# UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

# EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS POVERTY ALLEVIATION

# VANESSA  ISAAC

# EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS POVERTY ALLEVIATION

An analysis of social workers' perceptions in the Pinetown
Service Office of the Department of Social Welfare

Shanthi Vanessa Isaac

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Science (Social Work)
in the Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines,
University of Natal, Durban,
January 2002.

*"Democracy will have little meaning and be short-lived if it does not have meaningful impact on the daily lives of the poor"*

**Jazairy, Alamgir and Panuccia (1992)**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe gratitude for the completion of this study to -:

- My family, who had to forgo a vacation to be near me so that I could focus on the write - up of this dissertation rather than on missing them.

- Babara Simpson, my 'sanity inducing' supervisor for her practical advice, guidance and encouragement - "that this could be done".

- June Chetty, who earned her "best friend , invaluable colleague" accolade and who patiently listened  through more than one harebrained research  idea.

- My friends and colleagues at Pinetown Service Office, without whom this research would not have been possible, individually and collectively - their assistance is greatly appreciated.

- Finally, in my parents I have been truly blessed in more ways I could count. Your love and support  has sustained me throughout the years.

# DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this dissertion, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

Shanthi Vanessa Isaac
University of Natal, Durban
January 2002

# DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation is being submitted with the approval of my supervisor, Mrs B. Simpson.

B. Simpson
January 2002

# ABSTRACT

Recent changes to welfare policy in South Africa advocated the need for social workers to adopt social development as a paradigm for service delivery. Within this policy framework empowerment is touted as the model to affect the transformation of the welfare sector and to achieve sustainable development in the post apartheid society. The concept empowerment and the issues relating to it are ambiguous and ill-defined.

The study took place at the Pinetown Service Office, a local service provider of the Department of Welfare. The areas of operation are the inner and outer west areas of the Durban Unicity City Council and some areas of the Ilembe regional council. The purpose of the study was to analyse perception of practitioners about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. An exploratory-descriptive research design incorporating of questionnaire was utilized to collect data.

The findings reflected that the perceptions of the participants about empowerment towards poverty alleviation were consistent in that they identified that it comprised of micro and macro socio- economic strategies to empower consumers to become self reliant. Other findings revealed that the predominant activities of the social workers regarding poverty towards poverty alleviation are to refer consumers to social security and developmental groups. Additionally, the study indicated that the Department of Welfare's organizational bureaucracy inhibited the adoption of an empowerment orientation to social work practice.

The recommendations included changes about organizational policy and social work practice in accordance to developmental social welfare policy proposed in the White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997.

# CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1**

# ABBREVIATIONS

**AIDS**       Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**ANC**       African National Congress

**D.O.W.**      Department of Welfare

**HIV**       Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**SA-PPA**      South African Participatory Poverty Assessment

**SA-PPR**      South African Participatory Poverty Report

**P.S.O.**      Pinetown Service Office

**RDP**       Reconstruction and Development Programme

**PIR**       Poverty and Inequality Report

# CHAPTER ONE

# CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of social workers about the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation. This chapter provides an overview of the study in its presentation of the objectives, context, rationale, value, theoretical framework and introduction of the research approach. The chapter closes with a summary of the presentation of contents.

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study takes place within the context of escalating global poverty. This section therefore provides an overview of international and local poverty. Additionally, South African welfare policy and the organizational context of the Department of Welfare (D.O.W.) informing the study are discussed.

### Poverty

History chronicles that throughout the centuries the challenge confronting human development has been that of countering the debilitating effects of poverty. The advent of democracy, communism and socialism had failed to eradicate poverty. Moreover, the wizardry of technology as evidenced by unparalleled medical advancements, sophisticated biological and/or nuclear warfare, space travel and the magnitude of economic wealth (for individuals adept at transferring wealth created at macro-level to themselves) have marginalized the war against poverty. This attests to the failure of governments to fulfill their moral and socio-political obligations to the most vulnerable sectors of the populace.

Consequently, poverty is a global phenomenon in the twenty-first century and affects one billion people. The poverty referred to is not merely insufficient income but is inclusive of squalid living conditions, lack of housing, malnutrition, high infant/adult morbidity and illiteracy. Furthermore 90% of the poor live in rural areas, 50% are small farmers and a quarter of the one billion poor are landless labourers (Jones, 1990). World bank statistics over the past decade consistently places the poorest 20% households in the poorest country in the world: Bangladesh.

The United Nations Human Development Report (1992) estimated that in the period 1960 - 1990 the income disparity between rich and poor had doubled and that approximately 83% of the world's income was distributed to 20% of the world's

population whilst only 1,4% of this income goes to the poorest nations. One third of the total population living in developing countries are poor. (Hofmeyer, 1996). Lemma and Pentti (1991) quoted Ife (1987) who noted that in Africa, the general situation of poverty and human deprivation are so prevalent that they are taken for granted.

This was in reference to the 'conspiracy' of natural disasters ( floods, droughts) political corruption, fraud and the phenomenon of colonalism having depleted the natural resource bases of those regions.

The situation is magnified in Sub-Saharan Africa. Oakley and Glegg (1999) contended that the economic crisis of the1970s and 1980s led to widespread poverty in the region. The subsequent structural adjustment policies adopted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund resulted in falling living standards, reduction in employment prospects and formal wages, the removal of food subsidies and an overall increase in the number of families at risk of becoming poor. Overall little progress is noted in the 'war against poverty', particularly in development policies that advocated economic growth to the detriment of ecological and social welfare.

In South Africa the legacy of apartheid interacts with market forces to perpetuate persistent and increasing poverty. Subsequently the levels of inequality between rich and poor are stark. The findings of the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SA-PPA), (a study commissioned by the South African Government and funded by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the Dutch and British governments) published in 1997 reported that:

- 50% of the population is poor (this constitutes 19 million people).
- They receive 11% of the total income (53% live below the R301 per month poverty line).
- 72% live in rural areas with 55% living below the subsistence level.
- 61% of the poor are African in comparison to 1% of whites.
- Three children in five live in poor households. This comprises 54% of the poor in the country being children.

Barbeton, Blake and Kotze (1998) reported that 10% of the poorest South African household earns less than 1% of the total household income whilst the richest 10% earn over 40% of the total household income. The SA-PPA, 1997 also noted that food insecurity is part of the daily struggle of poor households who are compromised over multiple sites. Lack of access to efficient sources of energy and safe drinking water, high unemployment, high adult morbidity, overcrowding and destitution are common to the profiles of the poor.

The current development paradigm acknowledges that sustainability and quality of life are integral to human development. It also promotes the view that poverty is a major obstacle to social transformation, its eradication must be specifically and aggressively

pursued within governmental policies and that effective community building and organization rests upon the notion of empowerment, (Elliot,1993; Estes,1993; Midgley,1995 and Minkler,1999). Consequently post apartheid policies to eradicate poverty in South Africa mirror the international trend to invest in human capital and thus is compatible to an empowerment oriented social work practice to promote development. Empowerment is variously defined as a 'process', a 'product', a 'principle' and an 'orientation' founded on a strengths-based perspective as opposed to a problem centred approach (Choplin,1995). Concepts associated with empowerment are comprehensively discussed in Chapter Two. However, in its most fundamental form empowerment is 'to give power' (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995, p 280).

The South African government's policies to democratize the country are amongst the most progressive in the world. They have received international accolades for their attempts to adopt participatory decision-making of stakeholders in policy formulation.

The policy documents which critically inform and influence social work in South Africa are -:

## The White Paper on Social Welfare (1997)

This policy has been subjected to numerous analyses by politicians, community organizations, government and non-governmental organizations. There is consensus that it is a macro policy based on the principles of the Reconstruction and Development Plan - the document credited with ANC's landslide victory in the country's first democratic elections in 1994. On a fundamental level, this policy shifted welfare services towards a developmental paradigm and advocated a wide range of initiatives to promote the empowerment of consumers.

Redress, redistribution of resources and equity in social welfare services is promoted. The emphasis is on targeting vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people to attain access to opportunities/services to develop and sustain them within
a holistic and generic framework of welfare. This policy is compatible to the social development paradigm and is discussed in Chapter Two. Ultimately, the policy acknowledged that social security forms an integral part of poverty alleviation, however ideally welfare within the developmental paradigm encompasses programmes that promote self-reliance and sustainability.

## Financial policy for Developmental Welfare (1999)

This policy postulated criteria for decisions about funding developmental social welfare,

the scope of services to be funded and the scope of available funding. Three types of financing were proposed : grant financing which attempts to develop the capacity of the Not for Profit sector, programme financing of registered projects and mechanisms to promote priorities to enable the awareness of the services of welfare departments. A distinguishing feature of this policy from past policies is its flexibility. It does not delineate categories of service, maximum costs or funding of posts and monthly payment of all services.

Instead integrated funding of programmes is advocated. Consequently social work posts and organizations are not the recipients of funding. Thus, it is hoped that holistic services will be funded across the spectrum of developmental welfare.

However, it is evident that the government does not possess the administrative capacity and infrastructure to enact this policy adequately. Further, the decisions to finance specific projects are taken at Head office (Ulundi) or Regional office level. The funding criteria are not made available to consumers or such communication is relayed at short notice and prejudices consumers who lack access to them. Another factor which impacts negatively on the financing of projects involves the composition of committees who make decisions about funding. These committees are composed of individuals who appear to lack experience of districts and/or knowledge of the projects to be funded. Consequently the scarcity of resources and the lack of expertise impacts negatively on the funding of projects.

## Growth employment and redistribution (Gear) (1996)

This is a macro economic policy which imposed fiscal restraints and outlined the merits of pursuing reduced budgets for governments. Gear reflects the worldwide tendency for shrinkage in governmental spending as a panacea for growth and development. This strategy recognized that reduction in inequality required accelerated job creation requiring structural transformation. The related elements of Gear are : re-prioritization of the government budget towards social spending, acceleration of the fiscal reform process, relaxation of exchange controls, consolidation of the trade and industrial reforms, public sector reconstructing, structured labour market flexibility and a social agreement to facilitate wage and price moderation.

The relevance of Gear to poverty alleviation lies in its commitment to increase employment, 'right sizing' of the public service and to maintain low inflation rates. Gear was formulated as a result of government's inability to undertake the redistribution and re-prioritization of public expenditure as contained in the R.D.P. Subsequently the moderation extolled by Gear has impacted on dis-empowering poor people further and with little hope of convincing government of delivering on its R.D.P. promises Barbeton, Blake and Kotze,1998.

## Provincial strategic plan (2000/2001)

The powers and duties of service offices are set out in programmatic format and in relation to developmental social welfare. The plan reflects the national priority, presents provincial objectives, identifies indicators for the evaluation of services and projects estimated costs. The ( 2000/2001) plan specified the primary consumers of welfare as the elderly, women and children and the unemployed youth.

Core services encompassed initiatives for the establishment of income generation groups, the transfer of economic skills to create micro enterprises and to increase the productive assets of consumers. whilst the plan developed ten programme objectives, it is gratifying to note that priority was awarded first to the Provincial Poverty Eradication Strategy , second to Poverty Relief and Infrastructure Investment Fund and third to the establishment of Development Centres to address welfare needs focussing on income generation projects - all of the programmes incorporate the goals of poverty alleviation.

Subsequently, the provincial plan exerts influence on the character of social development projects within geographic locations and in relation to core groups for whom services are prioritized. The strategic provincial plan directs funding to 'poverty pockets' which are geographic areas which have been identified as being particularly poverty stricken. Urban and peri-urban communities are marginalized in the allocation of resources which is a consequence of this specified targeting of poverty pockets.

The primary consumers of welfare have been identified as the elderly, women, children, youth and families. Core service objectives towards poverty alleviation include the provision of income generation opportunities, the transfer of skills to developmental groups to increase self employment, to foster improved quality of life and to increase the creative productive assets of its consumers.

## Organizational context

The Kwa-Zulu Department of Welfare (D.O.W.) context is pertinent to the discussion of the context of the study. The D.O.W. comprises of a Head Office in Ulundi and four regional offices : one in each of the four regions (Durban, Ulundi, Pietermaritzburg and Midlands). The regional offices are responsible for administrating 65 district/service offices and 15 institutions in the Province (Service commitment Charter, 2001). In South Africa, welfare is a national competency, hence the service offices are local service providers responsible for enacting all regional and national policies. The Pinetown Service Office (PSO) was the site of the study and falls in the ambit of the Durban regional office.

The area of operation extends from Kwa Nyuswa to Molweni on either side of the Inanada Dam and incorporates areas of the inner west and outer west areas of the Unicity

Council of Durban and some areas of the Ilembe region. Diverse areas such as Zwelibomvu with its peri-urban clusters of informal housing, Marianridge with its predominantly flat dwellings and the upper highway areas characterized by middle and upper income households of Westville and Kloof form this area. The estimated 244 298 residents are serviced by eleven social workers. The area of service delivery whilst not being declared a 'poverty pocket', is characterized by poverty related diseases and social instability. The small staff, scarce resources, current health and social problems evidenced by the AIDS pandemic and the extensive area of operation make effective and equitable social work services logistically unfeasible.



FIGURE 1 : MAP OF AREA SERVICED BY THE P.S.O.
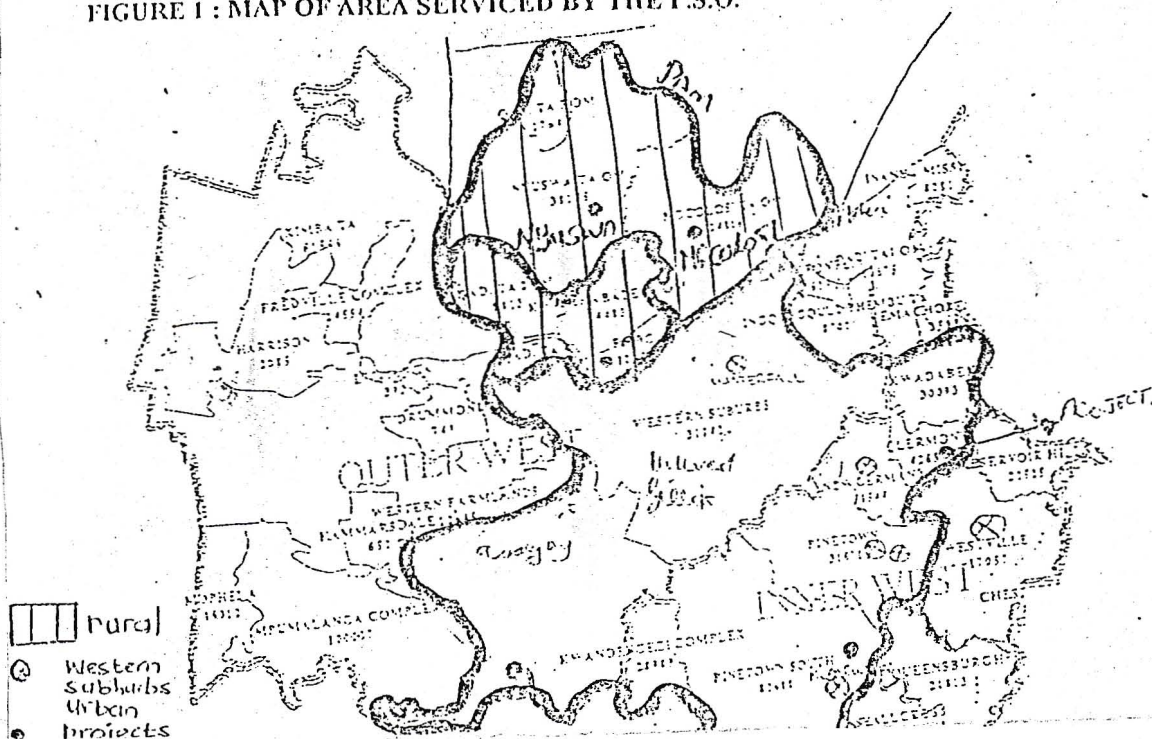
Factors such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and poor health standards are prevalent in the area. The Lund report (1996) and Sewpaul (1998) noted that HIV AIDS disapproptionally affected those living in conditions associated with poverty. Whiteside (1999) observed that Kwa-Zulu has the highest incidence of HIV infection (Soweton, 13 December 1999: 9). Further, it was estimated that six million parents will die of AIDS by 2009 in South Africa.

This has impacted on service delivery within the PSO in the following ways:

- increase in applications for children in alternate care.
- increase in adult morbidity rates resulting in more children being reared with relatives.

Census in Brief (1998) reported that Kwa-Zulu Natal has an unemployment rate of 31,1%. Unemployment undoubtably affects the urbanized and result in increased numbers of consumers becoming 'poor' and/or unable to satisfy basic needs. This places increased demands on service and resources - for which there are no entitlements within social welfare policies with the exception of limited Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) by the Department of Labour. However, increasingly poorly paid unskilled and domestic workers are left uncompensated as they fall outside the parameters of the UIF. As these potential consumers also fall out of the 'safety net' of social security they become poor for whom no relief is in sight.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Poverty eradication is a government priority and is on the agenda at local, provincial and national levels. The D.O.W. has made significant inroads in the formulation of policies to redress and to redistribute benefits in the years following the country's first democratic election in1994. This is reflected in the parity achieved in government transfers, in the shift towards developmental social welfare and in the financing of programmes rather than organizations. Welfare update 1996 and White Paper on Social Welfare(1997). The D.O.W. however is beleaguered by criticisms by consumers for failure to deliver qualitative services to the poor thereby failing to contribute to social development (Gray,1998).

Social workers, the majority of whom are employed by provincial government departments, are at the forefront of this backlash. Whilst some social work programmes have emphasized literacy, others have focussed on capacity building and counselling - all programmes however, have struggled to take disadvantaged consumers towards economic mainstream. Furthermore, they have failed to analyse, monitor and evaluate the perceptions of social workers about empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

Empowerment relates and is integral to social development and social work, in the participatory process advocated by the R.D.P., the White Paper on social welfare and in the various strategic plans adopted by the provincial D.O.W. An understanding of the concept of empowerment therefore is critical to the process of whether social work is relevant to poverty alleviation and ultimately to the realization of social development which the D.O.W. purports to uphold. Although there has been research commissioned to elicit the role played by social security/ (income transfers) in alleviating poverty (Lund and Ardington, 1995). There is a dearth of such research in social work.
This promotes the view that social work is not meeting the challenges of development. Further, it lends credence to assertions the poor communities are disinterested in empowerment and are more concerned about infrastructure development (Gray,1998).

Further, it is the observation of the researcher that, although, there are defined policy

options about poverty alleviation, there is confusion about the concept of empowerment. The frequent application of the concept to services provided by agriculture, education and health and its usage interchangeably with the concept of participation has resulted in distortion and confusion. Is participation empowerment? Is one the product of the other? Does empowerment contribute towards poverty alleviation? These questions are central to this study and reflects the inherent tension between welfare policy and social work practice in post apartheid South Africa.

Additionally, whilst the D.O.W. is supportive of the empowerment of consumers in the policies advocated, resource constraints prevent the practice of such strategies or 'empowerment' is sidelined in the face of other challenges. Empowerment is the 'tool' to achieve the democratization of the citizenry and of a meaningful social work practice. Further, the empowerment of social workers is critical to the implementation of programmes advocated by D.O.W. hence it is important to assess whether an understanding exists amongst social workers about the concept and its potential benefits to holistic social work practice.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research was to explore and describe the perceptions of social workers about the concept of empowerment in interventions towards poverty alleviation within the Pinetown Service Office of the D.O.W.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to -:

- Determine the geographical location of communities and consumers who are categorized as 'poor' and to identify the definitions that underline that categorization.
- Describe specific activities which social workers considered as empowerment towards poverty alleviation.
- Estimate professional time per month spent with such consumers/communities and to estimate which proportion of this time is allocated to poverty alleviation activities.
- Identify whether such activities are consistent with policy approaches towards eradicating poverty.
- Describe the constraints/challenges impacting on an empowering practice.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ecosystems and development theory underlined the research process.

## Ecosystems Theory

Germain (1991) related that the biologist Ludwig von Bertanffy is credited with popularizing systems theory in the late 1960s and that it is an abstract set of assumptions which is applicable to many fields of study. Society is conceived as a whole comprising of subsystems which interact, change/or are maintained within particular contexts. Concepts derived from systems theory resulted in the development of many approaches to social work practice - ecosystems, biopsychosocial and person - in - environment. (Germain 1991) Grief and Lynch (1993) described systems theory as a holistic, conceptual and analytical framework while Gray (1993) observed that it encompassed the different levels of social work intervention, thus preventing the polarization of the individual and social.

This concurred with Coates (1991) who asserted that ecosystems theory analyzed problems in relation to the environment. This moves away from traditional models which defined problems as a result of individual deficiencies rather than societal deficits and is compatible to an empowerment oriented practice. Such an orientation encompasses an analysis of power differentials and its impact on the socio - economic status of people.

Criticisms against the system based perspectives are that they are too general, abstract, lacked clarity of concept and hence were difficult to operationalize and research. (Goldstein 1998 and Jordan 1977, quoted by Gray 1993). For the purposes of this study however, ecosystems theory was useful in the analysis of the perceptions of social workers within the D.O.W. as it interacted with communities. Further, the strength of system theory lies in the way it is used to integrate approaches to organizational development with approaches to practice. As Ross and Bilson (1989 p 15), proposed without the integration of systems theory into social work, "only higher orders of pathology will be created by social work intervention".

## Social development theory

The purpose of development was contested in numerous theoretical debates in literature and is encapsulated in the desirability of attaining material versus ideational goals.

Midgley (1995) elaborated that these definitions included differing definitions about social development.

- views of sociology that development was a 'process of guided social change

which promotes modernity' economic growth models.

- social workers perceptions that it was a process of 'personal growth and self actualization' which led to improved social conditions.
- political scientists who emphasized that it encompassed 'increased human rights, political participation and social integration'.

Camfens (1993) summarized that social development rests on two assumptions
Firstly the eradication of poverty is attainable, and secondly economic development can accompany human development leading to social justice and equitable distribution of resources.

This is supported by Midgley (1992) who stated that the common themes associated with social development include links between economic and social systems. These descriptions emphasize the importance of the creation of employment opportunities and income generation as being essential to poverty alleviation and the transformation of society as a whole. Hence, the developmental roles to be adopted by 'development workers' per se interconnects with the roles of social workers.

No standardized or universally accepted definition of social development exists, despite the extensive discussion in the literature Midgley 1995. However, the common themes associated with social development include links between economic and social systems, the importance of job skill development and income generation as being essential to poverty alleviation and the transformation of society to this end.

Hence while there is no commonly accepted definition of development there is agreement that social development is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the dynamic processes of economic and social development (Sturgeon, 2000). Ecosystems theory is unitary and thus applicable to intervention strategies that advocate a developmental approach. This is relevant in an analyse on perceptions in the welfare sector particularly in view of the adoption of Social development by the D.O.W. The juxtaposition of the social developmental models and the ecosystems theoretical framework affords the analysis of the practitioners about the empowerment of social work towards poverty eradication within a holistic perspective which contextualize socio - economic factors and in relation to all levels of intervention (Community, individual and group work).

## RESEARCH APPROACH

The research methodology utilized in the study is elaborated in Chapter Three. The study focussed on the question: what are the perceptions of social workers about their practice in relation to the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation? This lends itself to both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Guided by the assumption that

both methodologies are representative of perceptual reality, the study adopted the methodology which would best reflect the agenda of the study. An exploratory-descriptive design would best suit the purpose and objectives of the study.

Marlow (1993, p 25) noted that such research "... describes, records and reports phenomenon as objectively as possible". The descriptive characteristics about empowerment and poverty alleviation, derived from the literature and policy documents is contained within categorized items on the research instrument. Common themes were identified to represent the practice of empowerment orientated poverty alleviation strategies within the PSO.

## VALUE OF THE STUDY

The value of the study is inherent in its purpose. It seeks to examine the process of empowerment, thereby enumerating the ways social work empowers consumers. This will contribute to an overall understanding of processes of social work empowerment. Aligned to this purpose, are the attempts to illuminate how social work has responded to initiatives proposed within poverty alleviation policies of the D.O.W. and thus its role in social development.

More specifically it was hoped that the study assists the social workers within the PSO and D.O.W. in the following ways -:

- Provide an opportunity for social workers to analyze their perceptions about poverty, poverty alleviation and empowerment.
- Identify activities that promote empowerment and correlate with poverty alleviation policies.
- Assess factors that inhabit and/or facilitate empowerment processes within public welfare, thereby contributing to a decrease in the gap between welfare policy and social work practice.
- Demonstrate the relevance of an empowerment perspective in social work practice.
- Promote reflection about the processes of social work to affect meaningful change in the lives of consumers.
- Enable social workers to clarify staff training needs in respect of empowerment in practice.

The perceptual analysis of social workers within the D.O.W. is worthwhile in the context of the first decade of the twenty-first century as the public service become subject to review. This is a consequence of the democratization and transformation processes that characterizes post-apartheid South Africa. Hence, the attempt to understand the impact of changes in the bureaucratic organization within which social work is located is

fundamental both to increasing opportunities to empower consumers and to enhancing service effectiveness.

## PRESENTATION OF CONTENTS

This chapter provided an overview of the study in its discussion of rationale, purpose, theoretical framework, research approach, assumptions and anticipated value of the study.

The literature review is contained in Chapter Two and is organized into sections which are delineated into specifically identified themes relevant to the purpose of the study. Themes relating to social work and social development, empowerment theory and practice, poverty and poverty alleviation and the organizational theory as it relates to social work practice within social service departments are discussed.

Chapter Three discusses the research design utilized in the study. The chapter concludes with the discussion of the limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

The results are analysed and discussed in Chapter Four. The literature on empowerment, social work practice and poverty alleviation policy presented in Chapter Two provided the backdrop against which the results are discussed.

Chapter Five concludes the research report and makes recommendations for an empowerment oriented social work practice.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to relate empowerment theory to the practice of social work, social development and to South African welfare policy and to provide a backdrop against which the results are to be analysed.

The chapter is organized into sections which focus on specified themes relevant to the study and which contribute to an understanding of associated concepts and debates which underlie the current development paradigm. Social work empowerment and organizational theory is reviewed within the context of international and local poverty alleviation policies. The chapter begins with an overview of terms frequently utilized in debates about development. Hence the definitions about community, participation, democracy and issues relating to gender and power are visited to provide conceptual clarity within the parameters of the study.

Section Two identifies the congruence between social work and social development. This provides a knowledge base and framework within which the study is defined, conducted and interpreted. The adoption of the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) mirrors the international trend towards social development and is briefly cited to demonstrate the compatibility of the major social welfare policy document in South Africa to the current development paradigm.

Section Three outlines the pertinent issues relevant to empowerment theory and practice. The interaction between the micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work intervention are discussed in reference to an empowerment orientation to practice.

Section Four is an historical and contemporary overview of the phenomenon of poverty. The findings of the SA-PPA (1997) are referred to and provides a situational analysis of poverty in South Africa. This backdrop to the study is useful in the analysis and discussion of participants' perceptions of poverty within their areas of operation and in relation to international conceptualization of empowerment and poverty.

Section Five locates the practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation within the bureaucratic organizational structure of the D.O.W. Organizational theory is linked to social work practice in an effort to examine its interaction in the support and/or inhibition of the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation.

## SECTION ONE : OVERVIEW OF COMMON CONCEPTS IN DEVELOPMENT

In South Africa, the climate following the country's first democratic election was one characterized by fervour that community participatory approaches would provide redistribution of resources in the country. However, the realization that participation was not the panacea to development as it was initially thought to be, has given way to small scale initiatives, selective funding by government and international donors, an over-emphasis on accountability and increased suspicion on the part of both professionals and communities about motivation and the goals of developmental programmes. Thus there is a need for clarity in purpose and objectives of projects. In view of this dilemma the ambiguity in concepts associated with programmes and projects is outlined in this section. The relevance for the study is also acknowledged.

### Development

Development conjures a multiplicity of intepretation. It represents on the one hand infrastructure development (sewerage installation, housing schemes), educational inputs in diverse and aligned fields of health, welfare and adult literacy. Whilst the current development paradigm convincingly argues for the integration of social and economic development strategies, earlier perspectives focussed singularly on the theory of modernisation and the economic growth model. The stance adopted by the study is one proposed by current development discourse which places primacy on the poverty alleviation agenda and is drawn from Sen (1984). Sen advanced an understanding of development in his focus on people being the 'ends' rather than 'means' of growth. This 'capabilities approach' was conceptualized by Sen as an analysis of factors that shape people's ability to realize their potential over time. Thus, development was viewed as -:

- short term focus on economic growth strategies eg. enhancing a country's producers and macro- economic stability.
- longer term concern with people's welfare eg. direct energy into increasing opportunities for people and to improve quality of life.

Sen's analysis included the relationship between people and their resources and the commodities needed in meeting basic sustenance. Hence, in increasing individual, household and community capability the following components needed to be available -:

- assets, claims and resources
- activities to generate sustainable livelihood
- commodities and service that are needed for an acceptable standard of living.

This study adopts the view that development evolves from an interaction between human capabilities, natural resources, social, institutional and manufactured assets without which a developmental agenda cannot proceed.

## Community

Community is a word used in a variety of ways' Hunter (1975) defined community as:

- functional spatial units meeting basic needs for sustenance
- unit of patterned social interaction
- symbolic units of collective identity

A broad definition is that communities are social units coming together, politically to make changes. Minkler (1999) in an examination of the concept of 'community' explained that whilst it is commonly used as a geographic term, it may also be non-locality based in that the concept incorporates shared interests, characteristics, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or occupational classes. The study takes cognisance of the variance of the definition of community.

Additionally it notes that the earlier conceptualizations of communities being homogenous entities is been challenged by the work of writers such as Freire (1973), Solomon (1976) and Guitierrez (1990). Increasingly, the awareness of power differentials and gender disparities is impacting on community projects. Hence the study notes the diversity implicit in the usage of the concept community. Further, the South African socio-political milieu demands a perspective of community which encompasses the racial inequalities of its recent apartheid past and the implications this has for current community-driven programmes.

## Participation

Cooke (2001) noted that the concept participation had shed the radical connotations it had in the 1960s. He declared that present concerns about participation are about the pragmatics of policy implementation ( cost effectiveness, efficient service delivery and reduction of project maintenance cost). Guijt and Shah (1998) contended that the common usage of the term participation in development circles has created blurring of the concept and simplifies it to being everything that is 'good' and 'empowering'.

Chimera - Dan (1996) asserted that despite the hidden agenda for service effectiveness, the purpose of participation was community empowerment, self reliance and the development of people. It is widely accepted that participatory approaches incorporate the knowledge of local people in programme planning and has the mandate to involve them in decisions which affect them. The assumption is that in becoming involved, people participate and become empowered to develop themselves, their communities and

their world. The goal of this participation is the sustainable development as embodied by the Summit on Social Development (1995).

There have been criticisms levelled against participatory approaches - namely that it is 'tokenism', that participation cloaks power discrepancies and reflects gender bias - women are burdened as volunteers in groups and that participation ignores diversity (Chimera - Dan, 1996, Guijt and Shah 1998). This study acknowledges the dilemmas associated with participatory approaches. It contends that participation is a dialogue-driven process and pivotal to people centred development (Fritzgerald, Mclennan and Munslow 1997).

**Power and Gender**

The related issues of gender and power are undermined in development. Nelson and Wright (1995) surmised that the goal of participatory projects is to empower the marginalized to enable people to analyse their circumstances, develop skills and to challenge the sources of their oppression. However, participatory projects focus on relieving symptoms rather than causes and in the process the power differential between the participants is negated.

People's position in the communities is reflected in the positions they occupy within development programmes. The tensions, disputes and conflicts experienced by people outside of programmes is consequently transferred to the development agenda. This is not alluded to in literature about development. Further, as Guijt and Shah (1998) noted gender is equally marginalized in debates about development. The authors elaborated that although the 1990s have marked a steady growth to integrate the theories of gender with development, a continued gender focus must be reinforced.

All sectors must be sensitive about gender as a key factor in community differences and its influence on development opportunities for women. Hierarchies and structures which maintain power and gender imbalances must be challenged within participatory development approaches. This study reports on the prioritization of services towards women and children by the PSO.

**SECTION TWO : SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

In its attempts to address the controversies that exist about what social workers should know and do, social work literature focused on relating the values of social work to the knowledge and skills needed for practice. It also defined levels of intervention as micro, mezzo and macro to reflect casework, group and community work methods. The influence of psycho-dynamic treatment models permeated much of the literature, however, increasingly there appeared to be a trend towards analysis away from individual deficits towards an analysis which demonstrated the impact of socio-political

and economic factors in creating problems in living. This is compatible to an empowerment orientation of social work which seeks to locate the causes of poverty in structural inequalities. It is also relevant to a developmental rather than remedial conceptualization of practice.

## The Purpose and Definition of Social Work

The literature reviewed aligned the goals and mission of social work to altruism. Additionally, the overarching concern with the promotion of welfare and needs of people were reinforced with commitment to the values of respect for the dignity of individuals and social justice principles.

One traditional definition of the purpose of social work Pincus and Minahan (1973):

- to enhance the person's problem solving and coping abilities
- to promote and ensure a link between people and systems to provide resources.
- to promote effective and humane operation of systems to satisfy needs and welfare of people.
- to contribute to the development of equitable social policy.

Payne (1985) analysed definitions and debates about social work throughout the twentieth century. He postulated that the perspectives are common to these definitions -:

- **Individualist - Reformist** : Emphasis on caring, altruistic concern for individuals within a context of seeking improvement in service delivery.
- **Socialist - Collectivist** : Emphasis on the social engage purpose of social work. Role of social work is to empower, facilitate and participate in the process of learning and mutual co-operation. Egalitarian relationships are the goal of intervention.
- **Reflexive - Therapeutic** : Has personal growth objective for individual groups and communities. In facilitating this process people gain power over own feelings and are enabled to overcome and rise above difficulties. These goals are transferable to the agenda of most projects and programmes which attempt to foster redistribution of resources, improved living standards and sustainable development.

Clark and Asquith, (1985) reported that social work had a tendency of adopting a liberal view of justice emphasizing the protection of individual rights and freedom whilst focussing on social reform in improving the lives of the poor. Hence issues relating to the provision of needs and advocating for development are integral to the nature of social work. The tension between concern for the individual and sectors of the poor is evidenced in the methods of social work: casework with its influence by psycho-dynamic

theories and clinical models and the methods of group and community work which are influenced by the social action models of the 1960s. The dichotomy in the practice methods has been traced to Mary Richmond who was influenced by Freud and psycho-dynamics clinic models and Jane Addams who founded the Settlement house movement, concerned by the lack of provision for the poor.

It is evident therefore that the common theme in the focus of social work has been on the problems of people who were poor, oppressed or challenged by circumstances and disability. This was supported by Gil (1998) who asserted that social work played a pivotal role in reforms in response to poverty, anti-oppressive campaigns and ground breaking legislation in child and family welfare.

This acknowledgement may be attributed to the current definition of social work proposed by the International Federation of Social Workers (2000). This definition is quoted : 'The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at points where people interact with their environments.

Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work' (IFSW, 2000). Thus this conceptualization encompasses the elements of social justice, social reform and collectivity.

## The Mission of Social Development

Estes (1993) noted that credit for originating the concept of sustainable development must be awarded to the Brundtlend Commission which was established 1987. The commission advanced the notion of satisfying the needs of the present generation without depriving future generations of natural resources. Further interrelated themes forwarded by the commission included-:

- social and environmental problems are co-dependent.
- environmental crises are not geographically or locality bound and impact on people worldwide.
- sustainable approaches need to be put into place to protect the environment.

The linking of concepts of social justice and peace to economic well-being and sustainable development was encompassed at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development. It is this conceptualization of social development purpose/goals which are compatible to social work's vision of an emancipated and democratic society and is utilized in discussions in the study. The placement of social justice at the pivot of development precipitates the evolution of social policies to guide the welfare of nations. Thus, the interaction in purpose and mission of social work and social development.

Social development manifests itself in the principles of equity, democracy and equality of access to opportunities and resources (Estes 1993, Palley 1994, Midgley 1995) whilst the responsibility of social work from local agency level up to regional and national levels foster the development of individuals, groups and communities. (White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997).

Implicit in the practice towards social development is the need to possess an awareness and knowledge of the impact of socio-economic and political forces in creating and maintaining inequality. Social workers are also charged with the need to possess a similar knowledge base. (Gray, 1993). Lobbying for the formulation of policies to support equity, redistribution of assets and facilitating access to resources together with promoting the participation of the disadvantaged delineate roles for development.

The political implications and roles that social workers needed to adopt was comprehensively espoused by Gray (1998). Mazibuko (1996) also described the alternate roles that needed to be adopted by social workers and which are in agreement to these discussed by Gray. Both authors were focussing on the shift from remedial to developmental social welfare which was proposed by the White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997. These roles include lobbying and advocating for changes to social policies, to integrate micro and macro practice and actively challenging organizational constraints to implement  holistic social work practice. The linking of personal and political inculcates an awareness of the links between practice and global issues such as poverty.

This has been the agenda of Ife (1997). Ife's exposition contains approaches towards implementing empowerment based social work practice which detracts from the value neutral stance of traditional social work. This expands the role of practitioners to networking with stakeholders, forming partnerships to support efforts to sustain programmes and becoming involved in social movements to affect change. The challenge is that social workers roles are based on principles of justice and human rights - thus cannot be confined to specific clearly delineated roles.

**The interaction between Social Work, Social Development and Poverty Alleviation:**

Elliot (1993) indicated that poverty alleviation for social development was first associated with United Nations policies, whilst Guijt Shah (1998) surmised that development was driven largely by the poverty alleviation agenda. The adoption of poverty eradication as a strategy by international governments at the Summit on Social Development (1995) magnified social work's concern with the circumstances of the disadvantaged, marginalized and economically challenged included into the ambit of poverty alleviation. Ultimately, it is the mission of social work to ensure 'policy and programmes are in place, that it reaches people it is mean to serve and acts as the social conscience of society'. (Mazibuko, 1996, p 151-152).

The following sections examine the concept of empowerment in its focus of the origins and definitions, its dimensions, conditions, components and stages.

## SECTION THREE : EMPOWERMENT THEORY AND PRACTICE

Holistic notions of social work practice revolve around themes of disadvantage, social justice and empowerment. The focus of social work is most frequently with empowering people who are disadvantaged or who experience injustice. Brown (1988) stated that social work practice involves empowering people to act in relation to interpersonal, social, economic and political resource systems with which they interact in their daily lives. Freire (1973), noted that empowerment involves a conscious engagement in 'the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human'; whilst Rappaport, Swift and Hess (1984) described it as a process through which people and their communities 'gain mastery over their lives'. These descriptions of empowerment are broad definitions which recognize that in gaining mastery over their lives people gain a sense of control leading to actual control and thus derive practical power to affect change.

An initial examination of the concept of empowerment revealed that while the term is used increasingly in all facets of development literature ( social welfare, health and agriculture) it is difficult to conclude that there is a universal meaning.

### Origins and definition of empowerment

Adams (1996) traced empowerment in social work to the conscience-raising and protest culture of the 1960s. This is supported by assertions by writers such as Seedat, Duncan and Larzarus (2001) and Guijt and Shah (1998) who declared that empowerment has its roots in social action, community organization, adult education, Black liberation and feminism.

Parsons (1991) stated that the term was popularized in the mid 1970s by Solomon (1976) and was used to describe the process of increasing personal, intra-personal, political and social power so that individuals and communities can take action to improve their life situations. This general definition of empowerment is one adopted by Guitierrez (1990), Rappaport (1982) and Torre (1985) who wrote prolifically on the subject.

Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as 'a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives, and involve themselves in the democratic process of their community and employing institutions'. In defining empowerment, Torre , 1985 quoted by Parsons 1991, discussed it as ' a process through which people become strong enough to participate within, share in the control of, and influence, events and institutions affecting their lives', and it necessitates that people gain particular skills, knowledge and sufficient power to influence their lives and the lives of those they care about.

Guitierrez, (1990) described it as-:

- a sense of personal control accompanied by the ability to affect the behaviour of others.
- a focus on establishing existing strengths in individuals and communities.
- advocating for equity in the distribution of resources
- an ecological analysis for understanding individual and community phenomena.
- a belief that 'power' is not a scarce commodity but one that is generated during the process of empowerment.

This definition was compatible to the empowerment model proposed by Rubin and Rubin (1992) and quoted by Veeran and Simpson (1996). This model emphasized that the process of empowerment-:

- drew on human resources available in the community
- concentrated on finding and developing leadership
- sought help to build the capacity of the community to solve problems

The interaction of these conceptualizations of empowerment lies in the focus on enabling people to become involved in changing conditions that oppress them. The value dimensions incorporate self determination, group autonomy, mutual aid and concern for the 'common good' of society. Empowerment combines critical reflection with action for social transformation, hence its interface with development rather than remedial approaches to social change and its applicability to developmental social welfare.

The focus on power differentials that exist between individuals and communities translates to different groups exerting varying levels of control over resources. Consequently, empowerment based approaches envisaged that changes in power will reinforce democracy. The literature indicated that empowerment orientated practice involves work on multiple levels ( individuals, groups and communities) and skills encompassing skills audit, conscious-raising, advocacy, facilitation and mediation. A fundamental skill emphasized by Evans (1992) is that of listening. Descriptions of empowerment elucidated that it is an electic and dialogic process. It is reflective and generic with strong links to anti-oppressive social work practice.

It is evident that Freire's vision (1973) of transformation in adult literacy programmes in Latin America was influential in social work literature about empowerment. Freiere is credited for linking individual empowerment with societal change, thereby eliminating structures which oppressed people. However, theory rarely translates to practice easily. Further, the fact that it is 'fashionable' to adopt empowerment as the goal of developmental projects indicates the concept of power between the professional and the consumer of the service. The empowerment perspective assumes that power is not finite as it generated in the process of social interaction. The definitions of empowerment incorporate dimensions of empowerment forwarded by Guitierrez . This is reflected in table 1.

**TABLE 1 : DIMENSIONS OF EMPOWERMENT**

| DIMENSIONS | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Goal | To gain personal, interpersonal and political power. |
| Process | To raise consciousness and awareness, increasing efficiency |
| Method | A strengths based, education and democratic interaction |

Adapted by Guitierrez (1992)

**Conditions for empowerment**

Breton (1994) quoted Keiffer (1981) who identified the conditions for empowerment:

- A personal attitude and sense of self that promotes active social involvement.
- An ability to develop action strategies and to cultivate resources for the attainment of goals.
- A willingness to act in co-operation with others to define and attain collective goals.

**Power and social work practice**

Heron (1990) quoted by Adams, 1996 stated that counselling interventions had power dimensions inherent in them. Subsequently he classified the interventions into two types: authoritative and facilitative. Authoritative is inclusive of three levels prescriptive, informative and confronting and has inherent in them the element of social control associated with social workers fulfilling their statutory obligations. Facilitative counselling is cathartic, catalytic and supportive and is amenable to empowerment orientated practice.

**TABLE 2 : POWER IN COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS**

| AUTHORITATIVE INTERVENTIONS | FACILITATIVE INTERVENTIONS |
|---|---|
| Hierarchically structured communication | Lateral communication patterns |
| Practitioner centred<br>**Prescriptive:** utilizes legislation to direct behaviour | Consumer centred<br>**Informative:** gives information, value exchange                of knowledge and skills |
| **Confronting:** Challenges consumers about limiting attitudes and behaviours | **Cathatic:** discharge of consumer's painful emotions<br>**Supportive:** affirms worth, attitudes and actions<br>**Advocacy:** active in change of policy and legislation on behalf of vulnerable groups |

Adapted from Heron, 1990, quoted by Adams (1996)

## Components for empowering interventions

Evans (1992) and Parsons (1991) delineated the necessary components for empowering interventions. These components are outlined below -:

- **Collectivity** - The 'merging' of individual energy so that the collective provides opportunity for support, mutual aid and collective action from which people derive 'power'.
- **Education** - The critical examination of situations in relation to socio-political context and shared awareness of problems located in structural defects.
- **Competency Assessment** - Individuals, groups and communities are 'assessed' within frameworks of strengths and coping skills rather than deficits. This enhances feelings of self-efficiency.

Empowerment theory focusses on the power differentials that exist between individuals and communities. Gutierrez and Ortega (1991) quoted Pinderhuges (1993), Solomon (1982) and Rappaport (1981) in asserting that the empowerment theory assumes that different groups possess varying levels of power and control over resources. This translated to the failure of society to meet the needs of the poor and marginalized groups. It envisaged that changes in power structures will prevent individual problems and is relevant to an analysis of the unequal structural dynamics which result in widespread poverty of vulnerable groups in society.

Empowerment practice involves multiple levels and requires skills in working with individuals, groups and communities. Much of the literature indicated that this involved

a combination of personal control with the ability to influence the behaviour of others, focussing on enhancing and establishing equity in the distribution of resources (Rappaport 1987, Solomon 1976 and Gutierrez 1990).

Empowerment orientated practitioners conceptualized practice as the consciousness-raising process of cognitive restructuring and as a politicization process towards liberation. Empowerment necessitates participation the need to learn, to commit to development and to incorporate power differentials in analyses based on feminist theory. Feminists incorporate three definitions of power, the ability to get what one needs, the ability to influence how others think, feel, act or believe and the ability to distribute resources to families, organizations, communities and society (Gutierrez, 1991).

In summary the theory of empowerment is concerned with how people may gain collective control over their lives so as to achieve their interests as a group and as a method by which social workers seek to enhance the power of people who lack it.

**Empowerment practice**

The character of micro, mezzo and macro social work does not retain its distinctive character in an empowerment orientated practice. Ife (1997) concluded that the methods of social work are integrated in an effort to provide tangible and sustainable 'solutions' to challenges. Thus education, participation and capacity building form the corner stones of micro, mezzo and macro practice - the purpose of which requires investment in individuals, groups and communities. Given the enormity of the problems facing the poor, it appears relevant to progress understanding and knowledge of individuals about the strengths inherent in working towards community capacity building. Hence micro practice becomes but a stepping stone to group and community work practice.

The empowerment process parallels the steps for social work practice per sec, however differs substantially in the stance adopted by the practitioner and one which reflects the facilitative intervention depicted in Heron's (1990) typology of power inherent in social work practice. The steps are enumerated as-:

- Assessing Concerns and Resources
- Setting Mission and Objectives
- Developing Strategies and Action Plans
- Monitoring Process and outcomes
- Communication of Information
- Promotion, Renewal and Institutionalization

Solomon (1976) identified three major roles of social workers to empower:

- **Resource consultant** : Aids consumer in dealing with most urgent problems of obtaining tangible life supports in a way that enhances autonomy.
- **Sensitizer** : One who helps consumers develop self knowledge, reorientates consumers about self defeating and destructive behaviour.
- **Teacher/Trainer** : Values of social work predominate coupled with analysis of the power relations and their effect on the circumstances of the consumer. Interactions are to develop skills of consumers.

In practice social workers adopt a variety of roles as facilitators, brokers, and catalysts in networking or as advocacy on behalf of consumers. Adams (1996) provided a framework within which the process of empowerment may be analysed. This is presented in table 3.

## TABLE 3 : STAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

| Stage | Description of Steps and Activities |
|---|---|
| **Initiation** | Start up Activity<br>. Networking with existing programme<br>. Preparatory work<br>. Construct negotiation |
| **Self Movement** | Includes a range of Activities<br>. Problem centred<br>. Self development and/or training<br>. Consciousness - raising and/or social action |
| **Proselytising** | Individual moves on to help others<br>. Replication of learnt behaviours and attitudes<br>. Recruitment of others<br>. Joining other groups to reinforce and network with larger social movements<br>. Securing resources to engage social action for change |

## Section Four : Poverty and its alleviation

The eradication of poverty and inequality consistently appears as the focus of South African governmental policies. The pledge at the World Summit for Social Development (1995) was followed by requests by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme for an overall poverty assessment and Country Human Development Report respectively. Subsequently research culminated in the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (1997) (SA-PPA) and the Poverty and Inequality Report (2000) (PIR). In its attempts to provide an overview of the nature and

extent of poverty in South Africa, this section draws on the findings of the SA-PPA and the PIR.

Bradshaw and Sainsbury (2000) observed that the orthodox view of poverty based an economic inequality is challenged by the support for the meeting of basic needs of a citizenry combined with the aggressive redistribution of assets and resources. The role of human capital as postulated by Sen (1984) appears to be influential in the conceptualization for development and the eradication of poverty. Thus, governmental policies in South Africa and elsewhere attempt to promote synergy between economic and social empowerment for development.

**Nature and causes of poverty**

Poverty is acknowledged as a universal, multidimensional phenomenon and incorporates

- physiological dimension - denoting lack of basic necessities such as food, health, shelter and clothes; political dimension
- the state of deprivation and powerlessness where the poor are exploited and/or denied participation in decision making in matters affecting them and extends to the psychological dimension - the feeling of being worthless because of poverty. (Alcock, 1997 ; Jones, 1990)

Alcock (1997) noted that poverty is conceptualized in terms of 'absolute' and 'relative'. Absolute poverty (subsistence poverty) is regarded as an extreme form of human deprivation where basic needs essential for survival are not met. Townsend (2000) is credited for progressing an understanding of poverty away from minimum subsistence levels towards an alignment to social deprivation in work undertaken in the early 1960s . Relative poverty is described as situations where individuals and groups in society are unable to meet the standards of living taken for granted by others in that society. This conceptualization of poverty thus incorporates the subjectivity of people in defining whether they consider themselves poor in relation to other individuals within their social contexts.

The United Nations Human Development Report, 1997 proposed that the definitions of poverty are based on three perspectives. These appear in table 4.

## TABLE 4 : PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY

| Income Perspective | Basic Needs Perspective | Capability Perspective |
|---|---|---|
| Utilization of a poverty line reflecting monetary value of consumption which separates poor from non-poor. In South Africa this cut off point is R363 per adult in a poor household. | Inability to meet basic needs. | Powerlessness and consequent inability to participate in decision-making |

(Adapted from United Nations Development Report, 1997)

May (1998) defined poverty as 'the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs and the income required to satisfy them.' Thus it utilized the definition based on two of the three perspectives of poverty forwarded by the United Nations Human Development Report, 1997.

The causes of poverty are encapsulated in table 5 and are drawn from the theoretical debates about social development from Midgley, (1995).

## TABLE 5 : THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

| Modernization | Dependency | Development |
|---|---|---|
| Rapid industrialization and achievement of economic growth targets will lead to social development as the'trickle down effect will benefit the poor and lead to decline in poverty rate.<br><br>However economic growth biased towards wealthy - the poor reap no benefits. | Dominance of international capital by the North through control of world markets guarantees exploitation of poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<br><br>By competing in the global market poverty is reinforced leading to greater debt and cycle of dependency is perpetuated. | Propagates state intervention and involvement towards the adoption of specific poverty alleviation policies and strategies<br><br>Encompasses all three perspectives of poverty.<br><br>Acknowledges that structural adjustment policies perpetuates cycle of poverty. |

(Adapted from Midgley, 1995)

The causes of poverty in South Africa were attributed directly to apartheid, which created a dualistic economy. The high lifestyle of Whites was viewed in terms of superior productivity and this perspective devalued the labour of the African population

who were forced to engage in migrant labour to gain cash and establish food security (May 1998). The South African population is relatively young and relatives rather than their parents bring up millions of children. Unemployment is higher for women than men and many who want jobs cannot find them. Estimates project that by 2005 1 in 5 adults will be HIV positive and die of Aids or Aids related diseases (Population, Policy and Poverty Report, 2000).

## The dimension of poverty and inequality in South Africa

The past policies have left a legacy of regional, racial poverty and inequality in the country. Hofmeyer (1996) noted that poverty is evident across all cultural and ethnic groups but particularly in the United States of America and South Africa, there are more poor people in Black communities. The features of poverty are derived from the SA-PPA (1997) and provided an integrated understanding of poverty from the perspective of the poor.

## TABLE 6 : FEATURES OF POVERTY

| Features | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Alienation from the community | Isolation from kinship and community, elderly and young have no emotional or financial support networks. |
| Food insecurity | Inability to provide 'suitable or good quality food' for their families, children were hungry and/or malnourished. |
| Crowded houses | Overcrowded conditions in the home inter-generational house holds. |
| Use of basic forms of energy | Lack of safe and efficient energy - costs to women who gather firewood |
| Crime | . Violence against women increase in poorer areas, women are more likely to be dependent on men for finance<br>. Wealthy are victims of property crimes.<br>. Less infrastructure(roads, telephone) increases Incidents of crime that go unreported.<br>. Police service inequitably distributed |
| Unemployment | Inability to purchase resources for survival |

(Adapted : SA-PPR, 1997)

## Poverty alleviation policy

Choplin (1995) broadly defined social policy as societal responses to social problems, while Jones (1990) referred to policy as a set of proposals reflecting government decisions. In the South African context 'policy' is regarded as 'white papers.' As mentioned in Chapter One the two white papers critically impacting on current social

welfare practice in South Africa are :

1. The White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997
2. The White Paper on Financing for Developmental social Welfare, 1999.

Both white papers are therefore relevant to a discussion about poverty alleviation policies and its subsequent implementation or lack of implementation thereof. It warrants noting that the white papers reflect the commitment of the government to adopt the tenets of the current social Development paradigm and outlines its financing policy accordingly. This is in contrast to the pre - 1994 era when the poverty of the majority of South Africans was sidelined. Current policies therefore encompasses poverty alleviation as a major strategy to redistribute resources. This was comprehensively discussed in Chapter One when an analysis was made of the policy context in South Africa.

Two distinct approaches are perceived as being instrumental towards poverty alleviation: conceptualization of 'poverty' as a pathological condition for which a cure must be found or as an 'enemy' on whom war must be declared. (Choplin, 1995). The latter description was relevant at different periods in the history of the United Kingdom, United States of America and east Asian countries. It pre-occupies current policy making and political agendas in South Africa. Ruize - Tagle (1999) in his examination of how social policies influenced social development in Chile, delineated three categories of social policies . This is reflected in table seven.

## TABLE 7 : TYPES OF SOCIAL POLICY

| Universal Policies | Selective Policies | Targeted Policies |
|---|---|---|
| Those that are designed to benefit the entire population without reference to socio-economic differences. | Are formulated with a specific group and take into account characteristics such as age, geographical location which are indicative of specific needs. | Those which proposes to benefit only those sectors of the population who are below a certain level of poverty or who are specially vulnerable in some specific way |

Adapted from Ruize - Tagle, (1999)

Robinson and Sandan (1998) reported that the government experienced tension in meeting policy commitments. The limited available resources and the extent of poverty and inequality in South Africa compounds the problem. Hence, there is a need for prioritization and specific targeting of people disadvantaged and/or vulnerable to poverty. In South Africa as elsewhere around the globe this translates to women and children who have become the core groups to be targeted by governmental policies to eradicate poverty. Other groups who are embraced by policies include the disabled, the elderly and people living with HIV-AIDS. Social Welfare policies to eradicate poverty in South Africa thus falls into the category of 'targeted' as well as 'selective' policy arenas. An example would be the flagship programme for unemployed women and

children under five. This is discussed in the section which follows.

**Initiatives arising from policies about poverty alleviation**

May (2000) identified over fifty programmes, pilot projects and grants relevant to the reduction of poverty and inequality. This represents the broad commitment to poverty alleviation by the government.

The welfare budget is the fourth largest vote in the government's budget and accounts for approximately 10% of the total expenditure. It is designated to reduce and income poverty and promote development . Budlender (2000). The focus of D.O.W. poverty alleviation is not just on income poverty but incorporates human development. Programmes therefore incorporate empowerment objectives.

The following is an enumeration of initiatives proposed by policies advocated by the poverty alleviation policy.

**The Disability Policy** : This policy places special emphasis on women, children and the elderly. It addresses poverty in its advocacy for the provision of loans for small businesses and the removal of discrimination which limits the economic empowerment of the disabled.

**Flagship Programme** : This is a three year pilot project which focusses on single women with young children (under 5) to become involved in group economic and skills development.  This programme warrants special mention as it was one of the first to encompass the developmental social welfare approach. Each of the nine provinces has between one and three projects which receive R400 000  in the first year, R300 000 in the second year and R200 000 in the third year. In Kwa-Zulu Natal the sites at Bhambanana and Azulea in Pietermaritzburg targeted 360 women at year end 1998 (Budget Review , 1998). The Flagship Programme has elicited criticism namely that few women are targeted, there was a lack of infrastructure to administer funds thus rendering the programme to fraud. It also elicited criticism in that it requires much human and material resources. Replicability of the programme is questionable as a result of cost effectiveness. Nevertheless, the programme represents commitment towards sustenance and livelihood of people based on the premises of integrating economic growth with investments in the capacity of people.

**The Family Preservation Project** : This project is aligned to the Inter-ministerial Committee for youth strategy and seeks to address multiple problems in child, youth and family care. The project proposes out of home placements which are family focussed and community-based. This programme emphasizes intersectoral collaboration.

**National Population Policy** : This policy shifts away from prescriptive models of the past which dictated lower birth rates for achieving development. It postulates an analysis of the relationship between population and development data. In an effort to ensure that population issues are incorporated in development planning.

## Evaluation of the implementation of policy

Gray (1998) indicated that the White Paper for Social Welfare embodied the principles of the RDP in its attempts to integrate its developmental goals. Furthermore the White Paper for Social Welfare emphasized that the scarcity of resources makes it imperative that the poor, the disadvantaged and marginalized have a higher priority for services.

Gray (1998) and Budlender (2000) acknowledged that the D.O.W. has made conscious efforts to target the vulnerable. The obstacles to achieve the goals of developmental welfare are :

- Lack of knowledge and expertise to implement developmental welfare.

- Budgeting constraints - developmental social welfare requires larger staff components.
- Infrastructure development within D.O.W. restricted by budgeting constraints and its impacts on policy implementation.
- Lack of difficulty in co-ordination of programmes. Government bureaucracies are not effective in the production of intersectoral work.

Lombard (1996) noted that communal obligations have been alienated by the culture of entitlement which proposes that governments must provide support as a 'right' not 'relief'.

## The role of government

Sustainable, accessible and people-centred development are the tenets in policies of the D.O.W. - the vision is of a self-reliant nation built in partnership with other stakeholders. This 'partnership' was defined as : the government's role was to steer society towards policy objectives, while business and community organizations must be responsible for implementation Patel, (1996). This raises the question of capacity of resources (both human and material) particularly in poor communities. The culture of 'entitlement' contends that the government can and should maintain service delivery. Business ought to be a likely target to fund initiatives of communities but need explicit policy directives and legislation to enforce same.

However if one were to examine the policy priorities of the government it would seem

that despite 50% of the population being poor, other issues predominate in South Africa - that of crime and thus, the stated policy commitment of the Ministry of Welfare to combat poverty is weakened in the face of other priorities identified by the government. The policy priorities of the government for the country reflected in the address by the president at the opening of the parliamentary session on  04 - 02 - 2000
and are listed as :

- Fighting Crime
- Fighting Corruption
- Economic Growth, Investment and Employment
- Integrated Rural Development
- Prioritize the Poor and Disadvantaged
- Review and Intensify action against HIV-AIDS
- Human Resource Development
- Governance and Administration
- Nation Building
- Building a better Africa and a better World.

Ghai (1999) in an analysis of social development programmes in Third world countries asserted that such strategies combine economic growth strategies and enhance and the social capacities. Further, poverty and inequality were viewed as twin pillars antithesis of development. Environmental degradation, unemployment and surplus labour perpetuated cycles of poverty. There was a need therefore large scale interventions to directly support the poor until such time that the benefits of high growth reach the poor.

May and Rogerson (2000) delineated the elements of a strategy for the reduction of poverty and inequality in the country as :

- Linking Growth and Human Development  :  This entails an interaction of fiscal and monetary policies, sectoral policies, education/training, health, HIV/AIDS, welfare and pension, nutrition and safety. The main purpose of government intervention is to provide assistance when markets fail and to strengthen the capacity of the disadvantaged to satisfy basic needs and to participate in decision-making. Sectoral policies need to be integrated within national policies and the need for refining programmes and projects to increase resource allocation to the poor.

- Asset Redistribution and Increasing Opportunities to Develop : Redistribution revolves around access to land, housing, infrastructure and livelihoods. Focus needs to be expanded on the distribution of income, wealth and economic power and between capital and labour.

- Spatial development : Incorporates urban restructuring, rural development, transportation and spatial development initiatives. The purpose is to ensure that the poor are beneficiaries of the interventions.

- Institutional reforms : The devolution of power, integrative structures, development planning and information/technology.


## Section Five: Organizational Bureaucracy and Social Work

The term 'welfare' is synonymous with benevolence and of citizens being assisted to achieve quality of life (Billis, 1984). Parsons (1991) intimated that historically and traditionally social welfare is concerned with populations at risk. Thus social work and social welfare interact. Ginsbury (1993) indicated that the relationship between social work and social welfare is characterized by co-operation and conflict which is not unusual - given that public welfare and social work differs in objectives and priorities. Social work is but one component of welfare, which encompasses social security, housing, water and electrification. In the move to acquire professional status, social work located itself in the bureaucratic organizational structure of public welfare and become a function of the state.

Hence, the utilization of the 'professional organization' as a major reference. Social welfare is linked to social security, infrastructure development and visible material assistance and state provisions.

Billis (1984) and Hvinden (1998) conceded that the characteristics of the state bureaucratic organization did have the advantage of having efficiency in the performance of set tasks. Predictable behaviour that emphasized competence more than personal feelings had the possibility of rapid goal attainment given the trained and routinized activity of personnel. However, observations of the disadvantages of the bureaucratic organizational structure included that personnel operated within formalized structure and experienced difficulty in adapting to changed circumstances. This leads to inhuman responses to human needs which in turn affects service provision to the vulnerable.

Commitment to social work demands the need for flexible, holistic and innovative programmes whilst the social service departments decrees a blue print type response. Social work departments are therefore challenged to find ways to provide large scale comprehensive services in a flexible, responsive and effective manner which does not dehumanize.

Lund, Ardington and Harber (1996) observed that social welfare in South Africa as in other countries in the world has been stereotyped to reflect images of professionals involved in giving handouts to the poor. Further, welfare is viewed as creating

dependency and being anti-development. However the reality is that the shift in policy towards developmental social welfare has forced the social workers to engage actively in ways to overcome oppressive conditions in a sustainable manner.

The literature attested to the recognition that bureaucracy and human relations interfaces to impact on policy implementation and organizational changes. Currently in South Africa the adoption of developmental social welfare and the subsequent transformation of the welfare sector draws attention to organizational analyses. A relevant concept in understanding the dynamics of change is that of 'organizational culture' and its impact on empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

Handy (1986) suggested that organizations may be understood as having one of four different cultures:

- **Power Culture :** Power is at the centre (web) of the organization. The 'spokes' are functional 'soldiers'.
- **Role Culture :** Hierarchical communication channels, information is filtered through heads of departments.
- **Task Culture :** Flexible structures prevail which are reinforced or denuded of resources depending on the demands of the project and/or importance/priority awarded to said project.
- **People Culture :** Individuals cluster within the organization in an autonomous way and power is shared, based on expertise.

The character of social work in South Africa is affected by the organizational culture of the D.O.W. and resembles 'role culture'. This affects communication adversely and/or leads to categorized role definitions. In incongruence in the situation is that the welfare policy advocates for holistic practice but the organizational arrangements undermine and defy such practice. The impact is on consumers who are 'processed' to varying levels and channelled inputs which increases the potential of being classified as 'units of analysis'.

Practitioners work under stressful conditions within the D.O.W. borne in part by volume in workloads, resource constraints, constant exposure to pathology and an organizational bureaucracy which defeats the goals of altruism. The obstacles confronting the welfare bureaucracy includes shoddy management of the provincial budget (Daily News 14: 05: 98), lack of infrastructure to implement policies and the lack of expertise (Gray 1998). The fiscal constraints imposed by GEAR on social service programmes mocks the initiatives of an empowered orientation to practice.

Ife (1997) referred to these factors as contributing to the 'hostile environment' which confronts social work practice. His suggestion was that practitioners acknowledge the constraints, network and actively campaign for new forms of legislation and policy to

support practice goals. The 'hostile environment' inevitably confines holistic social work practice in its compartmentalization of consumer's problems, its marginalization of empowerment based programmes which are long term and comprehensive in favour of 'quick fix options', productivity and blue print-type responses.

Parallel to this discourse is the climate within the D.O.W. which resulted in a change in the conceptualization of the welfare bureaucracy from an agency run by professionals to that of a customer orientated service run by managers. This is encapsulated in the principles of 'Batho Pele' (People First). Thus the Ministry of Welfare pursues transformation to reshape service delivery from a remedial problem centred one to one which is developmental /preventative. Further it embraces the principles of the business sector with its 'consumer- first' philosophy in an effort to dispel the connotations of 'welfare' and attain service excellence. The impact of manageralism on social work practice places premium on administration of services rather than the objectives for sustainable development. Hence, cost effectiveness, organizational goals, categorization and rate of productivity predominates - all of which serves the interests of the welfare rather than social work.

Wallis (1997) stated that the manner in which the state social service department could meet the challenge would be for the welfare sector to aspire towards the attainment of a 'developmental bureaucracy'. He elaborated that inherent in the concept of a development bureaucracy would be flexible hierarchies, integrated service delivery structures, a blurring of occupational roles and organizational communications which would reflect horizontal rather than the current vertical patterns of command. This would reinforce the practice of holistic, generic and humane welfare in accordance to the paradigm of social development.

**Empowerment and organizational bureaucracy**

Empowerment is achieved by capacity building and expanding capabilities in respect of planning, organization and implementation of policies within organizations. Knowledge building, the development of self confidence, innovativeness and initiatives, acquisition of skills in conflict resolution and problem solving. Abel and Murphy (1990) quoted by Cronje (1996) stated that management divides into three issues :

**Ethical Morality**
It encompasses normative approach which embraces participative roles of managers, social workers and clients within a holistic problem resolution.
**Professional Autonomy**
Mutual accountability between consumers and service organizations
**Protection of the Public**
This encompasses issues of transparency, participation and general human rights.

Cronje (1996) identified empowerment as the most important component of intervention strategy utilized by practitioners and their managers. The framework for empowerment

from a managerial perspective within an organization involves:

- The welfare agency changes focus in language. The client becomes the consumer of service.
- Meeting consumer needs becomes the basis of the organization and consumers are 1st, 2nd and 3rd.
- The organization is not viewed as a 'closed system' but 'open' and dependent on the inputs of staff, consumers and other stakeholders.
- Managerial actions must lead to just consequences. This has inherent in it normative approach for ethical practice. The organization must display clarity about goals and staff must be trained to seek sound and moral solutions.
- The organizational structure must ensure a democratic and minimally stratified environment. The current power imbalances between the D.O.W. and other stakeholders does not reflect a levelling of playing fields and the empowerment of consumers is sidelined in the scramble for power in project ownership. This prevents synergy in the resolution of issues.

A commonly noted observation is the lack of organizational support of staff. Cronje (1996) asserted that the organization which bases its managerial philosophy on the normative approach will be able to provide human resources and the structural/psychological supports to ensure the empowerment of staff, the consumers and communities it serves. This ethical morality, professional antonomy and the protection of the public converge to support empowerment processes within the organization.

**Factors which impact on empowerment based practice**

Guitierrez, Maye and De Lois (1995) in an examination of the organizational obstacles to empowerment found that the expectations of funders the social environment and intra-personal and interpersonal aspects interacted to impede its practice. Further empowerment based practice is more time consuming than traditional practice. Practitioners engage in dialogue rather than prescriptive/ treatment based models to resolve issues. However funders show a singular lack of concern with needs focussing on product and result driven exercises rather than processes.

The quality of the community and organization affects the ability of the organization to function effectively. The social environment also comprises of the directives and regulations of the different stakeholders. There is a need to display credibility by developing reliable systems of measurements and evaluation of results .Intra-personal factors allude to the characteristics of people and practitioners (mental and physical) that impact on the consumer driven approach. Interpersonal issues are the inability and/or unwillingness of the practitioners to terminate.

The welfare bureaucracy fails to foster independence of practitioners, hence the specialized and routinized response dictated by the organization impacts negatively on empowerment. The focus of attitudes, skills and language contained in policies favour

empowerment, but the skill, level of expertise and 'delegation' overthrows this position.

Writing in the public welfare context of the United States of America, Elsmore (2001) identified seven characteristics of the strategies of the federal government which reflected the acceptance towards empowerment-based practice:

- All employees are involved in developing a clear vision and a shared sense of mission.
- Empower employees to achieve the goals of the organization.
- Create a team environment in order to help staff cross boundaries.
- Put the consumers first - find out what the consumers want.
- Communicate through every level in the organization
- Acknowledge need to circumvent red - tape
- Create clear accountability by concentrating on performance and the measuring of results.

This chapter attempted to provide a theoretical review of the concepts and issues relevant to the purpose and objectives of the study. It identified an approach to organizational functioning which would support the adoption of an empowerment orientation and commented on the lack of such support within the current welfare bureaucracy in South Africa.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology utilized in the study. The description of participants characteristics is followed by an exposition of the limitations and ethical consideration of the study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focussed on eliciting the perceptions of practitioners about the interaction between social work empowerment and poverty alleviation. Guided by the assumptions that social workers had the knowledge and skills to empower consumers, the research design and the formulation of questions were influenced by current social welfare policy and the practice context of social work practitioners within the P.S.O. This chapter outlines the research design.

Thereafter, participant characteristics, the data collection instrument and the utility of the pilot study in modifying the research instrument is discussed. The chapter concludes with inputs about the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was guided by its purpose: to analyse the perceptions of social workers about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. This lends itself to a descriptive design. The descriptive characteristics about empowerment and poverty alleviation is contained within categorized items on the research instrument. It is assumed that participants have a prior understanding of the phenomenon under study. However, they require a disciplined opportunity to clarify opinions, perceptions and experiences in an effort to generate common themes about service provision and social work practice within a defined 'problem' context.

Marlow (1993) tabulated the applicability of questionnaires to instances when objectivity is critical, anonymity is important and the respondents are literate. The choice of the questionnaire for this research was determined by the need to categorize the perceptions of social workers according to the theory of empowerment and the 'actual' practice in relation to poverty alleviation. This is dependent to the extent on the quantification of opinions and perceptual reality.

This study is also considered exploratory as no study of this nature has been conducted in the D.O.W. previously. Whilst the literature is expansive about empowerment, there is little in the way about empowerment towards poverty alleviation by social workers, particularly in the South African context.

## STUDY PARTICIPANTS

All social workers at the Pinetown Service office of the D.O.W. were eligible to become participants. Representativeness of the 'sample' to other service offices or of the social work practitioner population is not claimed. The analysis of perception as it relates to the phenomenon of empowerment towards poverty alleviation is context specific and relevant to participants only.

Eleven social workers were eligible to participate in the study. It is the perceptions of these practitioners about the interaction of social work empowerment and poverty alleviation which is central to the study. These perceptions ultimately determine the quality of empowerment and the implementation of poverty alleviation policies for the inner and outer west areas of the Durban unicity council and Ilembe regional council.

**TABLE 8 : PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS**

| Race | Gender | Age | No. of years Social work Experience | Length of service within D.O.W. |
|------|--------|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| White | Male | 56 | 23 | 23 |
| African | Female | 50 | 25 | 25 |
| African | Female | 41 | 19 | 19 |
| Asiatic | Female | 39 | 18 | 15 |
| African | Female | 38 | 15 | 6 months |
| Asiatic | Female | 35 | 12 | 12 |
| Asiatic | Female | 31 | 9 | 6 months |
| African | Female | 29 | 8 | 8 |
| African | Female | 30 | 8 | 8 |
| African | Female | 28 | 6 | 6 |
| African | Female | 26 | 2 | 7 months |

The table reflects the characteristics of the staff who participated in the study. The aspects reflect racial composition, gender, age, no of years social work experience and length of service within the D.O.W.

There is a majority of African staff (7), followed by (3) Asiatic and (1) White staff member.

The gender bias in the number of female staff (10) in comparison to male (1) is supported by Lund's (1998) observation that the work force of welfare is composed primarily of female staff.

The average number of years in social work experience is 11 years. The length of service of staff within the D.O.W. ranges from 6 months to 25 years.

The experience of staff varies from child welfare, specialized agency work to (such as Blind and Deaf, South African Epilepsy Foundation) to probation and generic social work.

The methods of social work incorporate casework, group and community work. The D.O.W. service offices do not undertake research as a core function of service delivery. Feasibility and needs analysis are confined to developmental projects undertaken specifically by the community developmental worker. All other staff who participated in the study were field-workers who utilized predominately the casework method.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data collection method favoured in the study was the questionnaire. The choice of the questionnaire for this research was determined by the need to categorize the perceptions of the social workers according to the theory of empowerment and the 'actual practice in relation to poverty alleviation. This is dependent to the extent on the quantification of opinions and perceptual reality. The participants were literate and experienced social work practitioners, thus a questionnaire would generate objective data about the impact of a particular orientation of social work practice in the language that is understandable to them.

Research questions are central to the design and connects to all aspects of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that questions which are too general/diffuse create difficulties in the type of data to collect and in the analysis of such data. The research questions in the study pertained to the activities and perceptions of practitioners in relations to empowerment towards poverty alleviation. The questions were structured to interact with practitioner responses and the items depended on prior responses. Such a format is appropriate for the conduct of descriptive research based on the research design which seeks to describe phenomena, is a process orientated and is unconcerned with impact or casual explanations.

Rubin and Babbie (1997) reported that descriptive designs favour questionnaires particularly items which are structured. This ensures that all participants 'are asked the same questions, in the same sequence, to maximize comparability of responses and to ensure that complete data are gathered from each person on all relevant questions' (Rubin and Babbie, 1997 p.390). The questionnaire contained closed ended items to facilitate quantification of data analysis. In addition the questionnaire included open ended items to elicit the views of participants in their own words.

The formulation of items for the questionnaire encompassed the issues of empowerment, poverty, poverty alleviation and organizational structure which facilitated/inhibited the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation. Items also included the potential benefits of adopting an empowered orientation to practice and general comments about related issues.

The questionnaire was self administered, although the researcher was available for consultation, should the need have arisen. As the participants were degreed. The assumption was that their prior knowledge would assist in the self-administration of the questionnaire.

## PILOT STUDY

Maxwell (1992) stated that the utility of a pilot study lies in its generation of understanding of concepts of theories held by people who are being studied. He referred to this understanding as 'intepretation' and cautioned that it was not additional concepts but were the meanings held by people who participated in the study. The pilot study is essentially a pre-test and a procedure to identify potential problems in the data collection method. Strydom (1998) summarized that the major advantage in conducting a pilot study lies in the testing and identification of the data collection instrument.

The pilot study was conducted with two practitioners from a social service office located in proximity to the P.S.O. As a result of delays anticipated in gaining access to participants via the official channels of the D.O.W., the researcher circumvented the process of obtaining official permission and utilized her informal networks. The practitioners selected for participation in the pilot study were considered 'experienced' both in the fields of generic and specialist social work. Their average years of experience was nineteen and they had been involved in all methods of direct social work (casework, group work and community work) inclusive of project management and design.

The pilot study was a two hour session. The initial twenty minutes were utilized by the practitioners to respond to the research questions. Thereafter, the practitioners and researcher collaborated to refine the research instrument. Data that was extraneous to the purpose of the study was excluded. Care was taken to modify questions specifically to address the objectives of the study and to marginalize ambiguity and the blurring of concepts. The wording and ordering of questions precipitated discussions and copious note-taking by the researcher. The proposed data collection tool was amended and feedback about the data analysis was received.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The objective of the study guided the analysis of the data. In analysing, the closed ended items emphasis was on the quantification of responses, frequency, types of relationship and the perceptions about the impact of the categories of empowerment, poverty and poverty alleviation policy. The open ended questions were analysed in terms of themes, patterns, similarities and differences.

## ISSUES OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Issues of validity and reliability are important considerations and researchers have developed pilot studies and other protocol in administrating questions to ensure consistency. This study's utilization of the pilot study, categorized data analysis and acknowledged limitations ensure that the issues of reliability and validity are addressed.

Validity pertains to whether the study measures what it intends to measure. There are many types of validity : Criterion validity, content validity, construct validity, internal and external validity. For the purpose of this study content, construct validity is relevant. Marlow (1993) indicated that the **content validity** refers to whether the content in the instrument is relevant to the concept one hopes to measure, whilst the latter relates to theoretical conceptualization which underline the study. Care was to be taken to ensure that the questionnaire included items that pertained to poverty, poverty alleviation and aspects of empowerment theory. **Internal validity** pertains to the extent to which the information received will reflect reality.

As the questionnaires were self-administered, there was the danger that social workers may have reflected information as per categorization, however it is hoped that this would be minimized by the inclusion of open-ended items. The **external validity** i.e. the extent to which findings may be generalized to that of other service offices within the D.O.W. A **pilot study** conducted with two social workers from another service office of the D.O.W. increased validity, reliability and refined items so that they became clear, concise and accurately reflected information required.

**Reliability** is concerned with consistency: whether the same method of data collection if used by other researchers will produce the same results. As the questionnaire was the desired method of gathering information, the study will be easy to replicate. Although the outcome cannot be anticipated to be the same the possibility exists that replication of the study within the service offices of the Kwa-Zulu Natal D.O.W. will yield similar results.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations must be borne when intepreting the results-:

- Method of data collection : the questionnaire was selected as the data collection method as the researcher was keen to quantify frequency of responses in respect of conceptualizations, activities and the organizational factors impacting on empowerment practice. Arguably, these may have been comprehensively discussed in interviews, however the constraints imposed by time did not allow for this. Consequently, the shortcomings of the questionnaire were minimized by the inclusion of open ended items which allowed participants expression of own views.

  The closed ended items offered structure and ensured that there was maximum comparability of responses in accordance to literature definitions.

- The context specific nature of the study precludes generalizability to social workers per se and hence is a major limitation of the study. However, the potential of the findings is that eleven social workers are impacting and influencing 9 million potential consumers of social welfare. Hence, the study is meaningful to participants articulation about focussed and broad issues relating to empowerment towards poverty alleviation. However, the study may assist social workers in similar
  contexts, particularly within the D.O.W. service offices.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the study was influenced by the interests of staff to explore perceptions and to understand the dynamic relating to the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation cognisance was taken of the following ethical issues -:

**Informed Consent**

After the identification of the site of the research and the selection of social work practitioners the process of gaining permission to conduct the study at the service office began. Initial discussions with the supervisor and manager at the P.S.O. were followed by written submissions about the title and the feasibility of conducting the study. Although attempts to access the participants via official channels were made, the failure in response by the manager and the regional consultant was noted. Subsequently, the researcher utilized her informal networks to access participants.

It was emphasized that participation was voluntary and that informed consent by individual practitioners was a pre - requisite. The study therefore represents the perceptions of eleven practitioners employed at the P.S.O. in their individual capacity and is not reflective of D.O.W. policy, although the perceptions of the participants may be influenced by such policies and practices endorsed by the D.O.W.

There are no staff regulations within the D.O.W. which prohibits the participation of social workers in research related to practice. Consequently, the staff are not transgressing on confidentiality clauses or the restriction of information. The transparency of practice is emphatically encouraged in policies such as the Batho Pele.

**Confidentiality and anonymity** : Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Further, it was emphasized that items on the questionnaire pertained specifically to information required for the study and that it would not be used in any form for other purposes.

**Dissemination of research findings** : Participants were informed that results would be made available to them and to the D.O.W.

The chapter substantiated the selection of the descriptive research strategy for the study and explained that the questionnaire was the data collection method. It assessed the limitations of the study and explored the ethical issues associated to a study of this nature.

The following chapter presents the results and discusses them in relation to the literature review and the objectives of the study.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a discussion of the information obtained from the questionnaire. In an effort to increase clarity and coherence, the format of the chapter consists of an outline of the questionnaire juxtaposed with the objectives and findings of the study. Additionally, the discussion will include concepts reviewed from the literature in Chapter Two specifically in its focus on the role of social workers and the practice relating to poverty alleviation.

The objectives of the study guided the process of data analysis. The analysis of data was organized into themes and emphasized patterns depicting similarities, differences, frequencies and comparisons. Such an analysis elucidated the perceptions of social workers about empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

The items on the questionnaire were categorized as-:

- Locality and Poverty
- Poverty Eradication
- Empowerment
- Organizational Factors

Provision was also made for participants to include general but related comments regarding empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

## LOCALITY AND POVERTY

There were five items relating to locality and poverty. The objective was to determine the geographic location of communities and consumers who were categorized 'poor' and to identify the definitions that underlined that categorization. Hence, the items pertained to-:

- The type of area: categories of rural, peri - urban and urban were utilized to denote characteristics of areas.
- Trends prevalent in the area.
- Estimates about number of areas considered 'poor' and time spent with the 'poor'.
- Features of communities considered 'poor' were juxtaposed with individuals who were 'poor' in an attempt to ascertain similarities and differences in conceptualizations of 'individual' and 'communal' poverty.

The office serves areas from the inner and outer west areas of the Durban Unicity Council and some from the Ilembe regional council. These areas have been internally demarcated into 74 sub-areas for social work service delivery. The questionnaire utilized the concept of rural, urban and peri - urban to denote characteristics of the areas. Definitions of rural, urban and peri - urban were borrowed from the practice context with the P.S.O. and incorporate the following meanings:

- Rural - those areas where subsistence farming and domestic husbandry prevailed. Noticeable lack of infrastructure
- Peri -Urban - areas in close proximity to the city but with distinctive features of agricultural lifestyle.
- Urban - those areas within the parameters of the city.

Table 9 categorizes the areas of operation as urban, peri-urban and rural. Such categorization is useful in delineating the concentration of poverty within specific areas. This enables comparisons between areas and with other studies undertaken in respect of poverty.

**TABLE 9 : CHARACTERISTICS OF AREAS**

| TYPE OF AREA | NAME OF AREA |
|---|---|
| **URBAN** | Botha's Hill, Cleremont, Desai, Hillcrest, Kloof, Kranskloof Hostels, Klaarwater, Marianhill, Marianridge, New Germany, Nazareth, Pinetown Central, Highlands Hills, Wyebank, Waterfall, Nagina, Motala Farm, Ashley, Savannah Park, Paradise Valley, Westville North, Emmaus, Cowies Hill, Cavershan Glen, Sarnia, Farnigham Ridge, Padfield Park, Hatten Estate, Pinetown Manors, Crestholme, Everton, Forest Hill, St. Hellier, Winston Park, Gillitts, Pinelands. |
| **PERI-URBAN** | Dassenhoek, Intake, Kwandengezi, Kwadabeko, Luganda, Sub-5, St. Wendolins, Sthundu Hills, Tschelimnyama, Thornwood, Impola, Madiba Valley, Oakland, Sunshine Park, Alverstone, Assegai. |
| **RURAL** | Embo, Molweni, Ngcolosi, KwaNyuswa, Qadi, Shongweni Dam, Valley Trust, Zwelibomvu, Nqethu, Tafelkop, Mnamata, Thysymuntu, Mabedle, Isikotshi, Shayamoya, Sikhelekeheni, Umedi, Isidingo, Umlambo, Mpalamahohashi, Mangangeni. |

Table 9 reflects that :

- Thirty-seven areas are urban, This comprises fifty percent of the total area of operation. Three areas were identified poor. This represents four percent of the total area of operation.

- Of the sixteen peri-urban areas serviced by the P.S.O. (22% of total area of operation), eleven areas or 68% of peri-urban areas were regarded poor.

- Twenty-one areas were categorized rural. This is indicative of 28% of the total area of operation, all of which were perceived as poor. This finding concurs with other studies which places poverty in rural areas ahead of other areas.

- Urban areas comprise 50% (37) of the total area of operation. Participants identified three areas as being poor. This represents four percent of the total area of operation.

It is significant to note that although none of the areas serviced by the P.S.O. have been declared a 'poverty pocket', there is a prevalence of poverty in 47% of the total area of operation. Figure 1 depicts the poverty in accordance to the typology presented in table 9. The shaded areas reflects the areas perceived as poor by participants.

**Time utilized in interventions with the poor**

Approximately 80 - 160 hours per month was utilized in interventions with communities and individuals regarded as 'poor. This was consistent with estimates about the number of
consumers of social work regarded as poor on current workloads. On average staff reported that between 50 - 100% of consumers in receipt of social work were 'poor'.

**Trends observed in communities**

In an attempt to determine the character and trends prevalent in the areas of operation, the questionnaire provided fixed option items. The frequency in participant responses is reflected in table 10.

**TABLE 10 : TRENDS OBSERVED IN COMMUNITIES REGARDED AS 'POOR'**

|   | Features | Frequency in response |
|---|----------|----------------------|
| A | Lack of infrastructure | 6 |
| B | Substance abuse | 9 |
| C | Wealth | 0 |
| D | HIV - AIDS | 11 |
| E | Poverty | 11 |
| F | Networks of support | 0 |
| G | Teenage pregnancy | 7 |
| H | Child abuse/neglect | 11 |
| I | Crime | 7 |

(Total respondents 11)

There is an absence of wealth and networks of support within the area lending credence to the assertions by writers that the consumers of social work are most vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged (Gil 1998). Implicit in this observation would be the need for practitioners to engage in community and capacity building programmes to enhance the positions of consumers.

The frequency in response for poverty, HIV - AIDS and child abuse/neglect was high in comparison to other trends. The perceptions of practitioners is mirrored by policies which target vulnerable communities to overcome such circumstances.

The vision of the provincial D.O.W. is 'to foster sustainable development and beat poverty', whilst vulnerable groups (children, elderly and women) are ear-marked for poverty in service delivery. However, in themselves poverty, HIV-AIDS and Child Abuse require sustained, intensive and extensive service delivery trespassing into arenas of Health, Welfare and Education, where inter-sectoral collaboration is a pre-requisite but within practice context, it is noticeable in its absence.

Budlender (2000) noted that the combination of poverty, natural disasters and the dis-empowered status of most rural and peri-urban women in South Africa forms an inclusive environment for HIV transmission. HIV lowers the general health in communities because of its relationship with communicable and poverty related disease such as tuberculosis.

## Identification of 'poor' consumers

This was a closed ended item on the questionnaire and related to item. Staff were presented with potential groups of consumers classified in policy and requested to rank them according to a scale of 1 -8 ('1' indicate 'poorest' level). The objective of this item was two-fold : firstly to ascertain staff perceptions about groups of consumers considered poor and secondly, to compare staff's identification of poor consumers in their areas of operation with the categorization of consumers in policies to alleviate poverty. The findings are reflected in table 11.

## TABLE 11 : LEVELS OF PRIORITY ACCORDED TO GROUPS OF CONSUMERS

| Levels of priority | Category of consumers | | Frequency in response |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Elderly | (Women) | 11 |
| 1 | Adult | (Women) | 11 |
| 3 | Elderly | (Male) | 9 |
| 4 | Children | (Male) | 10 |
| 4 | Children | (Female) | 10 |
| 6 | Youth | (Female) | 7 |
| 7 | Youth | (Male) | 6 |
| 8 | Adult | (Male) | 1 |

The findings revealed that :

- The frequency in response for elderly (females) and adult (females) was 11, placing women at the highest level of poverty which was '1'. The SA-PPA, (1997) identified that women are the 'poorest' group in communities. Additionally the study (SA-PPA, 1997) discussed that African women suffer three-fold discrimination based on race, gender and culture. This study did not consist of items pertaining to race as the African population group comprises the majority of consumers, particularly in areas classified poor in the study.

- It was interesting to note that children (male and female) were considered equally poor and elicited 10 responses. They were ranked at no 4, whilst female youth were regarded as poorer than male youth, having being ranked at 6 and 7 respectively.

- Adult (males) were perceived at level 8. This indicated that as a group they were considered by staff at the P.S.O. as the least poor. The frequency of response was 11. In contrast elderly (males) elicited 9 responses for the level 3.

There appears to be congruency between the perceptions of staff and poverty alleviation policies about the groups of consumers who are identified as poor. Women, children and the elderly are prioritized in policies and practice to alleviate poverty and this was recognised by participants.

## Causes of poverty

In an attempt to analyse the causes of poverty, staff were presented with fixed options about the possible factors which precipitate an/or perpetuate poverty. The frequency in responses are reflected in table 12

**TABLE 12: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

|   | Causes | Frequency in response |
|---|--------|-----------------------|
| A | Structural inequality | 4 |
| B | Disability | 1 |
| C | HIV / AIDS | 7 |
| D | Individual deficits | 1 |
| E | lack of resources to satisfy basic needs | 7 |
| F | Unemployment | 8 |
| G | Social exclusion | 4 |
| H | Capitalism | 3 |
| I | Lack of income | 6 |
| J | Power differentials | 4 |
| k | Lack of opportunities to develop | 6 |
| L | Apartheid | 6 |
| M | being workshy | 1 |
| N | Moral apathy | 0 |
| O | Other (specify) | 0 |

The perceptions of practitioners about the causes of poverty reflected an acknowledgement of the impact of structural deficiencies such as capitalism and apartheid. Moral apathy and being workshy did not feature prominently and mirrors the tendency of modern society to view poverty as an consequence of socio - political and economic challenges rather than a result of individual deficits. Unemployment and lack of resources to satisfy basic needs were closely aligned in practitioner responses about the causes of poverty. However, underlying reasons may include that social workers are aware that it is expedient and socially and politically correct to report that they have such a perspective.

The high level of unemployment in South Africa has been described as a 'crisis of the greatest severity'. ( Bhorat and Leibbrandt, 1996). Unemployment figures have been estimated at 32 % in South Africa. Aside from the limited and short term system of unemployment insurance there is no 'safety net' for the unemployed. Consequently the increased dependency on the income transfers such as old age pensions, foster care grant and child support grants.

## EMPOWERMENT

The objective was to explore staff's understanding about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. Four fixed options depicting possible descriptions of poverty eradication were given.

### Descriptions about empowerment towards poverty alleviation

Participants were requested to describe empowerment towards poverty alleviation. The frequency in participants response is reflected in table 13.

### TABLE 13: DESCRIPTIONS ABOUT EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS POVERTY ALLEVIATION

|   | Description of Poverty Eradication | Frequency in response |
|---|---|---|
| A | Provision of infrastructure | 1 |
| B | Assistance to make people self - reliant | 7 |
| C | Provision of grants | 2 |
| D | Other/ specify ( creating employment opportunities) | 1 |

Specific definitions offered by participants about empowerment towards poverty alleviation included :

- Empowerment towards poverty alleviation is a process in which communities and individuals are encouraged to organize themselves into groups to identify their strengths, market their skills and become economically self sufficient.
- Empowerment towards poverty alleviation involves consultation with various stakeholders in the community to formulate strategies to create micro enterprises that benefit people long term.
- Empowerment towards poverty alleviation enables participants to achieve their potential by teaching them social and economic skills that empower them to meet their needs.
- Empowerment towards poverty alleviation involves the identification of needs, analysis of poverty and the development of programmes to overcome problems and sustain people.

At an conceptual level, it would appear that poverty eradication is associated with 'assistance to make people self - reliant'. In comparing this finding with Moller's study (1996) it was suggested that consumers associated poverty eradication with the provision of infrastructure. Practitioners in the study however accepted traditional definitions of the function of social work in that it seeks to make consumers self - reliant.

Moller (1996) studied the perceptions of development goals of urban and rural dwellers. The findings reflected that the most commonly identified and/or given high priority were goals of infra-structural development, some form of government provision to meet basic needs and education. Further, it was observed that community empowerment and reduction of welfare dependency were given low development priority. In contrast the findings of this study reflected that partitioners were keen to link empowerment based approaches to their micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice. A consistent pattern emerged about a vision of self-reliant, economically independent, skilled consumers evolving from community empowered groups.

**Comparisons between the descriptions about the practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation and the policies about poverty alleviation**

This was an open ended item on the questionnaire. The objective in comparing the descriptions about the practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation and policies about poverty alleviation was to assess consistency in practice and policy implementation. Common themes reflected in practitioner accounts are delineated as follows-:

- Some participants commented that poverty alleviation policies emphasized business skills and micro enterprises. This was compatible with social work empowerment towards poverty alleviation and is supported by writers such as Midgley, (1996) and Raheim, (1996) who pointed out that such interventions create opportunities and promote economic independence. Consequently, consumers become self-sufficient and less reliant upon social security. This serves the dual role purpose of economic and psycho-social enhancement of consumers skills. The process of economic empowerment leads to the psychological and social development of consumers and is manifested in increased self esteem and confidence.

- Other participants alluded to the fact that difficulties in the establishment of micro enterprises is compounded by funding and differing foci. Income generation projects are propagated by developmental policies, however fiscal constraints preclude the funding of all such projects. Further, at differing periods, different projects are funded. For example, during the last quarter, service offices were given directives that groups comprising of consumers living with AIDS were to be funded. Consequently, preparatory work undertaken with youth in terms of the Not For Profit Act, 1997 were waived in favour of establishing groups who satisfied the criteria forwarded by the regional office. Hence, expectations raised with the youth were not fulfilled.

- In respect of income transfers, there appeared to be greater consistency between policy and practice. This was reflected in the responses of participants who declared that the eligibility criteria and benefit schedules guided practice. This clarified the options available to consumers and were consistent over time, unlike project directives which frequently changed and at short notice. The situation was made more difficult by the lapse in communication and lack of co-ordination between projects.

Overall participants concurred that policy created expectations that could not be fulfilled, particularly in view of the shortage in human and material resources. This was exacerbated by the levels of poverty and inequality in communities which became obstacles to consumers participating as volunteers in developmental projects.
The wide differences between practice reality policy context is complex, however it appears that the interaction between practice and policy lies in the shift towards micro enterprises, business skills and income generation projects.

## Activities in respect of poverty alleviation

In providing a list of activities commonly related to a social worker the researcher sought to identify those activities which reflected common patterns in interventions towards poverty alleviation. The frequency in responses are contained in table 14.

## TABLE 14 : ACTIVITIES IN RESPECT OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION

|   | Activity | Frequency in response about empowerment towards poverty alleviation |
|---|---|---|
| A | Assessing eligibility for benefits | 8 |
| B | Counselling for poverty alleviation | 2 |
| C | Referral for Social Security | 6 |
| D | Referral to Developmental Groups | 10 |
| E | Provide technical assistance (cv.s, business plans) | 4 |
| F | Organize individuals into groups for skills development | 6 |
| G | Advocate for benefits from other sources | 4 |
| H | Mediate for sponsorship | 3 |
| I | Lobbying for equality in policies | 2 |
| J | Assess strengths and capacities of consumers | 5 |
| K | Build on capacities of consumers | 7 |
| L | Assess individual deficit | 7 |
| M | Formulate treatment plans | 1 |
| N | Other (specify) | 2 |

The activities listed are drawn from generic social work practice. This included activities associated with 'traditional' practice. Other activities are broader and incorporate 'political' tasks such as 'lobbying for social policy' and 'advocacy for benefits from other sources'.

The findings reflect that the activities of practitioners are most frequently with referral to social security (for income transfers), referral to developmental groups and assessment for eligibility for benefits. These activities whilst related to poverty alleviation do not in themselves constitute 'empowerment towards poverty alleviation'.

Activities that build on capacities are clearly empowerment orientated, however, with the exception of the community development social worker it is not apparent that social workers undertake empowerment towards poverty alleviation. There is clarity in perceptions about what empowerment entails, although the majority do not engage in direct activities to alleviate poverty but are involved in assessment and referral procedures to secure resources on behalf of consumers.

The descriptions are consistent with policy initiatives regarding poverty alleviation and incorporate literature definitions of empowerment which emphasizes self reliance, skills and economic development, micro enterprises and the identification and meeting of needs.

## The process of empowerment towards poverty alleviation

Participants were requested to delineate specific steps and activities in their descriptive accounts about their practice which empowered consumers to alleviate poverty. The following examples are used to illustrate this.

## Example one : block making project

The beginning stage of this project involved preparatory work in the form of reading up of previous projects, assessing feasibility, gaining support from the local chief (Nkosi) and liaising with projects identified in the area of operation. Part of the 'research' included monitoring the 'building activity' in the communities. Obstacles at this stage revolved around the personality issues between rival political parties, the developmental forums and organizational goals to deliver results The respondent was careful to include issues about writing up the constitution and business plans which followed the establishment of the workgroup forum. It would appear that having received permission to operate a project in a specific area, the community dynamics came into play. Consumers chose, (depending on which political party gave consent) to either participate or not.

The second phase involved the skills development segment of the project. Consumers who had been mobilized were assisted to assess training needs and/or skills needed for the project. This involved education of people who were illiterate. Consumers were taught to calculate quantities, estimate and formulate budgets including the submission of reports evaluating their activities. The final stage described in the programme revolved around issues about maintenance and sustainability.

The blocks were also marketed within the community. It is at this stage that the volunteers who worked on the programme began to draw a percentage of the profits as a wage. The time during which the project was estimated to become self sufficient was 12 months. During this period the lack of compensation for the consumers was cited as being problematic. The group comprised of 15 unemployed women who were not able to secure an income. The reasons forwarded were that there was a slump in the building trade, money received for consignments of blocks were utilized in the purchases of materials to manufacture more blocks, hence labour costs were minimal and equivalent to expenses for bread on a daily basis.

## Example two : poultry farming

This group began as a food market co-operative. Members of the group broke away from the garden project as they wanted to earn money. The garden project provided them with food but there was an absence of income. The process began with an overview of the administrative requirements - drawing up of constitutions, business plans, negotiations with the Nkosi about possible venues for the poultry farm, setting up meetings with the Department of agriculture regarding the building of poultry hatches and an assessment of the people's talents with the respect to poultry farming. Of particular concern were the inputs received regarding the rearing of poultry (dietary requirements, space in relation to rearing chicks and protection from other domestic animals). Disease control was also a significant factor.

The second step encompassed the identification of people to manage the aspects of farming and sales of the poultry. Basic bookkeeping was taught by the social worker, while the inputs from agricultural workers assisted in the drawing up of routines. When the poultry was ready for retail, a group of three walked throughout the area advertising by word of mouth that the chicken sales were due to commence (This despite the pamphlets distributed previously about the poultry farm).

The participant who discussed this project was keen to emphasize that there were no distinctive stages in the project and that some consumers were involved in training and development aspects whilst others were marketing the poultry and others were purchasing live chicks for rearing. These examples were utilized to demonstrate that although the stages of empowerment are characterized as such in the literature, stage distinction is not reflective in practice. Consequently the stages of initiation overlap with self movement and proselytization.

Specific steps and activities were described in the accounts about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. There was a tendency for staff to follow the steps of intervention of generic social work practice in the initial stages of the engagement with the consumers. This was followed by an analysis of the talent/ strengths that the group members possessed. In conjunction with this, there was a pattern of recruiting individuals and informal networks to assist in the teaching of particular skills needed by consumers.

Research included needs analysis, a feasibility study with regards to funding projects and registration processes in accordance to the Not for Profit act, 1997. The number of consumers participating in the programme was six. the poultry farm was successful in generating a total income of R1 200 which generated R200 per individual.

Adams, (1996) provided a comprehensive analysis of the process of empowerment in his discussion of the stages of empowerment and which was summarized in Chapter Two.

The processes of empowerment as described by practitioners generally conform to the stages eludicated by Adams. However, these perceptions of practitioners may not necessarily depict empowerment towards poverty alleviation in that of tangible material benefits being derived by consumers but constitute psychological empowerment.

## Contribution of social workers towards poverty alleviation

The contribution of social workers towards poverty eradication was viewed as:

- promoting the participation of groups in programmes of self help
- empowering individuals, groups and communities to become self sufficient.

The participants did not perceive the 'lobbying for social policy' as being significant in poverty eradication nor in advocating for the provision of infrastructure. This is in contrast to the roles proposed by Gray (1998) and Mazibuko (1996) who asserted that such contributions by social workers were essential in the transformation towards developmental social welfare. The contribution of social workers towards empowerment of consumers revolved from the activities of referral to social security and social development groups.

## PERCEPTIONS ABOUT BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The final objective of the study was to assess the perceptions of practitioners about the bureaucratic organizational structure in relation to empowerment orientated practice. Item one in this category pertained to bureaucracy and social work. The frequency in responses is reflected in table 15.

**TABLE 15 : PERCEPTIONS ABOUT BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

| | Interaction with Social work | Frequency in Response |
|---|---|---|
| A | Conflicts with values of social work | 8 |
| B | Categorize consumers as units of analysis | 4 |
| C | Prevents accountability to communities | 3 |
| D | Supports empowerment of consumers | 2 |
| E | Enhances staff empowerment of consumers | 1 |
| F | Facilitates participation of stakeholders | 1 |
| G | Other / specify | 0 |

The rate of response for the option that bureaucratic organizational structure conflicts with the values of social work was 8. In explanations about the selection of this option, participants illustrated that the value dimensions of social work (respect for persons, justice and self determination) contrasted with organizational goals which revered productivity, efficiency and proficiency scales. Hence, the conflictual nature of the interaction between social work and the organizational bureaucracy of the D.O.W.

The categorization of consumers as units of analysis elicited 4 responses. It was perceived that this categorization facilitated the administrative purposes of the organization - in that consumers were 'tagged' and counted for in statistics. This was therefore aligned to organizational bureaucracy rather than social work which places primacy on individualization as a value where the uniqueness of people is emphasized.

Three responses were tabulated for the option that the bureaucratic organizational structure prevents accountability to communities. The descriptions to elaborate this position revealed that the hierarchal nature of communication created situations where senior management officials who made decisions about resource allocation to communities were provided with 'barriers' from being held accountable for their decisions. This resulted in field-workers as local service providers bearing the brunt of criticisms about decisions and processes for which they lacked knowledge.

Two responses indicated that perhaps the bureaucracy does support the empowerment of consumers. In substantiating for the choice of this item the participants forwarded legislation and policies within the D.O.W. which postulated empowerment but did not provide the necessary resources to implement such policies.

The option that the bureaucratic organisation structure enhanced staff empowerment and facilitated participation of stakeholders elicited one response each. In explaining that it enhances staff empowerment of consumers the focus was on the accessibility to literature and policy documents in comparison to the era pre - 1994, while facilitation of stakeholder participation alluded to the dissemination of documentation to consumers upon requested.

**Organizational factors which support and/or inhibit empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation**

All the participants agreed that peer support enhanced the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation. Peer support was described as assurance, professional guidance and empathy about practice situations which converged to support the empowerment of interventions towards poverty alleviation.

By contrast, the lack of support from management was viewed as anti-development and a factor which inhibited empowerment processes. The emphasis placed by management on 'fast tracking', targeting, performance evaluations and networking about project ownership served to detract from empowerment goals.

Staff development could play an important role in supporting the empowerment of consumers, however study participants dismissed the current frequency and quality of staff development and training as 'irrelevant' and 'dismal'. Lack of resources was also identified as inhibiting the empowerment of consumers towards poverty alleviation and was related to the criticisms about the D.O.W.'s penchant for creating magnanimous policies which raised expectations but failed in the delivery of services.

**Benefits of engaging in empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

The primary benefit of engaging in activities to empower consumers towards poverty alleviation was that 'consumers will become self reliant'. Other commonly stated benefits were:

- personal development and self empowerment
- social and economic enhancement
- improved living conditions
- the provision of effective services to empowered and economically independent communities.

This chapter presented an analysis and discussion of the results of the study in relation to its objectives, the theory of empowerment and the practice of poverty alleviation.

The following chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. it also offers recommendations and conclusions of the study.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the study. A review of the study's purpose and rationale will be followed by an overview of its main findings. This will be related to the theoretical framework. The chapter concludes with a section on the recommendations of the study.

Poverty and inequality in South Africa affects approximately 50% of the population. Rural communities are hardest hit by the lack of infrastructure, lack of opportunities and access to services to satisfy basic needs. Social economic processes past and present ( apartheid, colonialism, capitalism and gear). interact to reinforce the disparities in poverty and inequality. Unemployment, the prevalence of HIV-AIDS with its concommitant infant and adult morbidity rate coupled with shortages of resources exacerbates poverty and increases the vulnerability of people at risk of becoming poor.

Notwithstanding the extent of poverty, the government has introduced mechanisms by way of policies and legislation to address issues of redress, equality and redistribution of resources. This is being implemented in concert with programmatic interventions by sectors of government and civil society.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to analyse the perceptions of social workers about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. The stated policy commitments by the D.O.W. towards poverty alleviation is contained in the White Paper on Social Welfare, (1997) and in the Financing Policy for Developmental Welfare, (1999). Further the provincial plans adopted since 1994 by the D.O.W. emphasized the significance of adopting poverty alleviation strategies to achieve sustainable social development. Thus, social workers are legislated to promote poverty eradication projects in communities.

However, there is controversy about the nature and role of social work in the empowerment of consumers to alleviate poverty. Juxtaposed with this issue is the confusion which exists about the notion of empowerment and its association with concepts such as participation, development, community and power. In South Africa there is a dearth of research relating to the perceptions of social workers about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. Consequently, the lack of previous experience of social workers with the D.O.W. in the poverty alleviation is fuelling criticisms that practitioners do not understand empowerment approaches to eradicate poverty.

It is therefore considered essential to practise of developmental social work that concepts relating to empowerment and poverty alleviation are examined within the context of the D.O.W. It was envisaged that such an analysis would reveal the definitions which underpinned current social work practice and generate further research agendas to refine and develop in partnership with consumers who are economically challenged.

The overriding assumption of the study was that although there are defined policy options about poverty alleviation, there is confusion about the concept of empowerment. Further, empowerment is marginalized in the face of resource constraints and/or other challenges such as bureaucracy and volume of workloads. Accordingly, the findings are crucial to understanding staff's perceptions about empowerment towards poverty alleviation and to refine and enhance social work services in the PSO.

The study was guided by ecosystems and developmental theory. Ecosystems theory guided the examination of staff and the D.O.W. as they interacted with each other and the wider socio-political and economic contexts. The value shifts needed in maintaining the new political dispensation and the democraticisation of institutions is the responsibility of each South African. Ecosystems theory thus assisted in locating practitioners as citizens and employees in the multiplicity of systems. There is no consistent theory of development. At best, development theory is described as a labyrinth of fragmented theories. However, its utility in the study was in its location of empowerment as a process to achieve sustainable development and thus to attain democracy for every South African.

An exploratory-descriptive design guided the data collection and analysis. This approach facilitated the construction of the questionnaire. Whilst the nature of the questionnaire is not the preferred method of data collection in qualitative studies, the assumption that participants were familiar with the concept of empowerment but needed a disciplined opportunity to explore perceptions, guided the selection of the questionnaire as the data collection tool.

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study guided the analysis of the study. The main findings of the study are reflected in table 16.

## TABLE 16 : OVERVIEW OF MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

| Objectives | Findings |
|---|---|
| Locality and Poverty | Poverty concentrated in urban areas (2.2%), peri-urban areas (22.8%) and 75% in rural areas |
| Definition of poverty | Lack of infra structure<br>Lack of resources |
| Time spent with Poor Consumers | 80 - 160 hours per month |
| Trends observed in Communities | . HIV - AIDS, Poverty and Child Abuse incidence high in areas    of operation.<br>. Noticeable absence of networks of Support and Wealth. |
| Causes of Poverty | . Structural defects (apartheid, capitalism)<br>. Unemployment |
| Identification of Poor Consumers | Women (elderly, adult and youth) considered poorer than male counterparts. |
| Social Work Empowerment and Poverty alleviation:<br><br>Descriptions<br><br><br><br><br>Activities | <br><br>. Self-reliance and self sufficiency<br>. Economic independence<br>. Psychological and social well being<br><br><br>. Referral to developmental groups<br>. Referral to social security<br>. Mediation and advocacy for resources from other avenues |
| Consistency between Policy and Practice | . Skills development<br>. Micro economic initiatives |
| Contribution of social Workers | . Promotion of participatory self-help groups<br>. Empowerment to become self sufficient encompassing psycho-social and economic elements of the helping process. |
| Perceptions of Interaction between the Organization and Social Work | Conflicts with values of social work |
| Factors which support Empowerment | . Peer support<br>. Legislation |
| Factors which inhibit Empowerment | . Resource shortages<br>. Management is anti-development<br>. Poor staff development and training |

## Locality and poverty

Rural, peri-urban and urban areas were perceived as poor. Differences were estimated in respect of the concentration of poverty.

## Definitions of and causes of poverty

Commonalities in the definitions of a 'poor community' was the lack of infrastructure development whilst a 'poor' individual was viewed to be one who lacked resources to satisfy basic needs. Although literature definitions of poverty encompass psycho-social and political definitions there was a tendency for practitioners to disregard individual deficits as a probable cause. Only one response included individual deficits whilst the item on being workshy as a cause was excluded by all participants. This is indicative of the awareness of practitioners of the specific structural defects in creating and maintaining poverty in South Africa. This was evidenced in the frequency of responses for structural causes.

## Time

Between 80-160 hours per month were utilized in interventions with 'poor' consumers. This supports the literature which asserted that the majority of the consumers of social work are poor.

## Trends

Significant trends which emerged in the communities of the area of operation were the incidence of HIV-AIDS, Poverty and Child Abuse. The distinctive lack of networks of support and wealth of consumer communities were commented upon. The impact of adult morbidity on social work service as a consequence of the AIDS pandemic were described as an increase in the alternate placements of children. It was observed that increasingly relatives are responsible for the nurturing and rearing of children who are orphaned as a result of illnesses associated with HIV-AIDS.

## Identification of poor consumers

Worldwide, poverty impacts on the rights of women and children. Their needs are compromised and sustainable development remains a buzz word at conferences to discuss the plight of women and children. Consistent with quantitative research undertaken in the country and elsewhere the participants identified women as the group most affected by poverty. This was in contrast to men and male youth.

**The process of empowerment**

Definitions of empowerment and the description of staff about its steps, processes and activities was comparable with the literature suggestions that empowerment is a process in terms of initiation, social movement and proselytising stages. This resembles the engagement, relationship building and skills development of social work.

**Descriptions about empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

There was an acknowledgment of self reliance, self sufficiency and economic independence being elements of empowerment. Psychological and social well-being was also emphasized. Participants did associate infrastructure development with empowerment but were constrained in expressions of its significance to empowerment perse.

Overall the findings of the study indicated that staff share common perceptions about the concept of empowerment towards poverty alleviation. There was emphasis on economic self sufficiency the ability of consumers to satisfy basic needs and the development of skills to increase opportunities and access to improve standards of living.

**Activities about empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

A consistent finding was the congruency between poverty alleviation policy and social workers' perceptions about practice towards alleviating such poverty. Priority was given to the development of skills for economic empowerment via mediation processes to secure other resources, however invariably the contextual limitations deflected such intentions. Hence, the frequency of responses indicated referrals to developmental groups and/or social security.

**Consistency in policy and practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

There was a relationship between practice and policy - fostered by the impact of the financing policy for developmental welfare (1999) and the White Paper on Social welfare, (1997). Practitioners perceived that the financing criteria were punitive in respect of the funding targeted projects only (identified by regional office) rather than by communities and/or staff. Subsequently, practice attempted to mirror policy initiatives, hence attained forms of consistency.

**Contributions of social workers towards poverty alleviation**

Findings reflected that practitioners identified their contributions towards poverty alleviation in relation to the promotion of participatory self help and the psycho-social and economic elements of empowerment.

Advocacy for provision of infrastructure and lobbying for policies were forwarded by Mazibuko, (1996) and Gray, (1998), however these do not appear to have entered the practice arena of the P.S.O. Being familiar with the community and organizational context the researcher proposes that this is as a result of the conflictual socio-political dynamics that prevail in the areas of operation. It would be safer to exclude such political 'roles'.

Further, the D.O.W. is punitive in the face of criticism and employees are restricted expression. Additionally, there are no mechanisms to channel the communication of staff. More frequently, staff are diverted from progressive discussions in the face of punitive reappraisals by the D.O.W.

**Organizational bureaucracy and empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

Peer support was identified as the factor which critically affected the practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation. Legislation was cited second to peer support.

**Factors which inhibit the practice of empowerment towards poverty alleviation**

The bureaucratic organizational context with in which social work is located was found to be deficient in the support of an empowerment orientated practice. Further, the inaccessibility of departmental structures to the fieldworker and communities exacerbated delays in the response to proposals. Criteria were not clearly stipulated and additionally the short deadlines within which the proposals had to be submitted pressurized project co-ordinators, unfamiliar with bureaucracy and the completion of complex proposal formats. This resulted in practitioners themselves unfamiliar with such forms completing them at short notice and without consultation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study resulted in recommendations derived from the general segment of the questionnaire where staff were requested to include their comments about empowerment towards poverty alleviation. The recommendations were thematically arranged and are summarized below:

**Staff development training** : Staff articulated the need for developing skills in empowerment towards poverty alleviation across a range of micro enterprises and food market operatives. The need for specialized training in technology as a means to record, monitor and gain access to information across regions was emphasized.

**Intersectoral collaboration** : It was noted that staff of the different departments, inclusive of non-governmental organizations are involved in poverty alleviation. A need was expressed for collaboration at management levels to be reinforced at practitioner level without the blockages of protocol. A suggestion was for the convening of task centred collaboration.

**Funding resources** : Staff explored alternative sources of funding for community projects. Innovative suggestions in the form of tax incentives for business were forwarded. The employment of auxiliary workers was regarded as a method of overcoming practitioner shortages. Further, there were compelling arguments for the compensation and/or subsidisation of volunteers who assist in the 'maintenance' of projects which projects budgets overlooked.

**Holistic monitoring and empowerment evaluations** : It was articulated that practitioners skills were not recognized, neither were there incentives to encourage the utilization of empowerment orientated practice. Segments of projects were monitored with essential processes being sidelined eg. political by-play within a community which affected the capacity building focus of the project, the inability of practitioners to pursue project objectives in the face of such interaction and the punitive nature of monitoring and evaluation of practitioners rather than projects. Hence, the recommendation was for clear guidelines about evaluative processes.

**Research** : It was proposed that research be undertaken at various levels to gauge practitioners' responses about projects which empower consumers towards poverty alleviation in an effort to replicate such project and increase the self-reliance of communities. There was also an expressed need for the research of projects from the perspectives of consumers to assess the impact of projects on their socio-economic status.

**Practice :** The identification of organizational factors which inhabit the empowerment of consumers needs to be addressed. Policy initiatives advocate participatory decision-making, however the absence of same in practice is impeding the empowerment of consumers. There is a need therefore for practitioner/management cohesiveness if empowerment goals are to be attained.

Overall, the findings of the study revealed that practitioners concurred about the relevance of empowerment oriented programmes to development. However, they perceived that the absence of critical elements impact negatively on the adoption of such a practice. These are summarized as follows :-

- Staff development identified as being crucial to adopting and maintaining an empowerment approach. There is a need for the D.O.W. to .provide training and in-service and to access entrepreneurial support.

- Rewards to personnel by adopting incentive schemes thus promoting the self empowerment of employees and to encourage the self care of employees by creating opportunities which allow practitioners to deal with the stressors of the profession.

- The policies advocate collaborative approaches however, the practice context within the D.O.W. does not foster the team approach between managers and field-workers or between field-workers and consumers.

- The competiveness between development personnel to service resources affects the environmental context. Further, the scarcity of resources results in groups within the community competing for same resources and mirrors the competition between organizations going against one another to secure limited funds

- The intra-personal characteristics of consumers and practitioners is also significant in the success/failure of adopting and maintaining an empowerment orientation to practice. At times the mental and physical difficulties associated with chronic problems and experienced by consumers, may not be conclusive to such a practice. As Guitierrez (1990) noted that there are levels of empowerment thus the practitioner needs to be guided by merits of the situation and the strengths of consumers which is 'relative'.

Nevertheless, this study supported the assertion that social workers have an understanding of empowerment and are involved in its practice in the context of their work related tasks. The perceptions of practitioners concurred that policy initiatives towards poverty alleviation must be followed by human and material investments, combined with effective community building and organization.

## CONCLUSION

The need to deliver tangible services to consumers demands that the D.O.W. aligns its service delivery to its progressive policy. Poverty is not just a social welfare issue. It has economic and political implications - as such it is a broad based development issue which requires integrated and defined strategies across the sectors of government, business and civil society. The building of capacity within communities entails micro and macro input incorporating models of consensus and collaboration, advocacy and conflict. Welfare programmes play a fundamental role in poverty alleviation, in their provision of a 'safety net', however for interventions to be sustainable, the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged must be provided with basic social, health and educational services which recognize their decision-making with respect to the fulfilling of their needs. An overt strengthening of efforts to redistribute assets and opportunities resulting in broadened livelihood strategies which improve capabilities of people to cope in times of vulnerability is essential, so that individually and collectively communities are assisted to eradicate poverty.

There is the unwavering belief that levels of empowerment will contribute to the eradication of poverty and attainment of goals for individuals, groups, communities and ultimately the nations who compromise the global villages of the twenty-first century.

# REFERENCES

Adams, R. (1996). **Social Work and Empowerment.** Britain : MacMillan Ltd.

African National Congress. (1994). **The Reconstruction and Development Programme : A policy framework.** Johannesburg : Umanyano Publications.

Alcock, P. (1997). (2ed.). **Understanding Poverty.** London : Macmillan

Ardington, E. and Lund, F. (1995). Pensions and development: Social Security as complementary to programmes of reconstruction and development. **Development Southern Africa,** 12(4), 557-577.

Baberton, C.; Blake, M. and Kotze, H. (1998). **Creating Action Space: The Challenges of Poverty and Democracy in South Africa.** Cape Town: Idisa.

Bhorat, H. and Leibrandht, M. (1996). Understanding Unemployment : The relationship between the employed and the jobless in Baskin J. (ed) **Against the current labour and economic policy in South Africa.** Johannesburg : Raven Press.

Billis, D. (1984). **Welfare Bureaucracies : Their design and change in response to social problems.** Great Britain : Heienemann.

Breton, M. (1994). On the Meaning of Empowerment Orientated Social Work Practice. **Social Work with Groups.** 17 (3) : 23-25.

Brown, C. (1988). Social Work Education as Empowerment in Chamberlain, E. (ed.). **Change and Continuity in Australian Social Work.** Melbourne : Longman Cheshire.

Budlender, D. (2000) Human Development, in May, J. (ed.). **Poverty and Inequality in South Africa : Meeting the challenge.** Cape Town : David Philip Publishers

Camfens, H. (1993). Rejoinder : Communatarianism : An ignored ideology, **Social Development Issues,** 15(1) : 14-16.

Chimera - Dan, G. (1996). **Community involvement in Urban Health Projects** Johannesburg : International Thompson Publishing Company.

Choplin, R.K. (1995). Social Policy Development : **The Strengths Perspective** Social

Clark, C.L. and Asquith, S. (1985). **Social Work and Social Philosophy : A Guide to Practice.** London : Routledge and Kegen Paul.

Coates, J. (1991). Putting Knowledge for Practice into Perspective, **Canadian Social Work Review.** 8(1) : 81-96.

Cooke, B. (Ed). (2001). **Participation: The New Tyranny.** London: Zed Publishers.

Cronje, J.I. (1996). **The Role of Social Work Management in the Empowerment of Communities and Clients.** Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk 32(1) 37-44

Daily News : 14 May 1998, Durban.

Department of Social Welfare and Population Development (2000). **Population Poverty Policy and Poverty Report.** Pretoria : Government Printer.

Elliot, D. (1993). Social Work and Social Development : Towards an integrative model for Social Work Practice. **International social work** 36 (1). 21 - 36.

Elsmore, P. (2001). **Organizational Culture : Organizational Change?** Aldershot, Hants : Gower.

Estes , R.J. (1993). Toward Sustainable Development: from Theory to Praxis **Social Development Issues.** 15 No 3, 1 - 29.

Evans, E. N. (1992). Liberation theology, empowerment theory and social work practice with the oppressed.

Freiere, P. (1973). **Education for Critical Consciousness.** New York : Seabury Press.

Fritzgerald, P.; Mclennan, A. ; and Munslow, B. (1997) (eds). (2nd) **Managing Sustainable Development.** Cape Town. Oxford University Press.

Germain, C.B. (1991). **Human Behaviour in the social environment : An Ecological view.** New York : Columbia University Press.

Ghai, D. (ed.) Social Development and Public Policy :**Some Lessons from Successful Experiences.** New York : St. Martin's Press, Inc.

Gil, D. G. (1998). **Confronting Injustice and Oppression : Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers.** New York : Colombia University Press.

Ginsbury, N. (1996). **Divisions of Welfare** : A Critical Introduction to Comparative Social Policy. London : Sage Publication.

Government of South Africa, (1996). **Welfare Update.** Pretoria : Government Printer.

Government of South Africa, (1998). Census in Brief : **The People of South Africa, Population Census 1996.** Pretoria : Government Printer.

Government of South Africa, (1998). **Budget Review.** Pretoria : Government Printer.

Gray , M. (1993). **The Relationship between Social Work Ethics and Politics.** Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Durban : University of Natal.

Gray, M. (1996). The role of social workers in developmental social welfare : Is there a place for them? **Social Work practice.** (2) 8 - 13.

Gray, M. (1998). The R.D.P. Welfare and Social Development in South Africa. Paper presented at the **Joint World Congress of the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social work, Jerusalem.**

Gray, M. (1998). Welfare Policy for Reconstruction and Development in South Africa. **International Social work.** 41: 23-27.

Grief, G.L. and Lynch, L. (1983). The ecosystems perspective, in Meyer, C. (ed.). **Clinical Social Work in the Ecosystems Perspectives.** New York : Colombia University Press.

Guijt, I. and Shah, M.K. (1998). **The Myth of Community Gender Issues in Participatory Development.** London : Intermediate Technology Publication.

Guitierrez L (1990) Working with Women of Colour: An Empowerment Perspective. **Social Work.** 35(2) : 149-153.

Guitierrez L.M. and Ortega, R.(1991). Developing Methods to Empower Latinos: The importance of Groups. **Social Work with groups.** 14 (2) : 23-40.

Guitierrez L.M.; Maye G.L. and De Lois, K. (1995). The organizational context of Empowerment. Implications for Social Work Administration. **Social work.** 40(2).

Handy, C (1986) (2$^{nd}$) **Understanding Organizations,** London  Penguin.

Hofmeyer, L. (1996) Group work with the Disadvantaged.  **Social Work/ Maatskaplike Werk.** 32(14) 360-372.

Hunter, A.  (1975). The Loss of Community : An empirical test through replication. **American Sociology Review.** 40(5) : 537-552.

Hvinden, B. (1994). **Divided Against Itself : A Study of Integration  in  Welfare bureaucracies.** Scandinavia University Press.

Ife, J. (1997). **Rethinking Social Work.** Australia : Longman.

International Federation of Social Work, (2000).

Jones, H. (1990).  **Social Welfare in the Third World Development.** Hong Kong : Macmillan.

Jazairy, I. Alamgir, M. and Panuccio, T. (1992).  **The State of the World Rural Poverty : An Inquiry into its Causes and Consequences.** Great Britain :  International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Kwa-Zulu Natal Provincial Government, (1999). **Batho Pele.** Durban : Atlas Printers.

Kwa-Zulu Natal Provincial Government, (2000-2001) **Provincial Strategic Plan.**

Lombard, A (1996). Developmental Social welfare in South Africa, **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk vol.32 (2).**

Lemma, A. and Pentti, M. (1991). **Africa Beyond Famine.** London : Tycooly Publishing.

Lund, F.  (1996). **The Lund Committee Report on Child and Family Support.** Pretoria : Government Printer

Lund, F.; Ardington, S. and Harber, M. (1996). Welfare, in  Budlender, D. (ed.). **The Women's Budget.** Cape Town : IDASA.

Lundblad, K.S. (1995). Jane Addams and Social Reform : A role model for the 1990s.

Marlow (1993) **Methods for Generalist Social Work.** Pacific Grove, Brooks/ Cole Publishers

May, J. (1998). **Experience and Perceptions of Poverty in South Africa**, Final Report, Durban : Praxis Publishing.

May, J. (2000). **Poverty and Inequality in South Africa :** Meeting the Challenge. Cape Town : David Philips Publishers.

May, J and Rogerson, C. (2000) The Spatial Context in May, J. (ed.) **Poverty and Inequality in South Africa : Meeting the Challenge.** Cape Town : David Phillips Publishers.

Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research**, Harvard Educational Review,** (62) 279-300

Mazibuko, F.N.M. (1996). Social Workers and Social Policy : Related functions and skill in practice, **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk** 32 (2).

Midgley, J. (1995). **Social Development**, London : Sage Publication

Midgley, J. (1996). Involving Social Work in Economic Development. **International Social Work.** 39 : 13-25

Minkler, M. (1999). (ed.). **Community Organizing and community building for Health.** London : Rutgers University Press.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman A.M. (1994) **Qualitative Data Analysis**: An Expanded Source Book (2$^{nd}$ ed.). London : Sage Publication.

Moller, V. (1996). **Perceptions of Development in Kwa-Zulu Natal : A Subjective Indicator Study.** Durban : Indicator Press, University of Natal.

Mosse, D. (1994). 'Authority, Gender and Knowledge. Theorictical Reflection on the Practice of Participatory rural Appraisal,' **Development and Change**. vol, 25 pp 497-526.

Nelson, N. and Wright, S. (1995). Participatory Research and Participant Observation : Two compatible Approaches, in Nelson, N. and Wright, S. (ed.). **Power and Participatory Development.**

Oakley, P. and Glegg, I. (1999).**Social Development in Africa.** 14(1) : 31-52.

**Oxford English Dictionary and Usage guide to the English Language**, (1995), New York Oxford University Press,

Patel, I. (1996). Changing Apartheid's Bureaucracy : The transformation of the Public Service in Baskin (J) (ed) **Against the current labour and economic policy in South Africa.** Johannesburg : Raven Press

Parsons, R.J. (1991). Empowerment : Purpose and Practice Principle in Social Work. **Social Work with groups** 14(2) : 7-21.

Payne, M. (1995). **What is Professional Social Work ?** Birmingham: Venture Press

Pincus, A. and Minahan, A. (1973) **Social Work Practice, Model and Method.** Illinois : F.E. Publishers.

Potgieter, M.C. (1998). **The Social Work Process**, South Africa : Prentice Hall.

Rappaport, J. (1987) Terms of Empowerment- Exemplars of Prevention : Toward a Theory for Community Psychology **American Journal of Community Psychology.** 15(2) : 121-145.

Rappaport, J. ; Swift, C. and Hess, R. (eds.). Studies in Empowerment : **Steps towards Understanding and Action.** New York : The Haworth Press, Inc.

Raheim, S. (1996). Micro-enterprise as an approach for promoting economic development in social work : Lessons from the Self Employment Investment Demonstration. **International Social Work.** 39 : 69-82.

Robinson and Sandan (1998) **Where Poverty Hits Hardest : Children and the Budget in South Africa,** Idasa, Cape Town

Ross and Bilson (1989) **Social Work Management and Practice: System Principles,** Great Britain, Billing and Sons Ltd.

Rubin, A. and Babbie, E. (1997). **Research Methods for Social Work.** Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Ruize - Tagle, J. (1999). Balancing Targeted and Universal Social Policies : The Children Experience, in Ghia, D. (ed.) **Social Development and Public Policy: Some Lessons from Successful Experiences.** New York : St. Martin's Press, Inc.

Ruize-Tagle, J. (1999). **Balancing targeted and Universal Social Policies** : The economic development in social work : Lessons from ten Self Employment Investment Demonstration. International Social Work, 39 : 69-82

SA-PPA (1997). **The Experience and Perceptions of Poverty :** The South African Particpatory Poverty Assessment. Data Research Africa Report, Durban.

Seedat, M. (ed.). Duncan, N. and Lazarus, S. (cons. ed.). ( (2001). **Community Psychology : Theory, Method and Practice,** Cape Town, Oxford University Press.

Sen, A.K. (1984) **Resources, Values and Development.** Oxford: Blackwell.

Sewpaul, V. (1997). The R.D.P. Implications for Social Work Practice and Social Welfare

Solomon, B. (1976) **Black Empowerment** New York: Columbia University Press.

State Presidents Address : Opening of Parliamentary Session 4/02/2000

Strydom, H. (1998). The Pilot Study in De Vos, A.S. (ed). **Research at Grassroots : A Primer for the Caring Profession.** P : J.L. van Schaik Publishers.

Sturgeon, S. (2000) Empowerment: Observations on Mental Health in Sub-Saharan Africa **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk,** 36(1)

Townsend, P. (2000). Post 1945 Poverty Research and Things to Come in Bradshaw, J. and Sainsbury, R. (eds.) **Researching Poverty : Studies in cash and Care.** Great Britain : Longman.

United Nations Development Programme. (1992). **Human Development Report.** New York : Oxford University Press

Veeran, D.L. and Simpson, B. (1996). Promoting Competence in Community Work Practice : **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk** 32(3) : 226 - 241

Wallis, M.. (1997). The problem of Bureaucratic Administration in Fitzgerald, P.; Mclennan, A. and Munslow, B. (eds). (2ed.). **Managing Sustainable Development.** Cape Town : Oxford University Press.

Whiteside, R. (1999). HIV vaccine development : Would more (public) money bring quick results? **AIDS Analysis Africa.** 10(1) : 11-12.

**White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme** (1994) government Gazette, 353 (16085), 23 November 1994, Notice 1954 of 1994.

**White Paper for Social Welfare** (1997) Government Gazette, 368 (18166) 8 August

1997, 1108 of 1997.

**White Paper on Financing Policy** (1999)

World bank (1997) **World development Report**, World bank, Washington D.C.

Dear Colleague

This questionnaire is designed to elicit **your perceptions about the impact of empowerment on poverty alleviation.** The results and report will be available for staff development/training. Please use X to denote answers and **1** to reflect majority / the highest priority. All data must be drawn from **your current workload.** Your time, effort and candid comments in the completion of all questions is appreciated.

## LOCALITY AND POVERTY

1.      Community

1.1     The areas in which I render social work services are > 50%

| A | RURAL | B | PERI-URBAN | C | URBAN | D | OTHER (Specify) |
|---|-------|---|------------|---|-------|---|-----------------|

1.2     The communities are characterized by (more than one item may be selected)

| A | Lack of Infrastructure | B | Substance Abuse | C | Wealth |
|---|------------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------|
| D | HIV- AIDS | E | Poverty | F | Networks of Support |
| G | Teenage Pregnancy | H | Child Abuse/Neglect | I | Crime |

1.3     There are _____ communities in my geographic area which are poor.

1.4     I consider a community "poor" when

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.5     The number of consumers on my workload from "poor" communities in my geographic area is approximately _____.

## 2. INDIVIDUALS

2.1 The percentage of consumers on who my workload who are poor is

| A | 25 | B | 50 | C | 75 | D | 100 |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|-----|

2.2 Complete the table by ranking the "poor consumers:

|  | ADULTS | CHILDREN | ELDERLY | YOUTH |
|--------|--------|----------|---------|-------|
| MALE |  |  |  |  |
| FEMALE |  |  |  |  |

2.3 Identify groups who are prioritized in policies to eradicate poverty.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.4 What criteria do you use to categorize consumers on your workload as poor.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.5 An estimate of my professional time (as per Niswel) spent with poor consumers is

_____ hours.

2.6 The presenting problems of consumers I encounter in my practice are predominantly (select 1 only).

| A | lack of income | B | hunger | C | homelessness | D | H.I.V. Aids | E | Other (specify) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## 3. **POVERTY**

3.1 Poverty occurs as a result of (more than one item may be selected)

| A | Structural inequality | B | Disability | C | HIV/AIDS | D | Individual deficits |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | Lack of resources to satisfy basic needs | F | Unemploy-ment | G | Social exclusion | H | Capitalism |
| I | Lack of income | J | Power differentials | K | Lack of Opportunities to develop | L | Apartheid |
| M | Being workshy | N | Moral apathy | O | Other (specify) | | |

3.2 Poverty eradication is the:

| A | Provision of infra-structure | B | Assistance to make people self reliant |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Provision of grants | D | Other/Specify |

3.3 In your opinion which option best describes the contribution made by social workers towards poverty alleviation.

| A | Lobbying for equality in social policies | B | Promoting the participation of community groups in programmes of self help |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Empowering individuals, groups and communities to become self sufficient | D | Advocating for the provision of infra-structure and/or state benefits |
| E | Other/Specify | | |

3.4     In your experience, which of the following reflect your activities in respect of poverty alleviation (more than 1 item may be selected)

| A | Assessing eligibility for benefits | B | Counselling for poverty alleviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Referral to Social Security | D | Referral to Developmental Groups |
| E | Provide technical assistance (C.V.'s, business plans) | F | Organize individuals into groups for skills development |
| G | Advocate for benefits from other sources | H | Mediate for sponsorships |
| I | Lobbying for equity in policies | J | Assess strengths and capacities consumers |
| K | Build on capacities of consumers | L | Assess individual deficit |
| M | Formulate treatment plans | N | Other/Specify |

4.      Empowerment is a central theme in social work, in poverty alleviation policies and the current development paradigm.

4.1     How would you describe empowerment towards poverty alleviation in your practice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4.2     How does the description (4.1) compare with policies which advocate for poverty eradication.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.3    Which of the following factors support you in your current practice to empower consumers to alleviate poverty? (More than 1 item may be selected?

| A | Legislation | B | Unions |
| C | Management is proactive | D | Peer support |
| E | Staff development and training | F | Other/Specify |

5.4    Discuss how the items selected in 5.3 support you in your practice.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.5    List factors that inhibit you in your practice to empower consumers to alleviate poverty.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.6    Discuss how these factors inhibit you to empower consumers to alleviate poverty.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.7    What are the challenges in adopting an empowerment orientated practice towards poverty alleviation within your service office.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.8    Describe the nature of interaction between your service office as a local service provider in relation to the regional and national departments in respect of empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6.    **GENERAL**

Please include any other comments on empowerment towards poverty alleviation.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____