still have to make use of their own credit or SMSes.” MSW 5

The above accounts fit together with the principles of the ecological systems perspective that all parts of a system are interconnected and that change in one part of the system influences the functioning of all parts (Walsch, 2006). The Government of the Republic of Namibia has

found itself in a financial crisis which has led to serious cuts in budgetary allocations to all Public Institutions. Lyneham (2018), reports that a perfect storm of external events and domestic mismanagement has brought Namibia to its knees. The government cannot even afford to feed its army and the president has stopped using his private jet. This is corroborated by how "In the interest of curtailing public expenditure, no request for outbound travel... will be considered until after the end of February" (Chloe, 2018:1). This condition paints the circular causality concept of the ecological systems perspective that places individual behaviour within a network of circular feedback loops, meaning that one part of behaviour affects other parts of the system. The Namibian Government, being the broader community (macro level), took a decision (cutting of budget) that impacted the Ministry of Health and Social Services (exo system), which in turn has led to changes in the operation of social workers (meso and micro levels). Social workers have to share office space, office equipment and in some cases social workers with driving licenses have to drive their colleagues around because of few drivers. The implication is that while driving others, their own work comes to a standstill. There is no way that social workers could deliver effective and efficient services under such working conditions. As explained in Chapter 2, social workers are hosted in the Ministry of Health and Social Services whose main priority is primary health care, and social welfare services come second. Consequently, there is inequality in terms of the allocation of resources. Lawler and Bilson (2010) accentuate that typically social workers operate in uncertain and unsettled environments and issues of inequality and power are at the core of most of its business.

It could be concluded that given settings such as the above-stated, the social workers' desire to grow and to be independent in their work is negatively affected. The human resources perspective, for instance, proclaims that organisations should create a favourable environment and structures that would enable workers to flourish (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014). In the same vein, the human relations theory also emphasises that the content of the job can have a bearing on the quality of services. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) are of the opinion that the content of the job itself can influence workers' productivity.

Furthermore, the statements below point to how the workload is an essential management task:

“Yeah, to divide the work it is very important, so that mmm, there are many things you can prevent like burnout because if someone is working and overloaded with work it cannot be so effective anymore. So that is why it is important that the work is evenly distributed. Workload management is essential for effective and efficient provision of services.” MSW 7

“Yes, of course you need to prioritise, every hour of the day you need to give an account of your work. Every second week, we have a productivity meeting whereby you have to give feedback on that week's activity and so.” MSW 5

It seems that despite the unfavourable working conditions, participants were fully aware of the importance to manage their workload so that they can prevent unfavourable conditions such as stress and burn-out:

“Yes, workload management is very essential. It is very important because lack of management of our workload can lead to stress and burnout. You find out that sometimes you are just exhausted. Not that you do not have strength anymore but your mind is just exhausted, you want to take leave. That is why you find out that sometimes we take unplanned leave just because our mind is exhausted and I need to take leave. It is very important and it's quite sad that we do not have a wellness officer.” FSW 14

These statements reinforce the suggestions of Stevens (2008) that poor workload management has some undesirable consequences such as negative influence on the practice and outcomes of services by social workers and increases of stress among social workers which is leading to poor job satisfaction and productivity. Furthermore, poor workload management is also associated with burn-out, poor retention and high turnover rates of social workers. According to Adlem (2007: 5), many reasons contribute to the high turnover of social workers. These include poor working conditions, poor compensation for work, lack of resources and support, and increased demands for services. Hence social workers are experiencing work stress, burnout, decreasing job satisfaction and a lack of positive work engagement.

From the above discussions based on the research findings, it is clear that the lack of a sound workload system influences social welfare service delivery. Another important assumption is that social workers have little theoretical information about workload management.

Based on the above discussions, the following two categories for the theme workload management could be identified:

7.3.1.1.1 Data Category: Strategies to manage workload

The study's research participants were from different departments and due to the lack of a unified workload management framework in the Directorate, strategies to manage workload differ from department to department. It is a matter of what works best for a specific department. This category further helps in developing an understanding of how social workers execute this managerial task. The medical social workers, for instance, are assigned according to the various wards in the hospital such as the TB, Paediatric, Spinal Injury, Oncology, Maternity, etc. As a way to manage their workload and to try to distribute work fairly, the medical social workers rotate every third month. This system exposes the medical social workers to all types of hospital related social issues but does not create opportunities for specialisation. Therefore the rotation system has its own challenges as well as exposed in the following statement:

"I have no objection to move from one ward to another as this gives me an opportunity to work with different cases, but on the other hand, by the time you start finding your feet in the division, is the time that you have to move. Yea, but I guess that is the best under the circumstances". FSW 10

The approach to rotate might be practical in the hospital setting where the nature of cases that social workers deal with is normally short-term. Conversely, in cases of patients with terminal illness who stay longer in hospital, the worker-client relationship could be adversely affected as the client is every third month introduced to another social worker. This could lead to patients/clients not receiving satisfactory services from medical social workers as this practice impeaches on the continuity of services. In the absence of one social worker, other social workers are expected to take care of other wards, doubling their work as narrated below:

"We try to make things work but it is not always easy, when one social worker is on leave, we have to take care of the ward of that person, so at times you

have more wards than the usual one you attend to. Staff shortage is serious problem.” FSW 7

The shortage of social workers is felt heavily by social workers but increasing the number of social workers seemed not possible by the time the research was conducted. Most vacant positions had been frozen and the Namibian Government was not renewing the contracts of foreign social workers (mostly Zimbabweans) due to financial constraints.

Another way how social workers execute workload management is through division and delegation of responsibilities among colleagues as alluded to earlier in this section. Every time during data collection, the limited number of social workers concern came up, leading to heavy workloads among social workers.

7.3.1.1.2 Data category: Workload measurement

It is not enough for employees to manage their workload, but it is equally essential to deliver and uphold a desired level of quality in service delivery. Moreover, Nel (2014:68) reinforces that social service organisations need a quality assurance process whereby management and employees ensure that the organisation’s goals are accomplished or that actual performance compares favourably with the predetermined standards.

Again, in the absence of workload guidelines, the Directorate also does not have standardised workload measurement tools; however, research participants indicated that they have productivity planning and feedback meetings which assist supervisors to see how social workers are performing in their work. The following response from a middle manager participant confirms feedback meetings as a measurement tool:

“I receive quarterly reports from social workers under my supervision; so you see that record keeping allows social workers to account on how they spend their time. Recording helps me to know the number of cases and categories of cases per social worker. In that way if I realise that one social worker has more cases than others then I know that new cases should be divided among the rest of the other social workers. This is important to prevent that one worker is having more cases than others. Also at our productivity meetings, we as supervisors get an indication of the performance of staff.” MSW 20

The measurement of workload varies from division to division; for example in the hospital they follow a multi-disciplinary approach and meet every Monday to discuss patients and cases that need more priority:

“Being in the XXXXX Centre, we are part of a team with doctors, nurses and psychiatrists and it is important for the team to meet Monday mornings to measure and discuss cases. Besides that we have case review meetings every two weeks of the month.” FSW 4

It is not surprising that the research study could not reveal an up-to-date workload measurement system in the Directorate which does not provide guidelines on how to execute workload management. Workload measurement tools are essential not only to assess workers' performance but also to hold them accountable. In this regard, Gil (2017) underlines that workload measurement is a tool that is used to quantify the amount of time spent in the provision of services to patients, clients, residents, etc. It also measures the amount of time spent in non-patient activities and places the emphasis on accountability of performance.

To conclude this theme, all research participants were in agreement that workload management and measurement is an essential management task that can prevent stress, exhaustion, burnout, as well as increasing job satisfaction and creating a positive work engagement.

7.3.2 Theme 2: Time management

Time management refers to the way one divides his or her time between specific activities and tasks. Manktelow (2006) states that time management is about managing how you use your time. All research participants confirmed that they employ various tools and activities to help them manage their time but they do not regard time management as a managerial task. The following statements bear witness to this:

“Wow, very interesting, I was not aware that managing your time is a management task, okay now I know. This is really an eye-opener.” FSW 1

“We do all these things without realising these are all management tasks. It shows the need for in-service training on social work management.” FSW 3

As expounded in Chapter 5, time management is crucial in human service organisations because human service practitioners operate under pressure as they have to meet deadlines.

In the Directorate where social workers have to manage heavy caseloads as a result of human resource shortages and working under extremely difficult working conditions, time management is absolutely important.

“... because sometimes if I look at counselling services, we are supposed to have 45 minutes and sometimes the cases have a nature that you cannot use the 45 minutes because it might also be a crisis intervention. Sometimes I don't work with time, and sometimes I need to incorporate my time management. So, it depends from case to case, especially the crisis intervention because if I have someone who do not have a place to stay I need to run around and find something until I resolve the crisis.” FSW 12

Judging from the above account, it becomes clear that participants have difficulties in managing their time as some even emphasise that although they realise the importance of time management, the working conditions sometimes do not allow them to execute this task effectively. The following responses confirm this:

“I value planning and working according to my plan but in our work it is not always possible to follow our time schedule, we are few and we have always people showing up without appointments. You cannot send them back, sometimes it is a crisis and you have to apply crisis management. That means putting aside what you were busy with. There are days that you have planned to go out for home visits just to find out that there is no vehicle available, even if you have booked for it. You are just being told there is an outbreak, like now with Hepatitis E, and the nurses have outreach programmes.” FSW 15

Another research participant asserted how the working conditions impact on the execution of time management by stating that:

“Time management is not really so good in our division, you see I'm a supervisor (middle level of management), I'm not even supposed to have cases but I still have a caseload because of the shortage of social workers. I see clients and also have my administrative duties as supervisor. I have to attend a lot of meetings to. The Minister can call anytime instructing you to attend a meeting that you were not informed in advance. I plan to manage my time but there are always unplanned things that derail you.” MSW 23

The statements above point to the connection between the first theme (workload management and measurement) and time management. Note that in point 7.3.1 it was indicated that workload management is not only about the amount of work but it also involves working conditions. The lack of facilities such as vehicles and few social workers affect the execution of time management. For instance, if the social worker has planned to go out for home visits, the unavailability of a vehicle causes a suspension in service delivery. This can lead to procrastination, delays, work piling up and not finishing work on time. This evolving interaction between social workers and their environment accentuates the applicability of the ecological systems perspective in management in social work. Van Rensburg (2007), for instance, reminds us about the interrelatedness of various parts in a system and how these sub-systems influence one another. The Minister is one subsystem in the Ministry that is considered to be more powerful and when he/she assigns duties, social workers abandon what they were busy with to adhere to the commands, and this is affecting the execution of their time management tasks. This is contrary to the fundamentals of management which advocate that employees utilise inputs from the environment to perform their management task. In the case of social workers where the environment does not privilege them with inputs (lack of resources and facilities), it is not always possible for social workers to transform inputs into outputs (refer to figure 3.2).

Moreover, the bureaucratic management theory fits in the above discussion too, as bureaucratic organisations are characterised by a vertical organisational hierarchy. The Minister is on top of the Ministry and has coercive powers and social workers have to comply with the requests from his/her office. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) maintain that the person on top is the boss and power decreases at each lower level of the hierarchy.

The next section deals with sub-themes and the discussion thereof highlights how social workers execute this management task (tools they apply) as well as why they consider this task to be essential.

7.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Time management tools

Time management involves how staff members divide their time to attend to various activities and responsibilities. Manktelow (2006) suggests that time management is about how you

divide your time. Social workers work under pressure and there are always deadlines to meet as per the following excerpt:

“Managing time is absolute for social workers, in hospital we are part of a team and if you don’t manage your time you delay the work of nurses or doctors for example and at the end you disadvantage the client or patient. Social workers who do probation work have to meet court deadlines or otherwise you are in trouble; so we have various tools that help us to manage our time. Well these tools are not always applied effectively but at least they keep us on track.” FSW 9

Various authors such as Thomack (2012) and Pretorius (2014) suggest useful ways to manage time, and research participants also listed various tools and or techniques that they apply when executing time management. Although the participants were from various divisions in the Directorate, research findings show that they apply similar strategies in the execution of time management.

The discussion on the following tools unpacks Research Question 2 and develops an understanding on how social workers execute time management:

A work plan indicates the main activities for the week, for instance, Monday is for home visits, Wednesday is set out for group work, Friday is for administrative duties, etc.:

“It’s something (time management) that we do when we do have time, but you know, because of the fact that I mentioned that we are under-staffed. Time management is very difficult, especially now. But it’s something we do, we try and set up time to say Fridays are only for administration and Mondays to Thursdays I see patients so that I can get time for other stuff for example, doing administration or home visits.” FSW 16

The statement above reveals that working conditions still make it difficult for social workers to be effective and efficient in performing time management. Although they have a work plan, they are still not focused and the task is performed unsystematically. It is important for social workers to prioritise their activities and not “execute time management when we do have time” as per the above response. This is indicative of the fact that they do not know how to manage their time. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) for example, underline that effective time management requires managers to know how to manage their time. The authors further state

that managers who appreciate time management rank-order their tasks, and channel most of their energies on the most important activities, the ones that must be completed first, thereby accentuating the “first things first” concept as per Covey (2015).

The use of a diary and a to-do-list for a week or day are some of the most popular techniques applied by participants as one participant recalls:

“A diary is definitely an important tool; you need to track your meetings. There are a lot of meetings to attend. Not only our sub divisional programs but in other Subdivisions too where our contribution is needed. We have to sit in for input, have discussions on documents or draft any directorate document. Also some other stakeholders, currently we're doing. Where we have a joint agreement between the Ministry of XXXXX and us, we have to sit on those meetings; there are many stakeholder meetings we have to attend. Strategic documents like National Cancer Plan meetings where we need to have our input for a proper strategy. I rely heavily on my diary not to miss these important meetings.” MSW 7

A to-do-list is considered to be an effective way to coherently prioritise, manage and evaluate daily tasks (Coulshed & Mullender, 2006).

The use of technology such as smart phones and the creation of WhatsApp groups are also becoming popular among social workers, as revealed by the present study:

“Many of us also make use of our Smart phones to remind us about meetings, appointments or other important activities that I need to do for the day.” FSW 13

“We use it (mobile phone) a lot like the example of the appointment that I had yesterday, the phone had to remind me. As a team we have a WhatsApp group we share information on the cellophane and it is very important.” FSW 8

This is the era of information, communication and technology (ICT) and social workers who participated in the research study proved that they also move with times and appreciate technology in their work.

Desk calendars and rosters were also mentioned during data collection. Although a desk calendar and roster do not differ much from a to-do-list and/or diary, research participants found them to be very useful as per the statements below:

“In addition to my to-do-list and my diary, I also like the desk calendar. A desk calendar is in front of me and I look at it every time; in that way it keeps me alert of things I need to carry out on a specific day. It has one or two pages for each day, with spaces allowing me to make notes.” FSW 4

A roster is a list that shows the order in which a job or duty is to be done by the members of a group and the following response shows how social workers find it a useful tool in helping them to execute their time management task:

“We are in the hospital setting where we work in a team with the health staff (doctors, nurses, psychologists etc.) and a roster is very helpful in pointing out which social worker is doing which ward. It makes it easier for the team when it comes to referrals too. A doctor will for example know to which social worker to send a patient to. This makes things easier for the team. A roster also indicate which member of the team is on duty or on leave. Yea, so it is handy.” MSW 22

These testimonials show that a desk calendar can contribute to managing time effectively and a roster does not only benefit staff working in a team, but also prevents clients from being sent around from one staff to another.

Delegation of work is another way used by research participants in order to manage their time and this is in line with Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy (2012) as they suggest that delegation is an effective skill in time management. It is a simple way for managers to free themselves of time-consuming chores, gives employees opportunities to develop and increases the number of tasks accomplished by the team. The statement below from one of the research participants is testimony to this:

“So basically for my workload and also to manage my time, I delegate tasks not only among social workers, but I also delegate to other team members such as psychologists and the occupational therapist. For example, if I see that I have a lot of cases from substance abuse issues instead of doing with all of them, I send some to the occupational therapist so that the latter can start a substance rehabilitation group with them. In that way I reduce my workload and find myself in a better position to manage my time.” MSW 5

This account points out an important aspect of how the job of a middle manager can be overwhelming and that they should use their time efficiently, meaning that they do the jobs

that only they can do. When suitable they assign tasks to other staff members of the team. Delegation does not help the manager to maximise on his or her time but staff members who are assigned tasks can feel trusted and they can learn. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) underline that appropriate delegation helps managers to use their time most efficiently. The authors add that delegation can be of a good use of staff members' time as well as helping them to make their jobs more interesting, and this helps them to grow professionally.

Another skill or technique to manage time is to prioritise activities as evinced by the following quote:

"...so I realise if I don't plan my work I don't get my work done. I have learn that if I want to get work done, delegating tasks is one good way of managing time. Furthermore, I divide my work on blocks, putting the most important activity put on top with the less important activities at the bottom. Dividing my work help me to know what I must deal with in a week." FSW 20

What can be gleaned from the foregoing narrative is that planning of activities is important in order to know what is more urgent and what can wait; in other words to list daily or weekly priorities.

The same research participant further narrated many agendas that need her attention as a medical social worker:

"I also try very hard to educate my clients that they cannot just come any time to my office as I also have other things to attend to. I emphasise the importance of making appointments. Looking also at the wards, the nursing staff and doctors call me for small things. I have to inform the nursing staff too that I follow a duty roster. For instance, 2 days of the week I'm in the wards so that they can make referrals of patients that need my attention. By prioritising my tasks this help me a lot to manage my time." FSW 20

The above statement is a testimony of the many activities that demand the attention of a social worker at the same time; for example nurses who send patients to social workers for every small thing that they cannot deal with, doing ward rounds and patients wanting to see the social worker every moment. During data collection at the Mental Health Centre, the researcher observed the frequent knocking on the social worker's door from nurses to patients who needed the attention of the social worker. All this happens despite a "do not disturb" notice on the door. This indicates that prioritising is an important aspect of time

management. Generally, to prioritise is to designate or treat something as being very or most important. As a principle, it means doing first things first and as a process, it means evaluating a group of items (tasks or responsibilities) and ranking them in their order of importance or urgency (Covey, 2015). On ranking activities in order of urgency, Thomack (2012) proposes that it is important to look at what must be done, what could be done and what needs to be done.

Another crux of the expression above, that “I divide my work on blocks, the most important thing on top” correlates with Pretorius’s (2014) practical technique to help with time management as demonstrated in figure 5.1.

Lastly, research participant FSW 20 forms part of a team and each part of the team has its own specific responsibilities but yet these responsibilities are interrelated. Meyer and Botha (2011) argue that it is important for the various parts of a system to understand their relationship with one another as well as how each single part functions; hence, from an ecological systems perspective, the focus is on the arrangement of and relations between the parts which connect them into a whole. If this nurse for example develops an understanding of what social workers do, then they will not send patients to social workers for little things that derail the social worker from her/his work.

7.3.2.2 Sub-theme: Time management and performance

Social workers like anybody else, have 24 hours or 1, 4440 minutes in a day and from these 24 hours they have 8 hours (480 minutes) to perform their duties in an office where they report for work from 8 AM till 5 PM. In these 8 hours, they attend to phone calls, clients’ visits, home visits, administrative work, attending meetings, etc., and surely what they do with their time has an impact on their overall productivity and performance. Performance is what the organisation hires one to do, and do well (Campbell, 2016). However, performance is not only about doing but about creating results as well.

The research study revealed that the participants were well-aware of the link between effective time management and overall performance:

“We work in a very competitive environment and one is expected to perform in your work. Our promotions depend on your performance and one can only perform if you know how best to use your time. If you miss out, that time is

gone. That is why planning your work is vital but this is not always possible to stick to your plans due to many factors. I try very hard but at times you feel hopeless, like in my case I was the unlucky one the day when they handed over computers. I was not at work so I did not get a computer. If I have something that I need to type I have to go to my colleagues or the reception. If they are busy on their computers, then I cannot type. Sometimes I need to type an important report and if I don't get a computer it delays my work. That influences my performance. This can be very frustrating and discouraging.” FSW 3

This indicates once more the fact that hostile working conditions impact negatively on the execution of management tasks which equally hinders performance; for instance in waiting for an available computer, time is wasted. Such conditions create negative consequences on the performance of social workers. Even if social workers try hard to manage their time, the working environment seems to work against them.

Furthermore, the following response highlights the relationship between time management and performance:

“The Directorate has introduced a system of where we have to submit performance appraisal forms quarterly. Besides that we have productivity meetings where everyone has to account on how you spend your time in the Ministry.” MSW 27

The above statement is indicative of the link between time management and work performance, hence good time management skills have a positive impact on staff performance. There is thus a significant relationship between excellent performance and time management (Ahmad, Yusuf, Shobri & Wahab, 2012).

In conclusion, it is also clear that workload management and time management as managerial skills are interrelated. The working environment which is an aspect of workload management has an impact on how social workers manage their time. In other words, the tasks are intertwined and overlapping and they cannot be executed in isolation from one another, just as management functions are. Engelbrecht (2014) identified management skills, functions and tasks as three key concepts that are interconnected and performed in relation to another (refer to figure 4.1).

7.3.2.1.1 Data Category: Flexibility

One data category that could be drawn from this theme is the concept that social workers need to be flexible in their approach to their clients:

“There are times that you will be called from home. The social workers will be given a lot of responsibilities. You find that you are called from home because there is a patient who is discharged and have to go on a bus the next day. You can be called to come back here after 5 PM because we keep the patient’s belonging, so the doctor might have forgotten to inform you about the client discharge.” FSW 10

The following excerpt further affirms flexibility as an element or concept of time management:

“Actually what I normally do is that I put the appointment on my to-do list so I put the things that I need to do weekly so that I’m always cognisant of the appointments that I have within that Monday. Like now I have to cancel an appointment to attend an urgent meeting, but we bear in mind that we have to be flexible as other urgent matters might come up.” FSW 9

If flexibility is taken to mean willingness to change or compromise, then the question is up to what extent social workers can be willing to change or compromise. As much as Wallace (2004) argues that challenges such as global trends, attending meetings, integrating new policies and blended workforce make demand for flexibility greater than ever before, organisations should be cognisant of the implications of flexibility on the micro, meso and macro levels. From the above narratives, a social worker has to compromise his/her free time after work to go to the office to give a patient his/her belongings because the doctor or nurse failed to recall that a patient had been discharged. Social workers are already overworked and such instances can frustrate them and lead to poor working relationships among colleagues as this might exert unnecessary pressure on social workers. According to Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2014), group pressure has the strongest influence on workers’ productivity and this is from a human relations point of view. Also cancelling appointments to attend to an urgent meeting can sadly affect the social worker-client helping relationship, which in turn can hinder the helping process.

In terms of the ecological systems perspective, there are always reciprocal transactions; in other words, circular interactions where sub-systems engage with one another in such a way that they influence each other (Worden, 2013).

7.3.2.2.3 Data category: The value of time management

This data category aided in understanding why time management is considered an essential management task. All research participants indicated that time management is an essential management task as highlighted in some of the following statements:

“It is important for social workers to manage their time because if you cannot manage time, it can create confusion, and one cannot be effective any longer.”
FSW 18

When you don’t manage your time effectively you will constantly be in motion, trying to scramble to complete important tasks at the last minute, maintains Campbell (2016):

“Yes it is definitely important, especially now that performance appraisal is a requirement. It is a definite thing we have to do. Reporting every minute or every second of how you spend your time, makes it very important that you manage your time wisely.” MSW 4

“Because also you know too, I think when we keep our time and we manage it properly, it helps us to keep to our plans and most important, to prevent our social workers from exhaustion, stress and burning out and so on.” MSW 2.

All the above narratives correlate with Manktelow (2006) who cites that effective time management can have benefits like greater productivity and efficiency, a better professional reputation and less stress for employees. The following extract is in line with Manktelow (2006):

“It’s very important especially, not to be confused in the process of carrying out your work. In social work if you fail, it ruins your professional image. Let’s say I have a project at the clinic and each and every person knows that I am supposed to be there and I don’t appear because of lack of time management because I’m at the office sitting with another client or something else. It will tarnish the image of the Ministry and my own image as a social worker and the profession itself. So it is very essential to manage your time.” FSW 17

7.3.3 Theme 3: Information management

Information is a valuable resource and an asset in any organisation. Human service practitioners, including social workers engage with clientele, stakeholders and colleagues on a daily basis and they are expected to disseminate information. It follows that there is a need to have a better understanding of the essence of information dissemination and management in organisations since good communication is essential in social work in providing information, support, problem solving and bringing about change. To this end, Smit and Cronje (1999), state that the manager plays a significant role in the management of information, communication flow and maintaining the existing systems within organisations. The sharing of information through various communication systems is a key aspect of keeping the organisation, staff, service users and other beneficiaries as well as stakeholders updated about new developments. Barker (2003) defines communication as the exchange of information, including all the ways in which knowledge is transmitted and received. This flow of information is to and from multiple directions, hence it is crucial for the manager to gather information and pass it on to relevant partners. It goes without saying that social workers as managers at various levels of management are constantly engaging in internal communication (within the system/organisation) as well as external communication with stakeholders. Information management as a managerial task is thus a cycle of organisational activity, namely the gaining of information from one or more sources and the distribution of that information to those who need it.

Participants included in the study indicated that information management is a management task they execute mostly on a daily basis. This is not unusual, taking into account that one role performed by social workers is to empower service users by playing the role of an educator, thus, enabling clients through information management. The excerpt below points to information dissemination as a managerial task executed by research participants:

“Information sharing is a very easy task that we as social workers perform on a daily basis; well in fact without realising that it is an important management task. For example, we meet on Mondays; we meet for supervision and also for staff meeting where we share information, so it is being done on regular basis, so information is best for communication.” MSW 3

Noteworthy is the recognition that despite the fact that social workers engage in the dissemination of information whether with clients, colleagues or other parties, participants do not realise that this is another actual management task. This confirms the lack or little general information that social workers have about management in social work, and perhaps it is not as “an easy task that we social workers perform on a daily basis” as the above participant claims. The argument is, if social workers do not know that information dissemination is linked to management, how grounded are they then in executing this task? However, this question is addressed in the sub-theme on management tools indicating how this task is carried out.

The next extract is another confirmation of social workers performing information management:

“I would say that information management is something that I do on a daily basis, yea, every day. We get a lot of clients coming in to ask about so and so. Since we are hospital based social workers, sometimes clients come with different problems that need referrals or more information about a specific issue and we do disseminate a lot of information. This is what I do if that is what is called a management task.” FSW 11

This quote suggests that information dissemination from the social worker to the client does not differ so much from the previous one. The previous one refers more to internal communication taking place among social workers themselves during either supervision or staff meetings, while the second quote involves sharing of information from practitioners to service users. The impression is that the flow of information is not to and from multi directions as there is no mention of other stakeholders either within or outside the organisation. This finding contrasts literature that posits that communication should have a multi-directional flow and that it should enable staff to gather vital intelligence and impacts on how staff communicate and represent the organisation to the external stakeholders (Smit & Cronje, 1999).

However, some research participants seem to be in line with what literature suggests; namely reaching out to the external world and engaging stakeholders and other parties. The following responses are testimony to that:

“In our work, yes we do information management, distributing information at different levels not only in the Ministry but also outside. You know, some of us engage with other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) such as Epupa Investment (PTY) Ltd (the company which administer social grants) on information or logistical arrangements regarding our clients. There are different NGO’S and especially Faith Based Organisations in Windhoek that we deal with, were you go and find out what they need to be educated on as well as information from them that can benefit our clients and give it to the community. FSW 1

The next quote also confirms the circulation of information between institutions:

“There is a flow of information between our Ministry and various Ministries such as Ministry of XXXX, Ministry of XXXX, Ministry of XXXXX and other Ministries. So we need to manage the information from us to them and from them to us and see how this can enhance our work.” FSW 11

This narrative underpins the flow of information not only within the organisation but also with the external environment with other partners and associates. Social workers collect information from various systems and stakeholders to benefit services users and this correlates with literature as Nel (2012) points out that networking that is external to the organisation will keep you up-to-date professionally as well as in your specialist field.

Another participant reiterated the focus on information management outside the Directorate by saying that at times they have specific targets in the community:

“We sometimes only give specific information to specific targets, for example like to parents in the XXXXX Home coordinating this with the Ministry of XXXXX. Some other days, according to our work plan of course, we have reach out programs in the communities like in the informal settlements in collaboration with the clinics. These reach-out programs can address any social issue e.g. productive health, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. We give information everywhere, like when doing planning we choose certain groups and share the information to that specific group in the location.” FSW 5

This is indicative of the fact that social workers identify, create and share information. In this regard, Corbitt (2003) insists that to ensure that information becomes a useful resource, specific processes are required, namely identifying, creating and sharing.

Linked to the ecological systems perspective, this illustration describes the Directorate as an open system which is in interaction with its environment. An open system exchanges information, energy and/or material with its environment (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014).

7.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Strategies to information dissemination management

This sub-theme speaks to research Question Number 2, which is about expounding on how social workers execute time management as a managerial task. The research participants appeared to have employed various strategies for dispensing information and communication (internally and externally). Managers use various methods to communicate and manage information (Reyneke, 2014). Research participants shared the following:

Report writing

Social workers write a lot and their writing has a major impact on people's lives. Social workers are required to write reports for a wide number of uses; reports for the court, and reports to account for their work especially in the three main methods of social work (case, group and community work). A report is a piece of information describing, or an account of certain events given or presented to relevant authorities (Watt, 2013).

Record keeping and documentation has been an essential task within social work (Trevithick, 2010) and current research findings confirm this as per the response below:

“We learn from the university that writing cannot be disconnected from social work. You write reports every week if not every day. We are expected to account for any action we take in our work, after every session whether with an individual client, group or a community work activity, you have to write a report. In fact we have to keep records of any action we take, you call a client, and you make a note in the client’s file that on this day a phone call was made to the client. So reports help us to perform information management.” MSW 21

The above excerpt confirms that social workers write reports to give an account of events they engage in, be it at micro, meso or macro level of practice. The following citation is in support of the afore-mentioned statement:

“In doing social work we put a lot of emphasis on confidentiality, so whatever social workers do, the supervisor is not always present. The social worker sit alone with a client behind a closed door, go out alone to do home visits,

facilitate groups and community projects on their own. Yet as supervisor you have to know how the social worker is doing with all these. It is through their reports that I, as supervisor, get a picture of what is going on. So it is so important for social workers to write reports to account for their work. This help in promotions too.” MSW 27

With further probing on how reports help social workers manage information, one research participant responded as follows:

“Yes, here in the XXXXX Centre, we have files for each client, they’re kept in one central place, and there is a steel cabinet where all files are kept. So, like if a client comes they must give their card in front so they will have to find their files. I pray for the day when we will get rid of the old filing system and start creating folders on our PC’s. With this the old systems, sometimes you cannot find the files of the client and what this person has been treated for. But I guess that will not be realised soon since social workers do not even have computers.” FSW 15

From this citation, two important observations can be made. Firstly, in this new era of information, communication and technology, social workers are still storing files in old-fashioned steel cabinets. Pretorius (2014) maintains that over the past decade, the keeping of orderly systematic information on cases and permanent recording of activities was expected, and social workers maintained shelves or cabinets with files on service users, group activities or projects. Information management in the 21st century, a decade of technology, has become an absolute necessity and social workers need to start appreciating technology in managing information. According to Corbitt (2003:20), information management is a method of supporting organisations in the environment that they face in the 21st century. Kettner, Moroney, and Martin (2013: 192) warn that today’s governments, funders, donors, and sponsors require “...precision in matching service to need, for performance measurement, overall program cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness, for transparency and for reporting of results”.

A second assumption is that keeping files of clients in cabinets poses the danger of files getting lost as alluded to in the extract above since there is no backup. Moreover, given the fact that not all social workers have access to computers, the application of technology will remain a dream for some social workers in the Ministry.

However, despite the lack of or sharing of computers in some offices, social workers value technology and apply some technological processes to manage information and to keep communication flow in the organisation as well as outside the organisation. The use of technology is valued in flourishing organisations, and Reyneke (2014) accentuates that technology is used as an enabler for internal communication and collaborative work.

The accounts as shown below indicate that technology is used to share information transversely:

“In the Directorate we have created a WhatsApp group that we use for communication and spreading information, it is very effective, information is fast and we keep ourselves updated on what is happening in the Directorate. But, some social workers do not have internet in their offices and so when you do not have credit in your phone, then you miss out. But it works most of the time as people nowadays make use of Aweh.” FSW 19

(Aweh is a product that allows customers to choose a specific bundle for each voice minutes, Data in Megabytes, SMS quantity and Data in Megabytes for Social Media):

“In managing information we use emails a lot as well as our own mobile phones, we email, we call each other to share, to collect information, not only among social workers but also with other stakeholders. But still in some cases it is necessary to follow up the email with a letter.” FSW 2

The use of emails underpins the observation of Reyneke (2014) that emails are used frequently in most, if not all offices. Reyneke (2014) further maintains that to manage information effectively, emails should still be followed by a letter or attach a formal letter as part of an email.

On further probing whether participants use other software such as Google Drive, Twitter and Dropbox, the research results show that social workers do not apply these sophisticated Apps. The discourses below are testimony thereof:

“Except using WhatsApp, I personally have never tried to use Google Drive or Dropbox. I do not think there are social workers in the Ministry who use these. I’m not aware of that.” FSW 13

“Communicating through WhatsApp is becoming very popular but not these other things, we do not even have a Facebook Page for the social workers in the Ministry. I’m aware of the Ministry Website and yes the Namibian Social Workers’ Association has a Facebook Page too. I know that the social workers in Erongo Region has created a Facebook for them too. Yea but here no for us.” FSW 9

This suggests that social workers in the Directorate, although not using all various tools of technology, emails and WhatsApp seem to be the most popular ones. The assumption is that social workers need to familiarise themselves with technology so that they can start appreciating it more in managing their tasks and for them to be more able to use multiple ways to disseminate and receive information. As a managerial task, communication requires managers to be familiar with technological advances in the communication fields to facilitate the speedy transmission of information, storage and information management (Pretorius, 2014). In contrast, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) seem not to be optimistic about the technological deluge. On one hand, the two authors argue that with a few clicks of a mouse, the social worker can google directions to a client’s house. However, they reason that workers can easily spend their entire office day on non-productive Internet activities; hence it is important for managers to have management information systems in place.

The research also found that social workers in the Directorate still apply conservative ways of information management and dissemination as per the extract below:

“Circulars and memos are common ways of managing information, especially from top level downward. If the Minister wants to share information, or any other division in the Ministry has something to share or remind, circulars and memos are usually send out. New policies or even change in a policy is done through a circular. As supervisors we make sure that these reach to the rest of the staff. In some cases memos are used to remind people from various departments to meet to look into a specific issue.” MSW 24

This highlights the fact that internal communication in the organisation is characterised by downward communication from management to employees as well as horizontal communication between staff. Circulars and memos are seen as traditional ways of communication. To this effect, Garthwait (2011) states that modern technology has largely replaced paper with emails and that downward communications are those from management

to employees while horizontal communications are those between people at the same level of the organisation.

Furthermore, the extract above indicates that cross-functional communication is taking place in the different levels of the organisation. Diagonal communication is the communication between different structures of an organisation when different departments come together to solve specific problems and to coordinate work (Van Noordwyk, 2016).

Pamphlets and leaflets

Research findings demonstrate that booklets, leaflets and flyers are normally used to manage information when they reach out to the broader community. Flyers and leaflets are normally small booklets that have information addressing a specific subject that is intended for broader distribution.

The research found that social workers use pamphlets and flyers to manage information when reaching out to communities during big campaigns on certain social issues:

“Yeah we make use of pamphlets or leaflets especially during road safety campaigns with other partners such as the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA), the Namibian Police and the Roads Authority. We distribute pamphlets at various road blocks to make people more aware of the danger of driving while under the influence of alcohol or other substances.” FSW 6

Thus, from the above, it can be surmised that in managing information the broader external environment is engaged through involving various stakeholders, again emphasising the Directorate as an open system.

Television talks and Radio presentations

Social workers consider television and the radio to be ideal tools to disseminate information to their clientele as per the citation below:

“Yes social workers make use of Television and the radio to reach out to clients. We announce visits to the regions and districts through radios in various vernaculars. That works excellent. We also go on TV and radio to disseminate important information; we reach a large audience through the radio especially those communities in the remote areas where they do not have access to Television or newspapers.” FSW 10

The above is indicative that the television and radio are ideal instruments for transmitting thoughts, ideas, and opinions to the readers, listeners and or viewers.

The research findings however, could not highlight how the process to information management is followed in the Directorate. For instance, it is difficult to assume how social workers create information or take decisions based on accessible information. From the research findings it can be discerned that the approach is more of when a need arises, information would be shared. There is no clear process of information flow within the Directorate or outside with partners. Corbitt (2003) emphasises the importance of a process-based approach to information management. In Corbitt's (2003) view, a process-based approach to information management enables managers to generate new information, use accessible information in decision-making, and create a process that allows access to information from external sources, and transfer existing information throughout the organisation.

Consequently, it is essential for social workers to appreciate the prospects that information management creates. Carrilio (2005) suggests that social service organisations are under-utilising information management while Corbitt (2003) posits that in order to survive in the information society of the 21st century; organisations need to nurture and develop all their information management techniques.

7.3.3.1.1 Data category: The importance of information management

Information management is the life blood of any organisation and no organisation can survive without the dissemination of information. Managers use information in their planning and decision making processes.

Research findings revealed that information dissemination is an essential management task executed by social workers as MSW 14 recalls that:

“Information dissemination is very essential as I mentioned earlier that substance abuse and mental health issues are not well understood and it is important to share information. Most people believe it is witchcraft and by liaising with other stakeholders we can create more awareness.” FSW 14

From this excerpt, it is clear that information management is essential in informing and educating service users. This echoes Van Noordwyk (2016) that one function of information

management is to inform not only service users but employees too need data and information to perform their work. This suggests that information management is linked to performance and it could be further argued that the organisational environment would definitely impact on how information is managed in an organisation. An environment which is not responsive to the needs of its employees, like in the case of social workers, where not everyone has access to electronic devices such as computers or the Internet, management information systems are not in place. Furman and Gibelman (2013) affirm that when the working environment is negative, morale suffers as does productivity.

Moreover, regardless of the old-fashioned filing system, research findings confirm that record keeping and documentation is an essential way of managing information as per the reaction below:

“Record keeping is a systematic process or way that helps me to keep important records such as reports about my work with my clients, be it with individuals or groups. With record keeping and documentation I also manage to keep important memorandums, circulars and letters. With this it becomes easier to explain progress and what has been done to your supervisor or colleagues.” MSW 6

Based on the above response, documentation is a must for social workers in order for them to be accountable for their time and for them to work with their clients. Recording has been an integral part of social work since its inception; even in the 1917s, Mary Richmond in her first social work book (*Social Diagnosis*), put emphasis on case records. To this effect, Kagle and Kopels (2008) maintain that social workers routinely document their services to demonstrate accountability to their clients, agencies, funding sources, communities and profession.

Record keeping in social work practice has multiple reasons such as to facilitate continuity, promote communication among team members, and to enable social workers in appraising their own work. Additionally, records serve as a source of information for compiling court reports or any other reports. Moreover, record keeping serves as a basis for other managerial tasks, namely, supervision and consultation.

Information management becomes an essential management task when it comes to educating communities and raising awareness on certain social challenges as per the following research participant:

“Information management is essential, for example when we are commemorating the mental health day. One of our goals is raising awareness in the communities and as we raise awareness we educate communities about mental health issues. So our target group is basically everybody in the community. On a day like mental health day, we do not only commemoration day but we educate them family members and the community at large about mental health issues.” FSW 7

In managing information, it is necessary to know which information to take to which service users. Information management is about obtaining information from one or more sources and then distributing that information to those who will appreciate it (Smit & Cronje, 1999).

Lastly, information management is essential as it facilitates contact between social workers and other health professionals such as nurses as well as external partners. This is evident in the extracts below:

“We have a special program just for the schools under the health division to promote health among school learners. We cover various topics such as life skills, productive health and teenage pregnancy. So, health professionals and social workers meet at different schools where we go out and address learners. Alcohol and drug abuse, for example is the highest problem and suicide, so schools ask us specifically to come and assist the teachers.” MSW 2

7.3.4 Theme 4: Risk management

The term risk has been associated with profit making organisations (risk of losing profit) or games and not really linked to social welfare organisations. Bessant (2004) states that historically risk has been associated with gambling and games of courage, while Stalker (2003) argues that understandings of risk have been shaped by religious, environmental, political and economic structures. However, Callahan (2001) maintains that within the social sciences, and particularly within social work in the last decade, explicit attention to risk has entered the practice fields of child welfare, mental health and criminal offending.

For businesses, managing risks means to reduce and minimize the loss exposure. What exactly does risk management mean in the social work context? For social workers, risk management may certainly not be about losing profit, but it could be about ensuring quality services to service users to prevent the risk of losing clients to other organisations. There is always competition and risk management for social workers could range from protecting service users (ethical issues) to safeguarding themselves as practitioners. To this effect, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) insist that in most human service organisations, there is stiff competition for external funding and retention of clients. This goes without saying that risk management for social workers entails managing various factors that impact negatively on service delivery. Poor service delivery might reduce the number of service users which in turn puts the continuation of social welfare services at risk. As expounded in Chapter 5, managing risk is a daily challenge for all social workers as they deal with different personalities coming from diverse backgrounds. Managing risks raises issues about values and ethical codes which have long been fundamental to social work education and practice throughout the world (Hepworth *et al.*, 2012).

7.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Business interruption

As indicated earlier, risk management has been associated with business and economic fields, and as such, the concept of management was never linked to social work until the 20th century. Traditionally, social work training has not really paid much attention on risk management, and professional education pays little attention on this topic, hence social workers receive diminutive training on how to manage risks associated with their profession. To this effect, Reamer (2015) argues that although more and more social workers are learning about professional ethics, professional and continuing education rarely includes an introduction to risk management. While Carson (1995) claims that social work has focused on risk assessment at the expense of risk management, Parsloe (1999), on the other hand, as much as noting the small number of studies on risk management in social work, is of the opinion that it is a new term rather than a new activity.

Weinbach and Taylor (2015) confirm that the last years of the twentieth century and the early decades of the 21st century have been a time for human service organisations to start practicing management. Although most management literature is based on research studies of the business or manufacturing factors, social workers can learn much from it. So, what is

business interruption and how does it link to risk management? Social workers are also in business, they do not produce products for profit but provide service to those who are in need and if their services are being interrupted, that poses a risk to their performance and productivity. Business interruption is a type of operational risk because it interferes with a company's ability to function, and refers to challenges that threaten the ability of organisations to operate (Graham & Kaye, 2006). Existing literature also suggests that risk management in the health sector is not something new. Physicians, hospital employees and the hospital itself historically became familiar with risk management after a patient sustained injury or when a lawsuit was filed requiring defence (Youngberg, 2011). So in the case of social workers what would business interruption mean and how do they deal with risks and/or challenges? Definitely there are decisions taken by the top management in the past two/three years that pose risks and challenges in the operation of social workers. The following excerpt from one of the research participants is a testimony thereof:

“The XXXXXX Rehabilitation Centre has closed down for more than a year now and we cannot send people with substance abuse problems there. It has stopped operating after a directive from top management or whoever because there is no money to run the program. So as social workers we need to be creative and make plans, people or families who have people who are addicted still come to us but we cannot send them away because the Rehabilitation Centre has closed down. So we have started support groups but of course is still not the same as a centre were you used to have doctors, nurses, social workers and psychologists.” FSW 5

From the foregoing response, it is evident that the business of social workers has been interrupted and this poses a clear risk for the continuation of social welfare services in the field of substance abuse. Not only that, from an ecological systems perspective, the social welfare subsystem in the broader Ministerial system is being impacted by decisions taken by the macro as well as the exo systems (refer to Figure 3.3). An ecological systems perspective requires insights in the way an organisation's various subsystems influence one another as well as insights in the way they are influenced by bigger systems of which they are part (Van Rensburg, 2007).

Moreover, the above-stated extract does not only foreground the disruption and risk in the continuation of services, but brings out an important aspect of decision-making and risk in

social work. Given the nature of their work, social workers make judgements and decisions on a daily basis and mostly the judgement or decision is made in uncertainty or through taking risks. In this case, top management takes a decision that poses a risk and uncertainty to social workers in delivering services to clientele challenged with substance abuse. Taylor (2017) affirms that decision making in situations of uncertainty is a central professional activity in health and social care services. Taylor (2017) further states that risk taking or decisions do not happen in a vacuum but within the context of an organisation and hence it is important to engage all stakeholders in decision making processes to minimise possible risks. It goes without saying that this supports the assumption of the ecological systems perspective that various sub-systems of a system affect each other.

Furthermore, in Chapter 2, a not so good picture of social welfare services in Namibia was painted especially where social workers share offices not only with fellow social workers but in some cases with administrative staff like clerks. The following citation is evidence of business interruptions as a subject of risk management:

“Yes as you can see, this is X, an administrative staff helping us with administrative work and we share office space. We are four in this office (2 social workers and 2 clerks). When there is a client, the rest have to be excused, yea, this is uncomfortable but what can we do? The economic situation in the country is really affecting us.” MSW 21

Again, the above extract indicates that the operation of social workers is interrupted because of a risky working environment and this condition influences their time management as well. If you have to leave the office because an office mate has an interview, one’s work is definitely disturbed. Furthermore, this has ethical risk implications to the professional social workers.

7.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Environmental risk

Environment is a broad term that is open to ambiguity and multiple interpretations; for some it means territory, domain, a home or a situation. In this study, environment is taken to mean the surroundings or conditions in which a person lives or operates. In this case it has specific reference to the conditions or overall structures in which social workers operate hence, the research findings highlight some daily challenges or risks that social workers are exposed to while rendering services to their clientele as the quotation below attests:

“In the XXXXX Centre, we have to manage risk and you really have to be alert. You need to be careful and when you notice that the client is agitated you would want to leave the door open, we choose to set up so that my chair is close to the door. The phone becomes a challenge for you to call for assistance, the patient can hear you. One can also use the cell phone; at least you can text a colleague. One is always alert and one of our colleagues was physically assaulted by a client.” MSW 6

The above response is supported by another research participant who stated that:

“Safety precautions in the XXXXX Centre are well in place, e.g. there are security guards all over the place and we make use of biometric doors to prevent patients entering our offices freely” FSW 8

Notably is the interrelatedness of management tasks as the following research participant highlighted:

“Given the high workload, social workers are also at risk of suffering from stress and developing burnout. The poor working conditions are also posing risks for us practitioners.” FSW 9

Through the lens of an ecological systems perspective, workplace factors such as the content of work as well as the social and organisational context of work could be associated with stress and health risks among practitioners. Elements that are intrinsic to the job can include long working hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, and poor physical working conditions, for example space. Michie (2002) postulates that organisational changes such as mergers, and inadequate consultations and relocation are huge source of stress.

The research findings reveal that risk management is an essential management task, depending of course on where the social worker works. Some offices are isolated and participants need burglar doors, biometric doors and security guards to provide protection. In some instances, the working environment poses a health risk to social workers like in the TB Hospital or Mental Health Centre, and as such, protective measurements are a must. The following excerpt is illustrative of this:

“O yes, risk management is in fact something we do on a daily basis. You see, in our work in the hospital, I come across cases that involve ethical issues; for example, a boyfriend who refuses to disclose his HIV status to his partner. As

a professional you are fully aware of the risk to the other partner but you also acknowledge your ethical responsibilities. It is difficult but through counselling I managed to convince this client and eventually he disclosed his status to the girlfriend. So yeah, risk management is a task I do.” FSW 18

From the above citation it could be argued that risk management is a task that social workers face on a daily basis and it also involves ethical consciousness as well as the protection of service users. This is supported by Abisheva and Assylbekova (2016) who postulate that risk management refers to efforts to protect clients, practitioners and employers and it is a daily challenge for all social workers throughout the world. Abisheva and Assylbekova (2016) further posit that ethical awareness is fundamental to the profession of social work where respect for human rights and diversity and a commitment to promoting social justice are paramount.

7.3.4.1.1 Data category: Health and wellness

Risk management is not normally thought of when it comes to human resources, and there should be greater emphasis on employee health; hence, there is a need for organisations to properly assess and mitigate potential risks of employee health. Social workers are not exceptional and in their interactions with their clientele, the health of social workers is also put at risk and it is important for them to manage risk as indicated by the response below:

“Sometimes clients come with a mental illness and the moment you say you want to refer them to another department it also becomes a challenge, you are accused of labelling them of being mad. You have to find nice words that you will need to use. Others they do not want to say they are suffering from TB and you end up getting infected and you cannot wear a mask throughout. Only when I have flue that is when I can wear a mask and explain to the patient that I am having flue.” FSW 4

The afore-mentioned statement is also supported by a medical social worker in the TB Hospital who narrates that:

“Yes I work at the XXXX Hospital so I need to wear my mask all the time, sometimes I forget because I don't want to have the mask on because I find difficulty in breathing. So there is a risk for me yeah.” MSW 22

Normally, most non-profit organisations and especially social workers are driven by deep-rooted principles of compassion and service for others that managers at times forget to care for their staff. Equally, during the day-to-day tasks, social workers may also forget to take care of themselves.

Risk management is concerned with all efforts put in place to protect clients, practitioners, and employers. Social workers in Namibia as clarified in Chapter 2, are required to register with the Health Professions Councils of Namibia to ensure that their professional conduct is in line with the ethical code of conduct. This is testified by the following statement:

“Our clients are very well protected, especially by laws/policies, for example social workers cannot operate without a license. You have to renew your registration with the council and this is to protect clients and not put them at risk.” FSW 17

The above research findings correlate with the suggestion that risk management includes the prevention of lawsuits and licensing board complaints (Reamer, 2014).

Francis and Armstrong (2003) suggest a variety of methods that social workers can use to manage risks and ethical issues such as consulting with a supervisor, and applying the Code of Ethics. Although social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services use supervision and comply with the Namibia Association of Social Workers' Association Code of Ethics, the research, however, revealed that the Directorate lacks a policy on risk assessment and risk management for social workers. Despite the absence of strategy, it could be concluded that the ability and commitment of social workers to act ethically enable participants to deal with risk management on a regular basis.

7.3.5 Theme 5: Change and transformation management

According to De Jager (2014), change is a simple process. It occurs whenever people replace the old with the new. Change is about traveling from the old to the new, leaving yesterday behind in exchange for the new tomorrow. However, the author notes that implementing change is difficult. Organisations, including human service organisations, are open systems and social workers do not operate in a vacuum. Research participants are employed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry is part of the broader Namibian

Government, hence any changes in the government policies or structures definitely have an impact on the operation of social workers and this is in line with the ecological systems perspective. The ecological systems perspective emphasises interrelationship between individuals and their environments and the impact the environment has on individuals. Environment includes a range of contexts including but not limited to family context, organisational infrastructures, service systems, network linkages, political forces, cultural forces, social forces, and social work values, roles, and professional issues. In this regard, Segal and Steiner (2012) hypothesise that each of the parts in the system interact with other parts in some way, and the various parts are dependent on each other to create the larger whole. The various parts of a system affect and are affected by one another.

Chapters 2 and 3 revealed how changes in the Namibian Government influenced social service delivery and the general operation of social workers. Therefore, it is critical for social workers to be ready at all times to reorganise and adapt in response to change, be it within or outside the organisation, in order to preserve the integrity of the organisation. In this line, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) affirm that many different areas of change tend to affect the work environment in human service organisations.

The affirmation that social workers should be ready for any changes is summarised by the response below as narrated by one of the participants:

“Being a social worker means that one should adopt a creative and innovative way of thinking. For instance, there are many changes taking place especially now with the Government budgetary cuts. XXXXXX Rehabilitation Centre was closed down because government does not have money to take new intakes. That is change which is influencing our work. People with substance abuse problems are there and we cannot send them back home or not help them. So what we did was to come together and decide that we create groups and continue helping them in groups. So that is being creative.” FSW 6

What is demonstrated in the above-stated extract correlates with D’Ortenzio’s (2012) view that resources are heavily constrained and yet there is a demand on services to continue growing. Consequently, health workers and social workers should think of innovative ways to manage change without compromising service delivery.

7.3.5.1 Sub-theme: Social workers’ experiences of change

Every organisation is prone to change and transformation because change is inevitable due to various factors. Passenheim (2010) mentions some external reasons which create a need for organisations to change such as market place, government laws and regulations and economic state of affairs. Besides external factors, there are also internal reasons that impose change in organisations, namely corporate strategy, work force, technology and equipment. Research findings confirm that change is unavoidable as per the citation below:

“Change is inevitable, especially in this Ministry and in the hospital. We have to manage change and transformation. The fragmentation of services is really a challenge, but our Ministry, as well as the Ministry of XXXXX are mostly the two Ministries that have the fragmentation of services. We’re currently working on the metrics; we have meetings lined up in order to sort out responsibilities. It is necessary to find ways to complement each other and social workers in various institutions to join hands. Instead of social workers to work in isolation, we need to pull resources together. FSW 19

Furthermore, the response of research participants is indicative that social workers display a positive reaction to change, thus enabling them to manage change and transformation. The following extract attests to this:

“Here we have to share offices, because the Ministry does not have money for more offices. I’m sharing my office with two administrative clerks, well I have to adjust and fit in. That is the reality.” MSW 7

In social work practice, sharing an office can pose a serious challenge on ethical issues, for instance ensuring confidentiality and privacy of clients. However, despite the challenges to confidentiality, research participants see a positive side to it as highlighted by the following reaction:

“Sharing offices can be good and bad as well, positive in the sense that it enhances cohesion among colleagues. I experience that closeness with my colleagues but on the other hand, privacy is compromised. But I guess we must accept change and not fight against it.” FSW 17

Participants create the impression that accepting their conditions is one way of managing change and transformation. However, the above research findings contradict De Jager’s (2014) position who maintains that people are suspicious about the unfamiliar, and that

people are naturally concerned about how people get from the old to the new. On the other hand, the above-stated responses highlight the importance of mind-set in any changing environment and dovetail with O'Connor and Netting's (2009) notion that a paradigm is the general organising principle governing perceptions, beliefs, values and techniques that describe what exists, and what the person can expect to do:

“As I said earlier on, things just don't stay as they were and we need to move with time and not stick to the 1970's. We also do not fold our hands and hope things will improve; we need to be part of the change and find ways of coping and adjusting to the change. Otherwise things can get out of hand or meaning that whatever the problem is will become worse.” FSW 11

Moreover, D'Ortenzio (2012) affirms that the world of health and care is a dynamic environment; there are opportunities, challenges, and ways of thinking and rich insights from the past.

Almost all participants affirmed that change and transformation management is an essential management task which helps them cope with changing environments.

7.3.5.2 Sub-theme: Change and change meaning: a top-down driven policy

Although Skidmore (2013) points out that management in social work moves from a pyramid to a circle as illustrated in Figure 4.2, research findings reveal a tendency of a top-down structure in the Ministry of Health and Social Services which affects change and transformation in social services. This top-down driven arrangement should be understood in the context that social workers are hosted in a Ministry whose primary responsibility is health and not social welfare services. The top-down approach to management is the process of upper management or the chief executive officer making decisions and conclusions that change for worse or good the organisational systems. A top-down structure is where top management takes decisions of how things should be done. In support of this, O'Connor and Netting (2009) posit that top-down management is where information and directives flow downwards through various levels of management. The citation below illustrates participants' attitude and experience about the top-down approach:

“The leaders and top managers take decisions that affect us without our involvement, especially now that the Namibian Government does not have

money. We are forced to be accommodative; we even share laptops and telephones. I'm not convinced that our supervisors fight enough to protect our interests. They do not care because they are better off than us." FSW 3

This sentiment is in contrast with contemporary theories as expounded in Chapter 2. Contemporary theories have been developed because the focus has shifted, with leading not only confined to top managers but extended to managers at all levels who are able to influence others in the organisation (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom, 2007). This seems however, not to be the case in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services.

There are ambivalent feelings with regards to decisions taken by middle managers without the involvement of social workers at the frontline level of management. The following expressions from a research participant in the medical setting points out mixed feelings regarding change especially in their work where they are rotating after every third month as she explained that:

"Change in the hospital is inevitable, I'm part of the multi-disciplinary team and we change every third month from one ward to another. It is difficult because you just have started to adjust and find your feet but then you have to move to another ward. But on the other hand, it makes that the work do not become boring and you get to learn more as you are exposed to different situations." MSW 12

However, the response below is in contrast with the view that the top-down effected change is not always received in a negative way and the illustration below is a testimony thereof:

"I was busy preparing a client for XXXXX Rehabilitation Centre only to hear that no new intakes will be accommodated. Although it was disappointing, there was a positive element in this. It created an opportunity for new ideas, for example we started to establish support groups. This also created an opportunity for the development of new guidelines or policy on how to deal with substance abuse. So at times, change imposed on you forces you to create new ideas and to think outside the box." FSW 5

The findings indicate that the rotation is not a policy matter but an arrangement of the current supervisor. Like with many of the management tasks executed by participants, there are no clear guidelines to help in the execution of change and transformation of management tasks.

Research participants shared the same sentiments that change and transformation management are essential tasks for social workers. Participants are employed in an organisation where the health component enjoys priority. Consequently, whatever new policies being introduced focus more on health, and social workers have to find ways of coping with changes and new procedures as indicated below:

“I guess that change and transformation management is essential for social workers since our first priority is our service users. For the sake of our clients and stakeholders we need to adjust to new changes and make the best of the situation.” FSW 16

The quote above endorses Nickols’s (2016) notion that managing change has two meanings; first, the making of changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion, and two, the response to changes over which the organisation exercises little or no control.

7.3.51.1 Data category: Structural change

As the conditions change, an organisation needs to endure structural changes to adapt to the changed conditions and at times changes in conditions put demand on work specialisation and departmentalisation. According to Nel (2014), members of a social service organisation need a stable structure within which they can work together towards accomplishing their goals.

Research findings reveal that with changes in the political climate which has seen the establishment of more social welfare services in many other host organisations, and social workers in the Directorate were somehow coerced to revisit their structure:

“In the past few years we have observed the creation of many public sectors that are mandated to render social welfare services and that made us to be more specific on various divisions for rendering specialised services. Right now we are reviewing our structure and its different departments. So change whether within or outside the organisation keeps you on your toes.” MSW 24

Weinbach and Taylor (2015) define departmentalisation as the grouping of people and their activities along some basic patterns such that their activities can be adequately supervised, coordinated and managed.

Structural change also involves re-designing of job responsibilities, as well as re-arranging and re-allocation of work. Major modifications in the structure can be brought about by changing the simple structure to a team-based structure and job descriptions can be redefined, jobs enriched or flexible working hours introduced, the organisation's compensation system may be modified, and incentives may be introduced to increase motivation.

Of course participants might not benefit from all the above-stated effects of structural change but the issue of flexible working hours was revealed throughout the study. The following evidence is proof of this:

“In XXXX Hospital you find social workers in each ward (department) and this makes work allocation easier. The doctors and nurses for example know which social worker to consult or refer patients to, If a patient for example is a cancer patient, they know which social worker deals which type of cases. Every social worker knows what her duties are.” FSW 18

“What I like about specialisation is the flexibility in working hours. You can choose what time you can start working, if you start at 7H30 then you knock off at 16H30, even you work from 7 AM and by 16H00 you can go home. We at least also have one free afternoon in a month.” FSW 1

From an ecological systems perspective, O'Connor and Netting (2009) emphasise that it is not just the environments in which organisations operate that are uncertain and turbulent, but organisations also face internal uncertainties as well. It is clear from the research findings that social workers are working in dynamic and changing environments and they must develop an understanding about these underlying forces.

7.3.6 Theme 6: Supervisory management

Supervision has been a key element of both the educational process and social work practice since the 19th century and it is considered to be the action of overseeing and managing employees in the workplace to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Supervision has been regarded as integral to social work practice since the early stages of development of the profession during the latter part of the 19th century (Borders, 2016).

It is a requirement in Namibia that social workers must work under supervision. The Social Work and Psychology Council regulates the practice of social work in Namibia and this requires that social workers should practice under supervision (Namibia, 2004a).

Research findings indicate that social workers in the Directorate appreciate supervision but the execution of it is affected by several challenges. The lack of standardised guidelines on supervision is a great concern and consequently every supervisor executes supervision according to his or her own way.

7.3.6.1 Sub-theme: Content of supervision

The content of supervision incorporates various aspects of workplace experience and performance. Such aspects include but are not limited to coping strategies, student and staff supervision, receiving feedback, determining supervisory needs and professional growth and development. Furman and Gibelman (2013) further indicate that the content of supervision is about choosing individualised interventions for the different cases that the social worker deals with. In other words, the execution of supervisory management recognises the uniqueness of social workers' cases. Furman and Gibelman (2013) further posit that the content of supervision encompasses difficulties and challenges encountered by social workers in performing their duties. This implies that through supervision employees are empowered and motivated to perform their responsibilities. The responses below affirm the value of supervision:

“I supervise one social worker and two administrative officers and supervision is necessary to assess staff progress as well as for administrative purposes such as determining training needs of staff, developing or revision of legislation.” MSW 6

“The execution of supervisory management is very important because you need to know which areas to improve on and which areas you are doing well so that you can be able to keep up with the good work.” FSW 2

Furthermore, research participants highlighted the importance of supervisory management not only in contributing to the professional development of staff, but also in ensuring quality services as revealed in the next excerpt below:

“Of course, supervision is very essential, how would you know whether your staff delivers effective services if you do not guide them. So it is important to protect clients by making sure they are satisfied with the service they receive. Supervision is good for capacity building. I, personally also learn a lot from students as well as from my fellow colleagues.” FSW 1

This suggests that supervisory management does not only benefit the social worker but clients as well as the supervisors benefit from it too. Therefore, the research findings confirm the learning element of supervision not only for the supervisee, but its usefulness to the supervisor as well. Nonetheless, ensuring the professional development of the supervisee is one of the many goals of supervision in social work (Mujinjangue, 2007).

The allusion of Furman and Gibelman (2013) that the content of supervision encompasses the management of difficulties that social workers encounter whether in their personal lives or during interactions with their clients is further confirmed by the research study as per the following response:

“If there are challenges that I am facing I’m able to talk to my supervisor so that he or she knows the challenges that I am facing. So sometimes you just see someone coming to work late but you do not understand why, with supervision it helps. Even on evaluation it helps to know that this person has been going through some difficulties, so that you can give the person the opportunity to attend to the issues and be able to come back to work and be able to do the work.” FSW 2

7.3.6.2 Sub-theme: Structure of supervision

The structure of supervision refers to the different methods, formats and models in supervision. Structured supervision provides a format for case presentations and specifies how supervisees and supervisors are to interact and provide feedback during supervisory meetings (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Research findings reveal unstructured management of supervision as the one where the format and frequency of supervision is left to the discretion of each individual supervisor. Supervisory management is executed based on what best works for a particular office:

“I do supervision on a quarterly basis and sometimes we have educational sessions discussing cases and supporting each other. We share new information and in that way we learn from one another. This is good for personal and professional growth.” FSW 16

The next account is evidence of the lack of uniformity or standardised execution of supervisory management:

“I have like 5 to 6 staff under my supervision that I’m responsible for. I do mostly individual supervision but I’m considering to start with group supervision too. At this moment I receive a file of a worker every month, I ask them every month they must give in their files and I write notes/remarks in their files as feedback but if there is a need then I will go there (to their office), especially those that need more guidance to tell them in a specific way what they should have done in this case, or how best they could have dealt with a specific case.” MSW 3

This revelation is far from what theory suggests with regards to how supervisory sessions should take place. According to Hawkins and Shohet (2006), a supervisory session is a meeting between a supervisor and supervisee and it requires proper planning regarding the meeting time, venue, drafting of an agenda, and a safe environment free of interruption. This is a platform for a dialogue between the supervisor and supervisee on the services rendered, as well as the fears and uncertainties that the supervisee might experience. What is happening in the Directorate as per the above extract suggests that there is no supervisor-supervisee relationship since feedback is provided in the file and no proper discussion takes place since there is no interaction between supervisor and supervisee. Face to face sessions take place only when there is a need and another deduction is that an individual supervisor can decide which method of supervision to apply.

However, under the working conditions in the Directorate, there are some supervisors who appreciate the face to face supervisory sessions:

“Yes, although I’m not in a senior position, I do supervision with students from XXXXXX or any other institution of Higher Learning. I do it once a year, depending when I get students. I would normally sit-in during a session and observe the student and give immediately feedback after the session.” FSW 13

It is evident that the participant has some knowledge about various models of supervision, for example, direct supervision where the supervisor sits in and observes the social worker engaging with a client. Feedback to the supervisee is provided immediately after the session.

Kadushin (1995) emphasises that for learning and feedback to be effective it should be given as soon as possible after the performance.

7.3.6.1.1 Data category: Supervision and accountability

Supervision is considered as significant means of ensuring management accountability with regards to casework planning, the allocation of cases as well as monitoring and evaluating the individual' staff work. From an ecological systems perspective, the organisational structure and a positive learning environment should enhance the execution of supervisory management. Although it is a legal requirement in terms of the Social Work and Psychology Act 6 of 2004 for social workers to operate under supervision, the research findings reveal that the Directorate lacks proper supervision guidelines. Consequently, the execution of supervision in the Directorate is not up to standard and requires attention in order to formalise it and make it a more interactive and a learning experience for both the supervisor and supervisee. The current performance of supervision also does not really create room for supervisors to apply various functions and models of supervision:

“The lack of supervision, as in some divisions, is a risk, since this influence the completion of Annual Appraisal Forms and above all, the provision of supervision is a requirement by the Namibia Health Professions Council.”
MSW 24

The other evidence that shows the lack of guidelines is found in the following narrative:

“Supervision is part of our year calendar. Although we do not have proper policy or guideline on how to do supervision, everyone try what works best for you. Like in my case, I try to have a plan schedule with my supervisees, but I'm also very flexible, I have an open door policy and my staff can consult with me any time about their cases.” MSW 5

However, despite the absence of policy, participants were in agreement that supervision is an essential management task and they cited various reasons as per the responses below:

“Supervision is essential since it, if applied correctly, contributes to effective and efficient service delivery.” MSW 21

“Yes it is very important, because, at the beginning, you have the practical issues that the social worker is not aware of because of not having the experience, so it is very important you give supervision to the person so that

they are able to do the right thing, especially letter writing and official communication and the image of the organization is not at stake.” MSW 27

Lastly, the next citation emphasises the essentiality of supervision:

“Supervision shape social workers, provide support and guidance.” FSW 15

To sum up, supervision takes place in a physical environment and this is where the ecological systems perspective has relevance. From the ecological systems perspective, it could be concluded that the Ministry as an organisation determines the structure of organisational supervision but with the absence of policy guidelines on supervision in social work, the obligations and entitlements of supervisory roles within the Directorate are adversely affected. Subsequently, specific tasks for which supervisors should be responsible as well as situational specifics affecting supervision are not clearly stipulated. For social workers to benefit from supervision, this does not always depend on the competency of the supervisor, but the working conditions also play a role. Engelbrecht (2014) considers structural and organisational issues as potential factors that have an impact on supervisory management. Engelbrecht (2014) points out that structural and organisational issues such as scarce resources, unmanageable workloads and counterproductive working conditions of supervisors and supervisees are sometimes ultimate determinants in the execution of supervision.

7.3.7 Theme 7: Program and Project Management

Although there is a difference between a program and project, the study indicates that in the field the two terms are used interchangeably. A program is a set of activities designed to fulfil a social purpose (Netting, O’Connor & Fauri, 2008). In this respect, Weinbach and Taylor (2015) define a program as a complex and integrated system that has been created to address some problem. A project refers to a series of planned tasks which aim to reach specific objectives within a certain time and under budgetary constraints (Weyers, 2011). In simple terms, a program can be seen as the broader umbrella hosting various projects that answer to the overall purpose of the umbrella (program). For instance, an organisation can have a programme to improve the wellbeing of the elderly who live on their own, while within this program various projects or activities can be initiated such as meals on wheels, health visits every Friday, etc.

7.3.7.1 Sub-theme: Empowerment

Some research participants indicated that most projects in the Directorate are initiated to facilitate change and empower communities. Nonetheless, this should be understood in the context that one underlying principle of the social work profession is to facilitate change, empowerment and liberation of individuals or communities. Qalinge (2015) defines empowerment as the process of making people aware of obstacles that negatively impact on their lives. The aim is for them to take power and not to wait to be given power:

“We set up projects depending on the community needs and we do needs assessment to justify the felt need for a specific project. For example, we did a project with XXXXX and the XXXXX were we did a gardening project which was a success and again we did some project in XXXXXX (one of the many informal settlements around Windhoek) with the unemployed mothers and these are the projects that are still running. We run these projects with some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s).” FSW 8

This is an indication that the community of unemployed mothers was made aware of their basic needs and the community’s self-reliance was enhanced through a gardening project.

Although the research findings revealed other projects such as senior citizen programs, parenting programs to enhance effective parenting skills, and some other projects at schools to enhance the life skills of learners, the execution of the program and project management is left to individual departments and staff members. Therefore, not all participants are involved in project management depending on the various divisions, especially those in the medical setting where they rotate now and then. Since the Directorate lacks development principles (due to the absence of a developmental social welfare policy as alluded to in Chapter 2), some participants do not feel obliged to initiate projects as indicated by the following citation:

“Many projects in the Directorate are initiated to create awareness on certain social impediments, for example a project on a specific issue would be aiming at creating awareness on that specific topic for example HIV/AIDS, TB, mental health or even Hepatitis E. For us in the hospital, you might move to another ward or division before the celebration of a specific day, this limits our participation or engagement in managing projects.” FSW 1

From this quotation it can be concluded that the shortage of development principles, unlike in the neighbouring South Africa where program and project management are guided by the Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) (Herbst, 2014), the management of projects in the Directorate is done in a vacuum.

Even if participants contemplate program and project management as an essential management task, the Directorate does not provide social workers with guidelines and policies to guide them. Nevertheless, the excerpt below indicates that participants try their best to do things the right way and they are aware of the triple constraints of program and project management:

“You know in running any projects there are always money involved, whether from donor or from the Ministry and it is important to evaluate the program throughout to determine progress and especially at the end to see whether we could achieve the objective of the project or not. We managed the resources as we were looking for donors so that entails finance, materials, human capital and also the time needed to run the project.” FSW 9

Authors such as Haugan (2012) and Mayer, Painter and Lingineni (1995), contend that there are elements that managers need to take into account which may impact the outcome of programs and projects. These elements are normally referred to as the triple constraints of all projects and they are namely time, resources and performance (refer to Figure 5.4). A constraint is a limiting condition, agency, or force that limits the system’s performance in a given context or environment. Normally, time is not easy to manage as it was pointed out earlier on in this chapter, while resources and performance can be reserved or adjusted. When time has passed, it is gone and time always moves at a steady pace. Therefore, project managers should accurately project the amount of time required for teams to meet their goals under expected conditions as well as following the project team’s progress against a series of indicators.

7.3.7.2 Sub-theme: Funding for programs and projects

Research findings revealed that funding for social work programs and projects is a challenge and the lack of funds hinders the management of programs and projects. Although all participants indicated that the Ministry has a policy that prohibits them to raise funds, none of them could however name such a policy:

“To get proper funding for projects is the biggest challenge we face since there is a policy that prohibit social workers to raise funds for projects, but for small projects such as asking for milk formulas for babies or collecting old clothes for patients, that is fine. We can write proposals for that but not for financial sponsorship.” FSW 11

In the Namibian context, social workers do not receive funding from the Namibian Government to cater specifically for social work projects. This state of affairs can be attributed to various factors. In Chapter 2 it was pointed out that social workers in the Ministry of Health and Social Services feel that the authorities overlook them. The social workers always come second as Tjihenuna (2015) points out that one of the exhalations is the feeling that the social work profession is not respected and recognised by the Namibian Government. This negatively influences the availability or allocation of funds which is a necessity for program and project management. To this effect, Smit (2014) points out some of the factors that influence sources of funding such as the government funding policy, political interests and the state of the economy. The influence of these factors is evident in the following research excerpt:

“I cannot really say that we write proposals for funding projects in our work. There was a circular from the highest office (the Permanent Secretary Office) that prevent staff from looking for funding for projects and that when one solicit donations such donations should first be approved. Sometimes following that procedure takes a long time and the client will be needing help immediately. But in cases where a family cannot afford a coffin for example, we get help from places such as XXXX or XXXX. Faith Based Organisations such as XXXXXX help out with food parcels. But funding as such for bigger proposals remains a challenge.” FSW 13

This statement is reinforced by a narrative from another participant:

“Me myself I was involved in a project that I started; a marriage project in the XXXX area (an informal settlement), it was a marriage enrichment project with married couples. Some of the activities needed funds, for example going out to a camp and invite motivational speakers, but I did not manage this project and had to interrupt it. It was not manageable just because of the lack of resources, including funding.” FSW 16

Despite the challenges of funding and other resources, the study revealed that to make project management practicable, projects are carried out in collaboration with other stakeholders. The reason for this is to pull scarce resources together and to tap from the expertise of various disciplines.

“We have for example various health projects which we team up with nurses, XXXXX Council Office, at local clinics where we provide education on various health issues such as TB, HIV/AIDS and especially with the cholera and hepatitis E outbreak, we run a lot of awareness creation programs. At times we also involve other stakeholders such as Police officers and social workers from the Ministry of gender Equality and Child Welfare.” FSW 18

Multidisciplinary collaboration is a team comprising of members of different professional backgrounds and it has a synergistic influence of grouped knowledge and skills. Abramson and Mizrahi (1996) argue that inter-professional collaboration ought to foster a better understanding of client needs, improve service delivery, and reduce the likelihood of burnout, whilst also enabling the sharing of risks and resources.

Lastly, participants were in agreement that despite the challenges they experience regarding program and project management such as lack of resources and no guiding principles, program and project management remains an essential task in social work practice:

“Definitely program and project management is essential in social work and as social workers, we are catalysts, change agents, and we can do this through projects. Projects do not only raise awareness, but it empowers communities. It doesn't matter which group or community you are working with, even with the elderly you empower them, give them information about their rights, make them aware of elderly abuse issues, where they can go and report. FSW 9

The essentiality of program and project management is further foregrounded in the following response:

“Project management is necessary because it helps a social worker to make sure that the project has got the right impact on the targeted group.” MSW 23

From the study, there is evidence that social workers at both the frontline and middle level of management are involved in program and project management. However, there is room for development, especially in the execution of the whole process of initiating, designing and

managing the implementation of projects with limited resources. The fact that research participants work in shaky conditions with limited resources was evident across all participants. Through the lens of the ecological systems perspective, reciprocal twists between various systems are obvious. Figure 3.3 illustrates the different ecological systems in the Ministry of Health and Social Services and how these systems can influence one another. The Macro system, in this case the Ministry, is responsible among others, for policy formulation and organisational funding. A policy for social workers not to raise funds is affecting the execution of social workers' managerial tasks. This reality contrasts the human resources approach which advocates for workers to have more opportunities for growth, change and creativity as well as enhancing their inherent competencies, and as such, organisations should provide a favourable working environment (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014). It is the responsibility of managers to have structures in place that can enable workers to flourish (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014).

Furthermore, in executing the program and project management task, social workers do not limit themselves within their working environment, but see themselves as part of a system of a greater network to ensure best possible services to their clientele. This is in agreement with what Kadushin and Harkness (2002) accentuate, that the strength of the ecological systems perspective is that it allows managers in social service organisations to consider themselves as part of a greater network in order to render the best possible services to service users.

7.3.8 Theme 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

Although monitoring and evaluation are regarded to be related, they are two distinct functions. Monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of information as the project progresses, while evaluation refers to the comparison of actual project impacts against the agreed strategic plans (Minnaar, 2010). In other words, monitoring aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a project or organisation. Contrary to monitoring, evaluation looks at what the employee set out to do, at what he or she has accomplished and how he or she accomplished it.

Social workers, especially in host organisations like the present study's participants, need to provide evidence-based results of their work. Host settings are arenas that are defined and dominated by people who are not social workers (Kelly & Stone, 2009). In host settings, the work environment may be substantially unfavourable, posing challenges for social workers to

execute their managerial tasks. For instance, Furman and Gibelman (2013) argue that marginality or token status could be one of the challenges for social workers in host settings. In terms of improving organisations as well as the delivery and monitoring of services, there is a huge demand on social services to reach a range of service objectives in order to address specific outcomes and performance targets. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation (M & E) has become an important component of management in social work practice. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation is no longer seen as integrated in other managerial tasks, but it is considered as an essential management task on its own as supported by Gargani (2012) that monitoring and evaluation has become a very specialised intervention or managerial task.

7.3.8.1 Sub-theme: Performance measurement

Monitoring and evaluation enable managers to put in place systems to manage and monitor staff performance. It is through monitoring and evaluation that organisations can measure successes and challenges and that is the reason why Hafford-Letchfield (2007) justifies that monitoring and evaluation are the tools, systems and behaviours that organisations apply to assess the process of performance against the predetermined objectives. This is corroborated by the following:

“Yes I have to know how my staff members are performing and I determine that by monitoring what they do. I use various methods such as during supervision I’m able to get a picture of what the staff is doing. We have regular meetings and I also receive monthly statistics and reports from them so that I can see the progress. So m & e is an important task, helping me to know the performance of my staff. It is important for accountability and feedback to middle and top management.” MSW 26

Moreover, research findings also reveal that in monitoring and evaluating staff performance, participants, especially in the middle level of management, rely heavily on appraisals.

“Monitoring and evaluation is very important in our work for various reasons. It is essential for capacity building and quality assurance. That is why staff members sign Performance Agreement Forms, submit monthly reports about their work as well as quarterly appraisal forms. This is expected from all social workers at District, Regional and National levels.” MSW 27

Appraisals are useful evaluation and development tools that managers use to review staff performance which in turn can affect staff promotions. De Jager (2014) refers to performance appraisal as both a formal and informal activity. Formal performance reviews according to De Jager (2014), should be conducted once a year at the minimum and this is also reflected in the excerpt above. Informal performance appraisal on the other hand, is the day-to-day assessment that a supervisor makes of an employee's performance. The feedback that a member of staff receives during supervision about his or her performance is part of informal performance appraisal. Equally, Engelbrecht (2014) posits that an appraisal is a process that enables both the supervisor and supervisee to reflect on the achievement of set outcomes in the supervisee's personal development plan.

7.3.8.2 Sub-theme: Impact evaluation

It is clear that monitoring and evaluation has become an essential management task and that social workers have to rely greatly on M & E if they want to be efficient and effective in delivering social services. The following response testifies of this:

"M & E is a very important component of management, especially with case management. Especially when you make contact with a client you want to know what our goals are and what do we want to achieve in our working relationship. So you formulate some goals and how do we see how to get there. So that really requires, even at group work and community level we need to know how we can achieve that. You need to be able to know we are starting from here but at some point we need to be able to look and check how far we have gone. How is our work relationship, what else need to be done and how can we do that. What need to be changed and review, so monitoring and evaluation helps us to remain focus and produce quality services. Otherwise you will just be working without any focus and it also not fulfilling to just do that." FSW 3

Another indication of determining the impact of services on clients' progress is highlighted in the following excerpt:

"In terms of cases it is very important to know how the client is doing in terms of the family. I would like to see how things have changed. One of the ways that we do to monitoring is follow up sessions, through your discussion with the client you get feedback and from the family members as well. But there are other cases that are once off cases. We have a form that has a part where you

need to lay down your intervention and goal and timeframes and the follow up dates. Long term cases are the ones that we usually monitor.” FSW 9

7.3.8.1.1 Data category: Statutory framework

Although M & E seems to be tasks that are executed by social workers in the Directorate, there is no clear plan of executing these tasks. Quotes from participants are indicative of the fact that the Directorate needs to develop proper ways of managing monitoring and evaluation:

“Basically monitoring and evaluation is done by the chief social worker, I have my own way of monitoring how my social workers are doing their work and in terms of writing my supervision reports and then also to make sure that they are doing their job. But I actually do not have a problem with their work, so fortunately we have social workers who are responsible because they know what they are doing and their interest is to help the client.” MSW 5

“We do not have evaluation forms but we have regular sessions with the clients to see how, they are doing, home visits or telephonic evaluations. Yes that is what we do. For example in group work or community work I know that sometimes people also create and develop forms that they give to clients how the experienced the group, in that way you evaluate members.” FSW 10

Statements like the above are subject to bias and do not specify how monitoring and evaluation is managed. The meaning and understanding of monitoring and evaluation as a managerial task were not well comprehended by all the study participants, which is indicative of the misunderstanding that exists among social workers on what M & E is. In the case of one participant, she saw M & E as follows:

“Yes we do evaluation with our case work, so it is a daily activity based on the activities that we do. If you have been given a task you evaluate how far the task needs to be completed. It depends on what the tasks were. Maybe let’s say it is a divorce case and one parent cannot afford a lawyer; we advocate for them and monitor their emotions; we monitor their cases and we also try to monitor and link them to different resources.” FSW 6

Additionally, there was no evidence from the study with regards to how other stakeholders, a very important aspect of monitoring and evaluation, are engaged in the execution of this task. Furthermore, although feedback from service users is obtained here and there, the

research findings could not produce evidence of regulated ways on how feedback from the clientele is obtained. Marshall and Suarez (2014) emphasise that M & E represents a broad range of activities that are used to assess the performance of an organisation in meeting the needs of diverse stakeholders. This is in agreement with Lewis *et al.* (2012) who affirm the importance of the active involvement of all stakeholders, including all staff involved in the programme/project and external experts in the field of evaluation. Furthermore, M & E encompasses recording and data collection of implemented programmes as well as how implementation was carried out. Research participants cited that they manage monitoring and evaluation through monthly reports, quarterly reviews and annual appraisals.

Furthermore, Reyneke (2014) suggests that the use of technology in monitoring and evaluation and communication have become global trends and best practices, but based on the study findings, social workers in the Directorate are not moving with the times. This should be understood against the background that social workers are sharing basic office equipment such as telephones, mobile phones and computers.

7.4 OTHER MANAGEMENT TASKS

In addition, the researcher asked participants to provide any other managerial tasks that might have been omitted and they provided quite a list. This indicates that the list of eight management tasks presented in the interview schedule were not exhaustive of tasks executed by social workers. This also creates the need for future studies to confirm through literature studies, whether the following tasks are essential management tasks as well as to obtain empirical evidence on how social workers perform these tasks:

- Trauma and disaster management
- Self-care management
- Financial management
- Asset management
- Staff development
- Case management

In this study, financial and asset management are grouped together for ease of comprehension. Staff development and case management are not discussed because two of the participants who mentioned them could not elaborate on how they execute these tasks.

7.4.1 Trauma and disaster management

In their daily work, social workers work with vulnerable populations with pressing physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. They engage with people who have endured a traumatic event like rape, a life threatening medical condition, and loss of life or property, which has affected clients' lives and their well-being. A traumatic event is a sudden and unexpected occurrence that causes intense fear and may involve a threat of physical harm or actual physical harm (Herbst & Reitsma, 2016). A traumatic event affects the physical health, mental health, and development of the person who has experienced it.

Trauma refers to a direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury or other threats to one's physical integrity or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person (Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn, 2013). Briere and Scott (2014) further add that trauma is also learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threats of death or injury experienced by a family member or any other close associate.

Research findings reveal that medical social workers execute trauma management as per the following citations:

"I'm in the oncology ward and manage trauma almost on a daily basis through individual counselling and psycho-education to cancer patients. Not only do I deal with the individual patient, but I engage family members too, especially children who do not understand or do not even want to accept the medical condition of their parent. In that case I involve the whole family and family therapy." MSW 27

"In the XXXXX Centre we have a lot of patients suffering from post-traumatic disorders and depression. Our communities do not really understand mental health issues. Consequently, they neglect their family members who are admitted. They link mental health issues to witchcraft, which interfere with medication and counselling. In such a case the client/patient and family need to be educated on mental health in order for the family to provide necessary psycho-social support to the patient." FSW 12

Through the lens of the ecological systems perspective, social workers who execute trauma management should adopt holistic intervention by assisting clients in the multiple contexts of their lives. An ecological systems perspective provides an appropriate and relevant foundation for trauma-informed educational practice with traumatised clients (Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn, 2013).

Moreover, responses from research participants indicate that social workers in the Directorate perform disaster management as per the extract below:

“The influx of people to the cities, especially Windhoek, is contributing to more people living in the informal settlements. We get more cases from these areas of people who lost their properties due to disaster such as fire. People even lose their loved ones, especially children. Parents who leave children alone in their shacks. Most of them use candles and you have cases where shacks burn down. We provide counselling and link the family with social support such as XXXX Namibia.” FSW 7

A disaster or crisis is a sudden accident or a natural catastrophe that causes great damage or loss of life and has unfortunate consequences. It is a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the resources or coping mechanism of the person (Hepworth *et al.*, 2013).

Moreover, social workers are getting more involved in disaster management as per the following response:

“Number one disaster in Namibia is car accidents, people are losing their family members in car accidents and people develop a disability. Is a crisis for a person to die suddenly or to hear from doctors that you can no longer walk. We have to deal with such cases very often.” FSW 9

The aforementioned responses are indicative of the fact that the role of social workers continues to change. The roles of social workers have changed since its beginnings as assistants in charitable organisations in around the 1870s (Duckworth & Follette, 2011).

Disaster is one area where social work gives a lot of attention; hence the active participation of social workers is required in developing policies for disaster management. Without a shared disaster management policy that applies to all relevant sectors and all levels, this

might mean that prevention, preparedness, and response are likely to be fragmented (World Health Organisation, 2011).

In support of this view, Briere and Scott (2014) postulate that due in part to the recognition that traumatic events are increasingly common and that the effects of such can be negative, trauma informed care is becoming popularised among the helping professions.

In view of this, research findings revealed that the Directorate is progressing well in this regard as indicated by the following:

“The Directorate has developed a Traumatic Events and Disaster Guideline in collaboration with the City of Windhoek, and we are about to pilot it in four regions.” MSW 25

7.4.2 Self-care and or self-management

Self-care refers to putting people in control of their own health and well-being. It encompasses the things that individuals can do to safeguard their health and to manage safety (Lorig & Holman, 2003). Self-management, on the other hand, involves the ability to handle relationships with clients and co-workers and the ability to take responsibility for one’s own feelings, decisions and behaviours (Weinbach & Taylor, 2015). In this study these two terms are used interchangeably.

Social workers deal with people who experience traumatic events and this makes them to become victims of secondary trauma. Secondary trauma refers to health practitioners listening to others telling their trauma (Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn, 2013). Grise-Owens, Miller and Eaves (2016) affirm that self-care is a serious and real issue for social workers and all helping professionals.

Equally, Naidu and Ramlall (2016) claim that professionals that are trained to care for others often overlook the need for personal self-care; hence social workers need to be mindful of how they take care of themselves and this is corroborated by the following:

“My work in the hospital is very exhausting, physically as well as mentally. It is very stressful and demanding; you know, some patients find it very difficult to accept their medical conditions. So you work not only with the patient but in some cases you need to involve the whole family too. It is not easy to explain to children that their mother is in stage 4 of cancer. This affect me as well and

I need to take care of myself otherwise I will end up in the hospital myself.”
FSW 14

The above quote is in line with MacKian and Simons (2013) who posit that working in health and social care is in itself stressful and social care workers are high on the list of people whose jobs make them prone to sickness and absenteeism because of stress.

The ecological systems perspective has relevance in managing self-care since working conditions are linked to self-care as per the following extract:

“We work under very difficult conditions which make us vulnerable to exhaustion and burn-out. Sometimes one has a very clear plan for the week but then the whole program is turn upside down by events not under our control. For instance, a client experiences a disaster when the whole shack in the informal settlement is destroyed by fire. You have to go out immediately to assess the situation but then there is no vehicle available. In that case you have to either use your own car or rely on colleagues. This is frustrating and clients do not understand our working conditions.” FSW 18

The above citation indicates that social workers experience stress in their work and if they do not manage their stress, their productivity is negatively affected.

Social workers encounter a number of unique forms of occupational stress on a daily basis. The more thoroughly they understand the stressors they face; the better-prepared social workers will be able to manage them successfully (Cox & Steiner, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative that social workers manage self-care at an individual and organisational level. At an individual level social workers are urged to develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Cox & Steiner, 2013). Self-awareness refers to conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings, in other words managers should be aware of their own strengths and shortcomings (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2012). The argument is that managers who are cognisant of their powers and limitations as well as a belief in their inherent ability to perform would be in a better position to manage stress and hence, self-care. The following extract attests to this:

“There are times that I cannot just handle certain cases, our training does not prepare us for all the issues, and the reality is different from the theory in class. So, it is important to know what you can do and what you cannot do. This is

where supervision becomes relevant so that you get guidance from the supervisor, or just debrief after a difficult case. Else, you can easily get stress or even burn-out.” FSW 7

MacKian and Simons (2013) support the above-stated citation, postulating that health and social care work are characterised by uncertainty and complexity hence practitioners need opportunities to reflect on the fraught and challenging moments of practice.

Furthermore, at the organisational level, managers are guided through a process of learning about areas of match and mismatch between themselves and their organisational structure and culture (Cox & Steiner, 2013). This is relevant to the ecological systems perspective as expounded in Chapter 3. The ecological systems perspective suggests that there is a relationship between a person and his or her social environment, which is characterised by needs and resources. Johnson and Yanca (2004) maintain that if those needs are met and there is a fit between a person and his or her environment, then a state of congruence exists. When the environment is not in a position to provide resources, the needs of people remain unmet, leading to a state of incongruity. In other words, this forms a basis for a state of improper fit between a person and the environment.

The aforementioned quotes suggest the lack or limited resources in the Directorate which creates a mismatch between social workers and the Directorate:

“One resource problem is that we don't have drivers, so the social workers who have driver's licenses and have the permission to drive government cars, they help the other social workers to do their work. Also, for a long time there were no telephones at the office so we had to use our own cell phones.” FSW 1

The study revealed some few approaches on how social workers manage self-care in the Directorate as per the following citations:

“To perform in their work our social workers need to take care of themselves. They have families too and at times things are not okay at home while they have to put a smile on their faces while at the office. Our work is exhausting and as a supervisor sometimes I have to ask my staff to go on leave if I see that they are under stress. For example, during supervision, you pick up personal issues and so I recommend that the person take leave for few days.” MSW 27

Research findings discussed earlier in this Chapter highlight the importance of supervision management, but supervision in itself is relevant to self-care management. Supervision, a professional support system and a fulfilling personal life with a diverse mix of non-work-related activities are keys to proper self-care and replenishment (Norcross, 2000). These minimise the risk of stress and burn-out.

It is important for human service workers to take vacations that make them feel rested and rejuvenated (Furman & Gibelman, 2013:229):

“We do not get over time payment but at least we have an internal arrangement of taking one afternoon off in a month. This helps, you have time for yourself, and you can do something to relax or even go for a massage.” SW 19

Research participants emphasised that self-management is essential because a social worker who is taking good care of himself or herself maintains good relationships with colleagues and clients. Self-management also helps to prevent stress and burn-out. Weinbach and Taylor (2015) endorse that self-care involves maintaining a confident and positive attitude towards one’s work and a belief in the mission, goals, and objectives of the organisation.

The success of any organisation depends on the well-being of its employees, and employees are the assets of any organisation. Managers have the responsibility to build supportive work environments that promote employee health and well-being through wellness policies (Furman & Gibelman, 2013). Therefore, the conclusion is that the application of a wellness policy would help an organisation to regulate mental health within the workplace.

The study revealed that the Ministry of Health and Social Services does not have a wellness plan as indicated below:

“The Ministry does not have a wellness policy but it is needed to help health workers practice self-management. In fact, under correction, the Office of XXXX should take care of wellness plan for all public institutions.” MSW 24

Oliveira (2019) advocates that in Namibia, employee wellness is a legal requirement under the Labour Act No. 11 of 2007 to ensure that employers must, without charge, create a safe working environment which also has adequate facilities for the wellness of employees.

In conclusion, the human relations theory as discussed in Chapter 3, underlines a need for recognition, security and sense of belonging having a greater impact on workers than the

physical conditions under which they work. The managers should therefore, create structures that can enable workers to flourish (Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014:29). The argument is that group pressure and not management demands has the strongest influence on workers' productivity. Therefore, a human relations approach adds considerable value to the way in which managers in social service organisations view their management tasks and functions.

7.4.3 Financial and asset management

Traditionally, social workers are known for helping individuals with problems or issues related to substance abuse, family and child care, poverty, and gerontology, but financial management in social work is a lesser known aspect or task in the field (Martin, 2001).

Weinbach and Taylor (2015) theorise that financial management as a task was assigned to middle management and top management; however, in the pursuit for more diverse sources of funding, staff at different levels have come to contribute to the development of proposals and managing relationships with donors. Be that as it may, research findings revealed that social workers (De V Smit, 2014) describe financial management as developing budgets, monitoring expenditure and reporting on income versus budget and expenses. Taking this definition into account, participants revealed that social workers in the middle level execute financial management as shown below:

“Yes, all chief social workers in the Directorate have to do budgeting. We all come together and budget for activities that social workers have planned for in the specific financial year. How do we monitor our budget? Every three months (quarterly) we meet again to assess the expenditure. This is important because we have to account for the money that was allocated to the Directorate by providing a financial report at the end of each financial year” MSW 22

Another participant restated that financial management is an important task that needs to be carried out with careful consideration as indicated below:

“As a control social worker, it is my responsibility to make sure that the staff members under my supervision have an annual plan with a budget for their activities. At our budget meetings, we prioritise activities, motivate and budget accordingly. I have to account for funds allocated to the department. So, although it is a task that I execute, I would want to get more training on financial management. We never learned about this in our training as social workers.” MSW 21

The above extract is in line with Furman and Gibelman (2013) that common to all types of human service organisations is the demand for financial accountability. Accountability is rooted in concerns about how organisations spend the money entrusted to them.

The ecological systems perspective has reference to financial management. The funding environment which includes legislation, government funding policies, political interests, the state of the economy and private funding (De V Smit, 2014) bear direct consequences on how social workers execute this management task, and this evidenced by the excerpt below:

“The Directorate’s services at national level have its own budget, which cater only for national level and XXXXXX. The regions share a pool budget with all the directorates in the Ministry. Even if they budget for their activities they end up not getting the money as it is used for other “essential” services in health.”
MSW 24

The aforementioned response suggests that drawing from the ecological systems perspective decisions taken by top managers in the Ministry have an impact on the performance and service delivery in other levels or systems in the Ministry. For instance, although the Directorate at national level has its own budget including the XXXXX Centre, the centre has been closed down due to budgetary constraints in the Ministry. Moreover, funds budgeted for social welfare services are transferred to other health activities that the Ministry deem crucial.

To understand financial management in the context of frontline social workers, one has to recognise that although frontline social workers do not perform financial management, they deal with clients that experience marital or relationship problems resulting from poor management of their finances. Therefore, in their day to day engagement with service users, social workers guide individuals and families facing financial stress, and they educate them on sound financial management behaviour. Social workers are more than financial advisors; they can hold interventions that address emotional and relational issues that may be influencing financial management behaviours. Financial management in social work practice involves helping to guide individuals facing financial distress, raising awareness of sound financial management behaviour and promoting financial security (Martin, 2001).

“I do not do budgeting, that is for control and chief social workers, but I deal with financial matters, for example, a couple experience marital problems

because one partner misuses money or simply does not know how to spend money. I end up educating them on the importance of drawing up a budget and learn how to spend within their budget.” FSW 13

This is in line with Fox and Lee (2005) who postulate that efforts to build financial capability among individuals and families include financial counselling, education, and planning. These are efforts aimed at increasing individuals’ knowledge of important financial and economic concepts and guiding their behaviour in a way that helps them to achieve their financial goals.

Asset management is a subcategory of financial management concerning itself with the management of the material resources of an organisation and not the finances (De V Smit, 2014). In other words, asset management is about how organisations manage their material resources. Interestingly, in the context of research participants, executing asset management is concerned with managing clients’/patients’ assets or resources and not the organisation’s resources as per the following extract:

“In medical social work, we do not deal with finances, but we help in managing patients’ money. Some patients receive disability grants, so while they are in hospital, we safeguard their money by keeping them in our offices. We guide them on how to spend while in hospital so that they do not spend money on unnecessary items. So when they are discharge we give it to them.” FSW 11

In addition to asset management mentioned by FSW 11, some medical social workers deal with other valuable possessions of clients as noted in the quotation below:

“In some cases, clients are admitted in the hospital carrying valuable personal assets such as watches, earrings or cell phones. We keep them until the patient’s medical condition improves or when they go back home.” FSW 17

Lastly, funding acquisition is another subset of financial management and historically the public sector has its financial base in public allocations from the central government through tax collection (Furman & Gibelman, 2013). This is the case too with the Directorate, as it gets its funding from the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Health and Social Services which is the host. However, findings from all research participants corroborate that fundraising in the Directorate is not carried out:

“We are not allowed to ask for sponsorship or funding as Ministry officials, there is a policy that prevent us from doing fundraising activities. For small activities

such as formula milk for babies or old clothes we can ask donations but not for a large amount of money or funds.” FSW 12

“We do not really look for funding, but in case social workers have a project to run that needs a lot of money and a proposal needs to be drafted, we are only allowed to collaborate with relevant government or Ministry structures.”

In line with the ecological systems perspective, the evidence provided by the study is that the ability of the organisation to provide funds influences both the context in which social workers operate and the parameters in which change strategies are considered. The sources of money, the dependability of these funds, and the financial viability of the organisation have an immediate, ongoing, and significant impact on all staff (Furman & Gibelman, 2013).

Moreover, although middle managers execute financial management, top management and the Ministry exercise complete power, consequently, reinforcing bureaucracy in decision-making and allocation of resources as attested by MSW 24 in this section. This is particularly risky for social workers who feel already ostracised by the health sector as expounded in Chapter 2.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of Chapter 7 was to discuss the findings of the empirical study on the essential management tasks executed by social workers at the front and middle levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia.

The demographic profile included details on the age, gender, years in position, academic qualifications and the level of management of participants. This was done in order to present an all-inclusive picture of the research participants. The empirical data was presented as accounts on essential management tasks as executed by social workers. These accounts were described, contrasted, validated and linked to the literature studies.

In summary, the findings suggest that indeed social workers at the frontline and middle level of management execute some essential management tasks.

The next chapter presents conclusions drawn from the study and possible recommendations.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to gain an understanding of some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle levels of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services (DDSW), Ministry of Health and Social Services in Namibia. This chapter aims to draw on the previous seven chapters, to offer recommendations and conclusions based on the findings of the research.

The recommendations serve to guide social workers in management in social work in their day to day execution of their duties, and especially as they execute management tasks. This will hopefully assist the Directorate in enhancing service delivery through the performance of management tasks. Moreover, the recommendations can also inform future studies for prospective researchers who have an interest in exploring management in social work in general, and in particular, the management tasks performed by social workers.

The conclusions and recommendations are offered in an attempt to enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of social workers in the domain of management in social work. Also, this chapter seeks to meet the sixth objective of the study which was to present recommendations not only to social workers, managers and/or supervisors and the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia about the findings of the research, but also to contribute to the development of policy documents to inform practitioners in executing their management tasks.

Beyond the sixth study objective that this chapter accomplishes, the other three study objectives were specified and realised as follows:

Objective 1: to describe social work in Namibia and critically examine the Namibian context of social work, important concepts and some critical reflections. This was presented in Chapter 2 as outlined in the thesis report.

Objective 2: to describe the ecological systems perspective and its relevance to management in social work. Therefore, Chapter 3 described the ecological systems perspective and its applicability to management in social work. The ecological systems perspective provided a

framework for understanding the connections of daily essential management tasks executed by social workers at different levels and the environment in which they operate. It expounded on the mutual interactions between social workers and the environment and the latter impacted on the execution of their essential management tasks.

Objective 3: to discuss management in social work and this was presented in Chapter 4 which provided an extensive overview of management in social work, by unpacking its definition as well as levels of management. Furthermore, Chapter 4 provided rich literature on the description of management in social work, its functions as well as the skills of management.

Objective 4: to provide a wide discussion on essential management tasks that social workers are expected to execute at the frontline and middle levels of management. Chapter 5 explored, described and synthesised some essential management tasks through exploring various literature sources. Objective 4 was achieved by identifying eight essential management tasks which shaped the data collection tool, the analysis in Chapter 7 as well as the presentation of the research report.

Objective 5: to investigate some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle level of management in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services through empirical study. Chapter 6, therefore, outlined the methodological chapter of the study and how the investigation was embarked on achieving this objective. Additionally, Chapter 7 presented the findings of the empirical study with the analysis based on the literature chapters.

Objective 6: to present recommendations not only to the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia about the findings of the research, but also to contribute to the development of policy to inform practitioners in executing their management tasks. Chapter 8 presents the conclusions and recommendations of the empirical findings on essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle levels of management.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the research findings produced rich descriptions and narratives on some essential management tasks executed by social workers at the frontline and middle levels of management. In Chapter 7, which dealt with the analysis and drawing up of the findings, the participants' narratives were contrasted and compared with literature to pinpoint the findings in the broader scope of management tasks in social work. From the literature, there was enough rich information on management tasks but, not much research had been done on management tasks executed by social workers particularly related to why these tasks are considered as essential. Consequently, this warrants the need for further research in the field of management in social work in general and particularly, on the execution of management tasks by social service providers. Furthermore, as highlighted in Chapter 1, the large body of knowledge that exists on management as a practice are derived from business or economics management.

Following from the findings presented in Chapter 7, conclusions and recommendations set out for social workers are discussed in the next section in an integrated manner. Thus, the conclusions seek to answer the three research questions in Chapter 1, as laid out here:

- What are some of the essential management tasks executed by frontline and middle line social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia?
- How do frontline and middle line social workers in the said Directorate perform their essential management tasks?
- Why are these management tasks essential?

The conclusions and recommendations are presented in the same arrangement as those of the findings in the empirical study which is Chapter 7. The presentation is done according to the semi-structured interview schedule, thus starting first with the demographic profile of research participants and then followed by essential management tasks. Conclusions for each of the essential management tasks as they relate to social workers are drawn and then followed by the recommendations.

8.2.1 Participants profiles

The participant profiles of social workers indicate that social workers at the frontline level of management tend to work for a period between 3 years and the longest was 8 years, whereas social workers at the middle level of management tend to serve for a period of between 7 years and the longest was 26 years. The profile suggests that social workers in general in the Directorate, do not advance themselves academically. Academic achievement was basic, with the majority of social workers at the frontline level of management having a BA (Hon.) in Social Work, with only one person having an MA in social work. This one participant who has advanced her education still functions at the frontline level because she worked for two years only and left for further studies. The academic realisation looks even unfavourable at the middle level of management where more than seven participants have a Diploma in Social Work; two participants obtained a BA (Hon.) in Social Work with the exception of only one participant with A Master's Degree in Social Work. While they are trained in social work, none of the two who furthered their qualifications were in management in social work.

Regarding gender, only 2 out of the 27 social workers were male, confirming that social work in Namibia, like elsewhere, is still associated with females and this further intimates to the notion that it is a caring profession and caring is associated with females.

From these profiles, it can be concluded that social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services have basic education in social work but not in management in social work. Furthermore, it can be concluded that participants have many years of experience to serve their clientele.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made for the social workers in the Directorate:

- Encouraged to advance their studies in social work and not work for 26 years with a Diploma in social work. Upgrading their qualifications will keep social workers abreast with new trends in social work practice.
- The tenure of service at one level of management needs to be clearly well-defined to prevent a situation where one participant has been serving for 8 years at the frontline level while another one with 7 years has progressed to the middle level of

management. This will prevent social workers from remaining in one position for too long which might discourage them.

- Social workers in management positions should also be motivated to enhance their qualifications specifically regarding management knowledge.

8.2.2 Workload as management task

The first task was workload management as identified in the literature. As per the explanation in Chapter 5, the amount of work that social workers have to carry out could have a serious impact on service delivery. Workload in the workplace means not only the amount of work but it also involves an environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available. It also means that the employee satisfaction and success depend on the availability of resources such as time, office equipment and facilities as well as support to do the work well. Therefore, organisations should have a sound system of workload management in place.

However, from the empirical study, it can be concluded that:

- Although social workers try hard to manage their workload, there was no complete system of workload management in the Directorate.
- Not all social workers have the necessary office equipment and facilities such as telephones, computers and transport, let alone office space. They have to share offices.
- There was little support from top management to the social workers at the frontline and middle levels of management.
- Social workers have limited knowledge regarding workload as a managerial task.
- The Directorate does not provide workload measurement tools.

Based on the discussion above on workload management, it is recommended that:

- There is a serious need for the Directorate to develop a uniform system of workload management so that social workers in all different divisions of the Directorate will have clear guidelines on how to manage their workload. High levels of workload have been connected with negative impacts on practice and outcomes as well as increased stress in employees. It follows that a sound system of workload management will prevent stress among service providers.

- The Directorate needs to seriously consider meeting the needs of social workers by not only providing them with at least basic office facilities such as telephones, computers, enough offices and vehicles, but updating the knowledge of social workers through in-service training on workload management. This will enhance service productivity and contribute to service users' satisfaction.
- The positions of the top management, namely the Director and Deputy Director should be filled as soon as the Ministry can. This will ensure that social workers at the frontline and middle level of management enjoy the necessary moral and technical support they need (During the time when the empirical study was conducted, both the two positions were vacant with chief social workers rotating every six months as acting Deputy Director).
- The Directorate should cultivate workload measurement tools that will involve social workers and other stakeholders such as service users, in the whole process to ensure quality service delivery. Such workload measurement systems would also enhance the importance of regular workload review.

8.2.3 Time management task

The second task derived from the literature was time management. Time management deals with how social workers divide their time between specific activities and tasks. Literature suggests that failing to manage time can have negative effects such as missed deadlines, inefficient work flows and low staff productivity, poor work quality and higher stress levels. On the contrary, effective time management can have benefits like greater productivity and efficiency, better professional reputation, and less stress.

From the study, it can be concluded that:

- Although the study found that social workers have different ways that they apply that seem to work quite well in managing their time, they were not conversant in dividing their time between specific activities which need sophisticated practices of planning, organising, leading and control.
- The Directorate does not have clear guidelines on time management.

Therefore, in light of the discussion above, the following is recommended:

- Social workers in the Directorate are overloaded and function within an unstable environment as described in previous chapters; hence time management is absolutely essential. Consequently the Directorate needs to come up with proper guidelines on how social workers should execute time management.
- The Directorate should develop clearly defined tools such as diary, calendars, weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports so that all social workers will be expected to apply all of them and not be left to individual staff members.
- The Directorate should cultivate guidelines and practical techniques to enable social workers in executing time management more effectively leading to increased accountability and greater productivity and efficiency.

8.2.4 Information management

Managing information was the third task identified from literature and this is central to the development and expansion of any organisation. Information management is an important task which communicates, coordinates, and supplies information from one or more sources and the distribution of that information to those who need it. Human service practitioners and especially social workers, appreciate the essentiality of managing information in supporting and solving problems, and bringing about change. There is always reciprocal flow of information in the internal organisational environment as well as in the external organisational milieu. Therefore, social workers have to manage information in order to sustain organisational structures.

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Information management is a task that social workers execute on a daily basis through the flow of information not only among colleagues and other professionals but also from social workers to the service users and vice versa.
- The research findings confirmed that the following Information, Education and Communication (IEC) tools in the Directorate are highly beneficial:

Pamphlets and brochures;

Television talks and Radio presentations;

Motivational talks at schools and churches;

Emails;

WhatsApp group;

Mobile phones;

Memorandums;

Circulars; and

Letters.

- Despite the above-stated tools, there was no mention of the use of modern tools such as Dropbox, Google Drive and other Google Apps. This is understandable in a working environment where most social workers do not have enough computers in their offices and no access to the internet.
- The out-dated filing system of keeping clients' records and files in steel cabinets poses a risk to ensuring confidentiality, especially in cases where social workers share offices and there are chances of misplacement of files.
- The Directorate does not have a clear communications strategy and information management was performed selectively.

Therefore, resulting from the conclusions above, the following recommendations are made:

- Information dissemination to be included in the year plan of social workers so that every social worker would know when and where information needs to be disseminated. This will ensure that all social workers in the Directorate can get opportunities to execute information management instead of only some performing it. This strategy will also prevent social workers from executing information management on an *ad hoc* basis.
- Given the heavy workload and shortage of social workers, the Directorate should determine which platforms are more appropriate for communication diffusion. This will prevent social workers from sharing information from corner to corner and making them feel overloaded.
- The Directorate should develop proper information management systems, ideally computer systems. Social workers would benefit from current information technologies, for example, important information about services can be displayed

through a Website, and E-counselling can serve as an alternative to face-face counselling in some cases. In addition, other smart phone applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram are quicker to share and disseminate information. These communication strategies can also synchronise the protection of information to be shared on behalf of the Directorate. A well-coordinated information management system will create a database that will feed management with the needed information to plan and make decisions.

- Social workers should be provided with training in the use of contemporary tools such as Dropbox, Google Drive and other Google Apps, at least to those who have access to computers. This will enable social workers to create various folders for their clients in all three traditional methods of social work on their PCs and safeguard these files with passwords to ensure confidentiality and also to prevent the misplacement of files. This would also serve as a backup strategy for files and information. The use of a Dropbox for instance, will be a good and easy way for social workers to have access to information about happenings and activities in their organisation.
- The Directorate should provide social workers with the necessary office tools such as computers or laptops in order for them to do the work properly – this is essential.

8.2.5 Risk management task

The fourth task was risk management as derived from literature. Managing risk is a regular challenge for all social workers given the fact that they deal with diverse populations coming from diverse backgrounds. Managing risks deals with values and ethical issues. However, from the empirical study, there was little evidence of risk management happening even though some participants have some precautions to manage the threats that they are exposed to at their work place. There was also no mention of risk management with regards to the clientele. The focus was more on dilemma situations and interventions where clients have difficulties in disclosing their HIV status. Consequently, it can be concluded that:

- Risk management as a management task is not well executed by social workers because they lack knowledge thereof and there are also no general risk management guidelines. Consequently some social workers are forced by their working environments to execute risk management, for example the social workers in high risk working areas wear masks.

- High workload and poor working conditions pose a threat to social workers, putting them at risk of suffering from stress and developing burnout.
- Management tasks are interrelated and if one is managed properly, then another management task could be performed with ease. For instance, if workload (which also includes working in a specific environment) management is executed effectively, then social workers will not be at risk of developing stress and exhaustion.
- The absence of a risk assessment and risk management policy influences performance, accountability, quality control as well as transparency, which are key elements of risk regulation in contemporary social work.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- There is a need for the Directorate to develop an organisational approach to risk assessment and risk management to safeguard the delivery of safe, effective and innovative practice. Clear guidelines will ensure that the execution of risk management will not be left to individual social workers depending on where they work but it will be inclusive. Evidence-based risk assessment tools will further provide a sound underpinning for professional judgement in social work practice.
- The Directorate should provide social workers with training on risk management as well as other management tasks so that they can increase their knowledge and empower them in the execution of this task not only to protect themselves but also to manage events and factors that put their clients at risk. Since the tasks are intertwined, the training will benefit social workers in their execution of these tasks.

8.2.6 Change and transformation management

The fifth task identified from literature was change and transformation management. Organisations are subject to change and transformation, either from internal or external forces which sometimes have implications for social workers in performing their duties and hence affecting clients too. Therefore, it is critical for social workers to be ever ready at all times to reorganise and adapt in response to change. In Chapter 5, the literature review pointed out that change and transformation management is the process of managing and supporting the change of an organisation in response to the broader socio-political environmental.

Research findings revealed that change and transformation were mostly discussed in relation to the economic crisis in which the Government of the Republic of Namibia found itself in and structural challenges which resulted from the lack of funding. Above all, it was also a matter of accepting change as it was imposed on them and not necessarily managing it. However, research findings revealed a certain degree of transitional change in terms of the coordination of service delivery between social workers of the two main Ministries (Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare) as they meet to find ways to synchronise services. According to the literature review, transitional change requires the reorganisation or undoing of previous ineffective or unsuccessful ways or methods of work and the implementation of new strategies. Based on the research findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Social workers are not involved in decision-making structures that impact their service delivery.
- Social workers find innovative and creative ways of coping and adjusting to change and still continue rendering services to their service users.

As a result of the discussion above, it is recommended that:

- Social workers should be part of decision-making structures so that they can influence those decisions that affect the execution of their management tasks and their general operations. Their involvement will put them in a better position to forecast the future and hence, cultivate change management strategies to deal with future changes and consequently safeguard the continued existence of the Directorate. The benefit would be that they will be more pro-active rather than reacting as change happens.
- Change and transformation management as managerial tasks need to be emphasised and social workers need to be encouraged to be constantly aware of these management tasks since any changes within the Ministry or outside it have serious bearings on social service delivery.

8.2.7 Supervisory management

The sixth management task emanating from the literature was supervision. It is mandatory in Namibia that social workers should practice under supervision. This is a requirement by the Social Work and Psychology Council which regulates the practice of social work in Namibia.

Therefore, supervision is a well-known concept among social workers but research findings show that this management task is not being executed in an effective way.

Although this is a task executed by many of the participants, everyone has his or her own way of carrying out supervision and only one model of supervision is applied, namely individual supervision. Based on this, the following conclusions are made:

- The Directorate lacks standardised guidelines on supervision.
- The execution of supervision in the Directorate is not up to standard in terms of international norms and standards.

Therefore, derived from the above, it is recommended that:

- The Directorate should develop standardised guidelines on supervision as a matter of urgency in order to formalise supervision. This will not only benefit social workers but will ensure that services users receive quality service.
- The social workers continuously need refresher courses on supervision, and especially on the various models of supervision. This will contribute to a more interactive and learning experience for both the supervisor and supervisee.

8.2.8 Program and project management

The seventh task as identified from literature was program and project management. A program is a set of activities designed to fulfil a social purpose; while a project refers to a series of planned tasks which aim to reach specific objectives within a specific time frame and budgetary constraints. In other words, a program is considered to be the broader umbrella hosting various projects that answer to the overall purpose of the umbrella (program). However, the current study indicated that in the practical field the two terms are used interchangeably.

The current study revealed that all participants were at one or other time involved in program management and one remarkable aspect that the research also disclosed is that all projects are carried out in collaboration with other stakeholders. The conclusion that can be made is that:

- Project management tasks are performed simultaneously with other tasks such as stakeholders' management and time management.

Although the findings specify that social workers were involved in some projects, the processes of program and project management, namely initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing were not evidently verbalised. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that:

- If projects are initiated without properly following the process, the outcome thereof might not deliver the desired outcomes. In the case of the scarcity of resources, it would be crucial for social workers to do proper planning to avoid wasting resources.

From the study findings, it could further be concluded that:

- Although participants indicated an awareness of the triple constraints of program and project management, there was no proof of how they deal with these limitations.
- Project and program management are considered essential management tasks, but the Directorate does not provide social workers with guidelines and policies to guide them in performing these tasks.

In light of the above arguments and conclusions, it is recommended that:

- Social workers in the Directorate should obtain training on program and project management so that they can increase their knowledge and skills in executing these tasks. Enhancing their knowledge will put them in a better position to follow all the steps of program and project management which may lead to more successful projects.
- General training on most management tasks should be encouraged in order for social workers to develop an understanding of various tasks that are interrelated and which can be performed together.

8.2.9 Monitoring and evaluation

The eighth and last task as derived from the literature study was monitoring and evaluation (M & E) which refers to the tools, systems and behaviours that organisations apply to assess the process of performance against the predetermined objectives. The research participants are hosted in a Ministry whose primary focus is health and not social welfare services; hence, social workers have a heavy-duty to provide evidence of how efficient and effective they are in delivering social welfare services.

Above all, the Directorate needs to have various activities to assess and measure the performance of social workers in relation to organisational needs as well as the needs of diverse populations of service users.

Research findings indicated that M & E is an essential management task if social workers want to be efficient and effective in delivering social services. However, narratives from participants revealed that the Directorate needs to develop a proper way of managing monitoring and evaluation.

Based on the research findings and narratives of participants, the following conclusions are made:

- In the absence of strategies and procedures, monitoring and evaluation is done randomly and this is not appropriately managed.
- Monitoring and evaluation is not executed in terms of assessing the overall staff performance but in many instances this is applied only in evaluating clients' progress.
- Social workers in the Directorate are not abreast with the use of technology in monitoring and evaluation and communications which have become a global trend and best practice. Certainly, this is not strange in a working environment where social workers have little access to basic office equipment such as telephones, mobile phones and computers.

Based on the discussions and conclusions above, the following recommendations are made:

- The Directorate should develop strategies and procedures on how and when monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by managers on all levels. This will prevent monitoring and evaluation to be done unsystematically as well as enabling social workers to practically operationalise monitoring and evaluation as an essential management task.
- Social workers should not only execute monitoring and evaluation to evaluate their clients' progress in intervention and for supervisors to get feedback reports for performance appraisals only. Monitoring and evaluation should be an instrument for the overall performance of staff. Furthermore, this management task can be applied to contribute to the overall improvement of all programmes and projects in the Directorate.

- Social workers, at least those who have access to technology should be encouraged to apply them in monitoring and evaluation. This will at least help social workers to move with the times and modernise their operations.
- Moreover, the interrelatedness of management tasks and the reciprocal effect on each other should be underlined. Therefore, it is recommended that social workers should be exposed to as many tasks as possible through training so that they can develop an appreciation for these tasks.

8.3 OTHER MANAGEMENT TASKS

During the face-to-face interviews, participants were asked to name and describe any other management tasks that they execute but that were not included in the semi-structured interview schedule. They narrated three additional management tasks namely, trauma and disaster management, self-care or self-management, and financial and asset management. The conclusion that can be made is that:

- Since these were tasks mentioned by participants, they seem to be comfortable in performing them.
- It could further be concluded that participants seem to be conversant with trauma and disaster management since the Directorate has Trauma and Events and Disaster Guidelines.
- These tasks did not form part of the literature chapter and hence the researcher could not compare and contrast the participants' narratives with literature.
- Despite the fact that participants execute self-management through various strategies such as going on leave, having off-days and using supervision, one conclusion that can be drawn is that the Directorate lacks a wellness programme.

In light of the above-stated conclusions, the following recommendation is made in terms of self-care:

- The Directorate should make a recommendation to the Ministry of Health and Social Services to appoint a wellness officer. This is needed given the heavy workload of social workers.

8.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

Additionally, the study sought to explore any other tasks that might have not been covered in the interview schedule but which social workers execute. Such tasks include trauma and disaster management, self-care management, financial and asset management.

- In light of the above, there is need for further research to confirm that social workers perform these tasks, how they operationalise them and whether they are essential or not.
- There is a need for ongoing research on essential management tasks, which in turn requires continuous education within the Directorate on what these tasks actually entail as opposed to the current understanding.
- This research highlights the unfavourable working conditions of social workers, and perhaps there is a need to find out how the fact that social workers are accommodated in the Ministry of Health and Social Services affects their work. Not only that, but the fact that social welfare services are fragmented and uncoordinated warrants further research to determine how these structural arrangements impact the delivery of social welfare services and how this influences social workers' execution of their essential management tasks on all levels of social work.
- There is an overall lack of local indigenous research in the vital general area of management in social work. Therefore, more local research is required, based on an African perspective, on the application and relevance of management as a social work method, especially in Namibia.

8.5 CONCLUSION

Social workers execute numerous essential management tasks. In most instances, the social workers are often neither well-grounded to perform these tasks nor effectively perform these tasks. Moreover, social workers at the middle level of management who are expected to guide those at the frontline are equally not equipped with management knowledge and are therefore not contributing to learning and capacity building. Therefore, social workers at frontline and middle levels of management tend to denigrate management in social work in general, and in particular, their essential management tasks. For the reason that they lack knowledge in this vital field of social work, social workers have a tendency to be wary of management as most social workers focus merely on intervention and not on the

management of their interventions. For social workers to develop confidence in the execution of management tasks and for management in social work to improve, social workers need ongoing commitment to management.

Finally, there is a need to encourage social workers at all levels to further their studies, specifically in the field of management, and not only in terms of intervention topics. This will not only increase their knowledge but will put them in a better position to be well-informed about new trends in social work, and to be prepared for contemporary and future challenges in societies.

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APPENDICES

ANNEXURE 1: FIELDWORK BUDGET

In local currency

N\$

Proposed Funding

Item	Rate	/Unit	Units	Amount
Administration				
Telephone and internet	1500	/site	1	1 000.00
Printing	400	/site	1	400.00
Total Administration costs				1 400.00
Travel & Transportation	Rate	/Unit	Units	Amount
Windhoek				
Researcher's vehicle				
Diesel	600	/day	8	6 000.00
Total Travel & Transportation				6 000.00
Copy Editing				
Copy editing	10 000		1	10 000.00
Thesis printing	4000		1	4000
Total editing costs				14 000.00
TOTAL COST				21 400.00

The researcher did not have any scholarship and covered all costs related to fieldwork herself. The research participants were not required to pay any costs related to the research.

ANNEXURE 2: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

16 August 2017

Mrs B. Katjivena
The Acting Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health and Social Services
Private Bag 13198
Windhoek
9000

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I'm employed as a social work lecturer at the University of Namibia and I have registered this year as a PhD candidate on a part time basis with the University of Stellenbosch, RSA.

I'm doing research as part of the fulfilment for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social Work with the following research title: ***ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS EXECUTED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN NAMIBIA: AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE***

I would hereby like to request your permission to conduct this study. Hereby enclosed is the research proposal, proof of registration, Curriculum Vitae, and data collection tool.

Yours truly



E. U. Muinjangue
P. O. Box 24435, Windhoek
Email: ngaringombe123@gmail.com
Mobile: +264 81 255 3348

ANNEXURE 3: CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DIRECTORATE



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Health and Social Services

Private Bag 13198
Windhoek
Namibia

Ministerial Building
Harvey Street
Windhoek

Tel: 061 – 2032150
Fax: 061 – 222558
Email: shimenghipangelwa71@gmail.com

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY

Ref: 17/3/3 EM
Enquiries: Mr. J. Nghipangelwa

Date: 14 December 2017

Ms. Esther U Muinjangué
University of Namibia
Windhoek

Dear Ms. Muinjangué

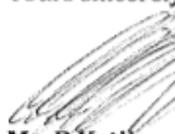
Re: Social Workers' experiences of the nature and execution of the essential management tasks in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia: an ecological systems perspective

1. Reference is made to your application to conduct the above-mentioned study.
2. The proposal has been evaluated and found to have merit.
3. **Kindly be informed that permission to conduct the study has been granted under the following conditions:**
 - 3.1 The data to be collected must only be used for academic purposes;
 - 3.2 No other data should be collected other than the data stated in the proposal;
 - 3.3 Stipulated ethical considerations in the protocol related to the protection of Human Subjects' should be observed and adhered to, any violation thereof will lead to termination of the study at any stage;
 - 3.4 A quarterly report to be submitted to the Ministry's Research Unit;
 - 3.5 Preliminary findings to be submitted upon completion of the study;

3.6 Final report to be submitted upon completion of the study;

3.7 Separate permission should be sought from the Ministry of Health and Social Services for the publication of the findings.

Yours sincerely,



Ms. B Katjivena
Acting Permanent Secretary

ANNEXURE 4: INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AT FRONTLINE AND MIDDLE LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS EXECUTED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES (DDSWS) IN NAMIBIA: AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Esther Utjua Muinjangu. The result of the research will contribute to the fulfilment of a PhD Research Thesis.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you possess the following criteria for inclusion:

- A social worker registered with Namibia Health Professions Council.
- Practicing social work in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia for at least three years, operating at the top-, middle and/or frontline management level.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of essential management tasks executed by social workers in the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services in Namibia from an ecological systems perspective.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher would ask you to do the following:

To participate in an individual interview with the researcher at your office at which you as the participant is employed as a social worker. The interview guide or schedule containing the interview questions will be made available to you. The duration of the interview will be approximately 1 hour.

With your consent, this interview will be recorded with a voice recorder.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

By volunteering to participate in this study, there is no physical threat to you. You will be responding to the interview questions in a professional capacity. There is limited risk for emotional discomfort. Information shared during the interview will be gathered with respect for the participants worth and dignity.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The information and insight gathered after interviews with social workers can contribute to the development of knowledge on the essential management tasks executed in Namibia as well as the experiences of performing such tasks. This may lead to a better improved understanding of social work management which will impact positively on social services possible interventions that will make the social workers' work experience more satisfying and rewarding.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The involvement in this study comes without remuneration as you will not receive any payment.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removal of identifying details for disclosure purposes. The data collected during the interview will be safeguarded in a research file. The data will remain in a secure file and will only be used by the researcher and the research supervisor.

The interview recording and identifying details will not appear anywhere in the research record. You have the right to request to view the recordings. Permission to provide access to anyone besides the investigator and research supervisor will be obtained from the participants.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

To participate in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any consequences. You may refuse to answer questions and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research should circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact;

Principle Researcher: Esther Utjiua Muinjangue (081 255 3348)

emuinjangue@unam.na

Research Supervisor: Professor Lambert Engelbrecht (+ 27 084 951 2448)

lke@sun.ac.za**9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
--

The information above was described to me by Esther Utjua Muinjangué, in English, and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Organisation

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the subject/participant] He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

ANNEXURE 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AT THE FRONTLINE AND MIDDLE LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT

**SECTION 1:
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1.1 Gender:

Female	
Male	

1.2 Age:

20 -30 years	
30-40 years	
40-50 years	
50-60	

1.3 Position in the organisation: _____

1.4 Years in this position: _____

1.5 Highest academic qualifications: _____

1.6 Department/division in which you work: _____

1.7 Indicate management level:

Top Management	
Middle Management	
Frontline Management	

**SECTION 2:
ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS**

- 2.1 (a) Describe your managerial job in the Directorate
(b) What do you have to manage?

2.2 What do you think are essential management tasks regarding your position in the organisation?

Probe: Can you provide examples of these?

Why do you consider these tasks as essential?

2.3 Do you execute workload as a management task? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.4 Do you execute time management? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.5 Do you execute information management? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.6 Do you execute risk management? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.7 Do you execute change and transformation as a management task? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.8 Do you execute supervision? If yes:

Probe: Can you give examples of fundraising tasks that you perform?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.9 Do you perform program and project management? If yes, how?

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

2.10 Do you perform monitoring and evaluation? If yes:

Probe: Can you provide examples of this?

How do you perform this task?

Why is this task essential?

If No: Probe why this task is not executed

<p>SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS</p>

3.1 Are there any other management tasks that you think are essential?

3.2 Do you have any recommendations of how you can be supported to best fulfil the tasks associate with your position?

THANKING YOU IN ANTICIPATION

April-May 2018

ANNEXURE 6: ETHICAL CLEARANCE**NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

REC Humanities New Application Form

2 November 2017

Project number: SW-2017-1624

Project Title: SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE NATURE AND EXECUTION OF THEIR ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT TASKS IN THE DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES (DDSWS) IN NAMIBIA: AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PERSPE

Dear Ms Esther Muinjangué

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on **05 October 2017** was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following about your approved submission:

Ethics approval period: 02 November 2017 - 01 November 2020

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (SW-2017-1624) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	Updated Final PhD Propoosal_2016	05/10/2017	Final
Informed Consent Form	Informed Conccent annexure c	05/10/2017	Final
Data collection tool	THEMES	05/10/2017	Final

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, it is **your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouche within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

