

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**EXPLORING AN ALTERNATIVE PARTNERSHIP
FOR MANAGING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOUR
AMONG LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN CHATSWORTH**

By

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
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CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

2009-10-20

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

Due to the strategic importance of this research, it would be appreciated if the contents remain confidential and not be circulated for a period of five years.

Sincerely

Miss N.B. Hoosen

DECLARATION

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Naseem Banu Hoosen
20 October 2009

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my late Father,
Sister-in-law and Nephews

Ahmed Hoosen
Ferna Hoosen
Fazludeen Ahmed Hoosen
Abu Hurairah Hoosen

*May You Forever Receive the Blessings of the Almighty
in the Gardens of Paradise
Ameen*

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ABSTRACT

The research focused on an alternative partnership as an intervention strategy with regard to addressing problematic learner behaviour within the broader system and takes into account that there are practitioners who are experts with specialized knowledge and pooling of such resources would lessen the burden on those currently involved. The current position is that when a learner is considered to be presenting with challenging behaviour, the policies and referral procedures of the Department of Education deem it necessary that the learner is referred to the Department of Social Development, which is mandated to provide statutory services to children up to age 18years.

The research strategy focused on the challenges in the current partnership between the respective departments through the collection of data from educators and social workers. A review of policies and procedures that address problematic behaviour among children under the age of 18 years was also undertaken with the objective of identifying gaps and challenges posed in their implementation when addressing learner behaviour. While the research focused on the partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education in the management of learner behaviour, an alternative partnership was implemented as part of an ‘action research’ project and which includes other Departments, Non Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations thereby adopting a holistic approach in addressing problematic learner behaviour. Critical Systems Thinking and its metamethodology of Critical Systems Practice, utilizing Soft Systems Methodology as the dominant method of data collection, influence it. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Educators from five schools and focus group discussions held with Social Services Practitioners to identify an effective partnership while engaging in continuous learning.

An analysis of the responses revealed that the notion of a community of practice prevailing within the Department of Social Development can be extended to include other Social Workers who are experts in their respective fields of service, other professionals and Educators, all of whom have the common goal of uplifting humanity. The research, based on a core competence partnership approach, revealed that it is possible to implement the Integrated Service Delivery Model to the problem situation giving effect to its purposes, one of which is to develop and empower vulnerable groups in society, in this instance, learners at secondary schools as well as their parents thereby regenerating sound morals and values.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: NATURE AND CLARIFICATION OF PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Social Development, (herein referred to as the Department or DSD), as part of its mandate, renders a variety of services to youth in response to numerous social problems and to Government's attempts to capacitate and empower them as future leaders and citizens of South Africa. In an attempt to address the challenges faced in its partnership with the Department of Education in addressing learner behaviour, the Chatsworth District Office engaged in numerous discussions with School Principals, Educators and other stakeholders. All have come to the realization that there has been, over the last decade or so, a degeneration of morals and values among youth, families and in society in general evidenced by the high incidence of uncontrollable behaviour presented by school learners in secondary schools in the area. This resulted in an awakening that there has to be concerted action taken that would lead to a regeneration of morals in the community. This meant that existing partnerships had to be revisited to provide for a total systems intervention to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of the learners targeted and to adopt a developmental approach and empower learners and their parents.

I am a Social Worker by profession and employed as a Manager at the Department of Social Development, Chatsworth District Office. The adopted vision of the Department is "to enhance the quality of life through an integrated system of social developmental services". In terms of its mission, the Department commits itself to "the promotion of developmental social welfare services and community development to the people of Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN) in partnership with stakeholders" (Welfare and Population Development 2007/2008-2010/2011 *Stratplan and Annual Performance Plans*). The Department of Social Development in the District of Chatsworth provides services as mandated in terms of the Departmental Strategic Plan, which stems from Governmental goals and objectives. The staff structure comprises of three components, namely:

- A Social Services component (comprising 1 Social Services Head, 6 Social Workers, 1 Probation Officer, 1 Social Auxiliary Worker and 7 Contract Youth Workers)

- A Development and Research Component (comprising 2 Community Development Practitioners) and
- An Administration Component (comprising Service Office Manager, Admin Support Officer, 5 Admin Clerks, 1 Messenger/Driver, 1 Food Services Aid and 2 General Assistants) which provides the necessary administrative support to the professional components in ensuring service delivery.

As Manager of a Service Office in the Department of Social Development, I am entrusted with the task of ensuring efficient and effective service delivery as stipulated within the Department's vision, mission, objectives and according to various legislation, policies and procedures stipulated in terms of the Welfare and Population Development 2007/2008 – 2010/1011 *Stratplan and Annual Performance Plans*. In relation to the problem of learner behaviour, my role is to ensure the rendering of professional services and programmes directed at development, empowerment and enhancement of the capacities of people to address vulnerability and dysfunction.

In 2007, after discussions and consultations with relevant stakeholders, the National Department of Social Development introduced the Integrated Service Delivery Model for the rendering of developmental welfare services. This model emphasizes the need for an integrated approach based on strengthening of relationships between Governmental departments at all levels, between Government and Non Governmental Organizations, business and society for the purposes of efficient and effective delivery of services to the vulnerable and poor. In pursuing Departmental objectives, cognizance is taken of the fact that partnerships must be forged and developed for various reasons. One major reason is that resources are scarce and the pooling of resources, be it financial, physical, human (skills, knowledge and abilities), within a partnership benefits all concerned including the recipients of service delivery.

1.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Lloyd and Maguire, (p. 12), cited by Ng (2004), maintain that to sustain organizational success, it is critical for the organization to build on what the organization knows about itself

and its environment and not focus on detailed processes and structures which are transient. This aptly describes the Department's attempts to transform taking into consideration the need to adapt to continuous change and community demands within the presenting political, economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental factors.

The PESTE Analysis is intended to identify external factors that influence service delivery, inherent opportunities and threats that present themselves (The Mindtools E-book-2007 (5th Edition, p153)).

Political factors such as Government policies, for example, the President's State of the Nation Address, 2008 (www.info.gov.za) determine the extent to which education and welfare issues are addressed. Although the Department of Public Service Administration recognizes the need for continuous training of all current employees, new employees and learnerships, there is an urgent need to implement policies for the retention of scarce skills (Social Workers). Threats to this situation are the fact that for the past 5 years (approximately) South African trained Social Workers are much sought after by other developed countries resulting in the social services profession also being affected by the "brain drain" from the country and the remaining staff having to continually find creative ways of dealing with specific problems.

The economic situation in the country does not only affect society as a whole but also the state's ability to pay its employees to retain scarce skills and its labour relations practices. Worldwide coverage of the June 2007 public servants strike prompted the State to introduce occupation specific dispensations for the various classes of public servants. The various Government departments are also allocated budgets, determined by the country's needs in order of priority. While meeting welfare needs may appear to be a Departmental priority, the Department is not allocated an adequate budget to meet all community needs let alone employee needs such as adequate training as well as provide adequate funding for social services provided by Non Governmental Organizations.

Social Workers and Community Development Practitioners have to adapt experientially to ever changing communities characterized by various socio-economic and culturally diverse factors. Post apartheid South Africa is characterized by emerging communities, which are no longer made up of predominantly just one race group resulting in difficulties to adapting due

to language, cultural barriers and emerging social problems in different extremities. However the long lasting effects of racial divide prevail, as evident in certain residential areas which are predominantly occupied by a specific race group, giving it distinct and peculiar characteristics of its own.

Technological advancement forces people to become computer literate which in turn can lead to smooth workflows. However, a long period of time is spent by older workers on learning and training on technical skills and the extent/rate at which transfer of learning takes place impacts on service delivery. The rapid rate at which technological advancement is made, brings both positive and negative impact on the development of youth for example.

Environmental factors such as the rate at which the community develops also affect service delivery. Each service office is based in an area with its unique set of characteristics, population dynamics and physical location. The professional worker's ability to adapt to such changing circumstances depends on his/her own attempts to be creative and innovative while considering the nature and intensity of social problems presented as a whole in society. For example, the rate of crime had for a very long time prevented Social Workers from venturing into informal settlement areas, which are characterized by high levels of petty but sometimes serious crime.

Social services delivery takes place largely in the form of casework with group work and community programmes undertaken as and when the need arises. Developmental work, in the form of empowering youth and women's groups in the development of sustainable livelihood projects, mostly targets vulnerable groups of people in the lower socio-economic residential areas of Chatsworth. At the local level, the office has to identify local community needs and respond to the presenting needs of individuals, families and community. In terms of development, community groups are mobilized thereby promoting community participation. The office is also engaged in creating awareness with regard to available services, provision of direct services and services in terms of drawing awareness to and prevention of social pathologies. This also requires that the office has to be aware of existing resources and create opportunities for partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders to prevent overlapping and duplication of services. The office serves a population of approximately 300 000, the number having grown with developments in certain residential areas since 2007 and

this figure indicates a high percentage of youth under age 35 years while the norm for Social Worker to population figures in Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN) is 1:5000. **Table 1.1** gives a brief profile of the Municipal wards serviced by the District Office with the information obtained from the Ethekwini Municipality website. There are approximately 23 Secondary schools in Chatsworth which in effect, means that youth at these schools total approximately 20 000. There are six Social Workers currently employed at the office by the Department, which also has five vacant posts, which are not filled due to certain constraints. It then stands to reason that the number of professional staff available to serve the youth population is insufficient let alone the entire population of Chatsworth.

WARD	POPULATION UNDER 35 YEARS	TOTAL POPULATION	HOUSING		UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
			FORMAL	INFORMAL		
WARD 63	14 863 54%	27 272 A- 11% C- 1% I- 31% W- 57%	7 806	151	6 %	6
WARD 65	21 128 58%	36 528 A- 22% C- 3% I- 44% W- 31%	9 303	703	11%	12
WARD 69	17 877 58%	30 703 A- 11% C- 1% I- 88% W- 0%	7 430	534	15%	12
WARD 70	18 757 58%	32 435 A- 4% C- 1% I- 95% W- 0%	8 085	316	12%	16
WARD 71	25 055 65%	38 607 A- 26% C- 1% I- 73% W- 0%	7 598	3 145	21%	13
WARD 72	23 401 67%	34 607 A- 38% C- 1% I- 61% W- 0%	4 794	2 965	27%	11
WARD 73	21 425 58%	37 269 A- 2% C- 1% I- 97% W- 0% (237 421)	8 784	45	13%	14

Information obtained from website <http://capmon.durban.gov.za/reports/geographical> (2009/04/22)

Table 1.1: Community Profile: Chatsworth District

1.3 NATURE AND CLARIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Faced with the above and other challenges, Social Workers can only deal with extremely severe cases where behaviour problems are presented despite the fact that schools are experiencing a high volume of such cases, which warrant referral to the Department for services. Schools are guided by policy and when Educators and Principals can no longer cope with unruly behaviour, the learner with his parents(s) is immediately referred to the Department which is then expected to intervene to change the learner's behaviour within a short period. During the course of 2008, 850 new cases called in for services; of these approximately 420 cases were related to problematic behaviour among learners.

Problems presented by learners vary in terms of their nature and intensity and are very dependent on the socio-economic background and status of the particular learner and his family. For example, a learner exposed to poverty would see drug peddling as a way out of his situation or alternatively as a way of being accepted by his peer group which also indulges or peddle drugs. Yet another learner at a school in another area classed as an upper socio-economic grouping may be considered deviant because he had been skipping classes for example.

In terms of a systems approach, various factors influence the human development processes as with the socialization processes that the learner is subject to, for example, a number of social systems have major influences in a learner's life during the socialization process. When child is born and before he goes to school at age six years, his parents, siblings and extended family play an important role. Once he starts school, his teachers help shape his personality. When he starts becoming independent, the urge to develop close friendships based on various needs takes over and again influences decisions made by the learner.

Conflicting interests and conflicting demands by modern day society, such as the need to be updated with the newest information technology not because of the purpose it serves but to be a part of the in-crowd, add to the learner's dilemma. These can also result in the development of certain patterns of behaviour which, in turn lead to families being unable to cope and schools ready to expel the learner. Schools and parents then look to Social Services Practitioners to assist in realigning the learner's behaviour to that which is generally

acceptable to society. The Department, considered to be a community of practice of social services and developmental practitioners, is then expected to respond to a crisis situation with a view to bringing about some stability within the family and school environments.

The nature of the environment within which the Department functions, can be described as being complex, in that numerous challenges and limited resources forces the Department to develop strategies which react to changes, be constantly analyzing the community environment, identify gaps, opportunities, threats and to develop innovative ways of dealing with problems. In so doing, the Department is also continuously engaged in developing new patterns of inter-organizational relations that can help achieve its objectives and shape its future in a manner that is proactive. The current partnership between the Departments of Social Development and Education determined by legislation is not effective in curbing the incidence of problematic behaviour presented by learners in secondary schools. Current policies and procedures have to be adapted to include a multiple partnership providing a holistic intervention.

Social Workers function within a 'learning culture', which is necessary for the development of the organization in terms of responding to environmental influences and needs of the community in a creative and innovative manner. The Department reflected, as a 'learning organization' requires staff that have their own personal vision, are self-motivated, dedicated and innovative (acquire personal mastery). Each has an understanding of how mental models influence his/her perceptions and assumptions of problem situations, is willing to share in the common vision of the Department and build upon it. Employees are expected to subscribe to the Batho Pele principles guiding public servants in carrying out their duties, while engaging in team learning that appreciates individual skills and abilities. In the process, maximum use is made of opportunities presented for innovation and problem solving in the context of interrelationships within the broader system, (Senge, 1990: pp7-10).

Although the Department, in general, is said to be bureaucratic in terms of its structure in that there are various levels of accountability, (Provincial, Regional, Service Offices), the Service Office, respecting the need for overall accountability, allows for individuals to exercise creativity and innovation in its services to the target populations. This is evident in the variety of programmes developed and implemented in consultation with the numerous organizations

in the area and the initiative taken by some of the workers to develop intervention strategies other than case counselling only.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A critical systems perspective lends itself to accepting that there are various perspectives to the research problem with numerous factors contributing to it. While paradigms and theories attempt to provide explanations, human development must be viewed holistically with interrelationships among the many relationships as this influence the learner in various ways. A learner with free will and, as a sub-system, is interacting with other sub-systems in the form of his family, his extended family, his peers, the school within the larger system, which is the community in which he resides. The various sub-systems are influenced by and in turn, influence the other sub-systems in their interaction with each other.

The intervention strategies therefore have to consider values and beliefs of the various sub-systems including those of practitioners, as well as the values underpinning legislation and policies, which guide Educators, Social Workers and other professionals in their work environment where learning takes place experientially.

For communities of practice, according to Wenger, (1998:7), "...learning is an issue of refining their practice ...Yet in our experience learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations....A key implication of our attempts to organize learning are that we must become reflective with regard to our own discourses of learning and to their effects ..."

For organizations, and in this instance, the Department of Social Development, "... learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected communities of practice through which an organization knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valuable as an organization" (Wenger, 1998: 8). The research therefore proposes that these 'interconnected communities of practice' can extend within a multiple partnership to provide holistic services to learners.

David Schön, (1987:3), writes of “the higher ground” where theories and techniques appear to provide solutions to problems, however, in “the swampy lowland...messy, confusing problems defy technical solution” (Schön, 1987:3).

Educators and Social Services Practitioners are faced with problems of high intensity and complexity. They exercise their artistic intelligence in for example, problem framing, implementation and improvisation which are necessary “...to mediate the use and practice of applied science and technique” (Schön, 1987:3).

Various Departmental legislation and policies attempt to provide structure and guidance to these professionals, but they are often faced with “...situations of value conflict...with no clear and consistent ends to guide the selection of means...the most common complaint” is that “...the most important areas of professional practice now lie beyond the boundaries of professional competence” (Schön, 1987:pp7-8).

The researched reviewed legislation and policies which attempts to guide Educators and Social Workers and models of social work practice that suggests to practitioners intervention strategies in the management of problematic learner behaviour. It further recommends a multiple partnership based on core competences of stakeholders and as Waddell, (2002:46) argues, “combining intersectoral core competences gives rise to a unique potential societal function” such as “improving cohesion between disparate parts of society”.

Ackoff, (1971:661), states the following, “the systems approach to problems focuses on systems taken as a whole, not on their parts taken separately. Such an approach is concerned with total-system performance even when a change in only one or a few of its parts is contemplated because there are some properties of systems that can only be treated adequately from a holistic point of view.”

In terms of a systems approach, service delivery by a service driven department or organization will not be effective or efficient without taking into consideration the following:

- The problem to be addressed, in this instance, an increase in the number of learners presenting with problematic behaviour

- The cause/s of the problem, which can only be determined upon the completion of individual profiles on learners by, trained professionals (Educator, Social Worker)
- The sub-systems within the system impacting upon the problem (parents, peers, school, community, etc.)
- The inter-relationships among the sub-systems and in relation to the whole system and vice versa
- The intervention strategies and developmental models by individuals, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) on the sub-systems and system as a whole , which would include individual / family counselling, group programmes, monitoring and supervision, etc.

The research focused on the intervention strategies with regard to addressing problematic learner behaviour within the broader system with a view to recommending an alternative partnership arrangement which respects the fact that there are practitioners who are experts with specialized knowledge. Managing such knowledge and pooling of such resources, would lessen the burden on those currently involved.

The current position is that when a learner is considered to be presenting with challenging behaviour, the policies and referral procedures of the Department of Education deem it necessary that the learner is referred to the Department of Social Development, which is mandated to provide statutory services to children up to age 18 years. This research paper proposes that the partnership between the respective departments be revisited to include other stakeholders, parents and the community to address the challenges being experienced holistically. The research focuses on the partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education in the management of learner behaviour and proposes an alternative partnership that includes other Departments, Non Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations thereby adopting a holistic approach in addressing problematic learner behaviour.

It further proposes that the community of practice, within which learning is continuous, prevailing within the Department of Social Development can extend to include other Social

Services Practitioners who are experts in their respective fields of service, other professionals and Educators; all of whom have the common goal of uplifting humanity. By utilizing this approach, it is intended that the Department would be implementing the Integrated Service Delivery Model and giving effect to its purposes, which is to promote a developmental approach to service delivery and includes empowering and developing vulnerable groups in society; in this instance, learners at secondary schools as well as their parents thereby regenerating sound morals and values.

Critical Systems Practice was adopted due to the multifaceted nature of the problem situation. It further provided the researcher with the advantages in specifying the exact nature of the ‘generic methodologies’ which have been derived in part from the dictates of the paradigms to which they correspond. The proposed study was influenced to a large extent by the philosophy and theory of the interpretive paradigm in terms of which intervention will be aimed at exploring purposes, alleviating distress, generating learning and conducted on the basis of stakeholder participation. CSP has also been designed as an ‘action research’ approach as it seeks to contribute to research and improve real-world problems. It can also be used flexibly and adapted to different situations both in terms of the methodologies, methods, models and techniques used (Jackson, 2003).

The qualitative method for the collection of data was utilized as the researcher focused on the processes involved in the study with a view to understanding the present situation by:

- Researching policies and procedures that underlie the present partnership.
- Conducting structured interviews with key partners such as school principals and educators.
- Conducting focus group discussions with social workers from the Department of Social Development.
- Conducting focus group discussions with social workers from Non Governmental Organizations rendering specialized services to youth and families.
- Conducting structured interviews with other professionals involved in the stud

The collated data was analyzed by the researcher who had to exercise objectivity to avoid bias and ensure a critical analysis of the situation and an objective presentation of the findings.

Key concepts/constructs that will be addressed within Critical Systems Thinking are interpreted as follows:

Problematic behaviour among learners: referring to problems presented as per analysis of learner profiles that are symptomatic of a degeneration of morals and values and include truancy, substance abuse, lack of respect for authority and poor performance at school

Partnerships: refer to the collaboration of two or more state departments and/or Non-Governmental Organizations for the specific purpose of sharing core competences and other resources for the management of problematic behaviour among learners. In this research, it refers to the partnership between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development

Communities of practice: referring to collaboration among social services practitioners and includes the learning that is gained from this collaboration as well as the extent to which service delivery by the Department of Social Development is effective in relation to the other organizations.

Empowerment: referring to the processes involved in capacitating learners and parents to enable quality decision making with the purpose of improving quality of life.

1.5 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was conducted in the district of Chatsworth and involved a maximum of five secondary schools
- The number of stakeholders was limited by whether or not they do work in the Chatsworth district and important stakeholders may have been excluded
- The learners and the families were largely representative of a particular socio-economic and/or racial grouping namely that of Indian origin
- The study was limited to reviewing the current partnership between the Government Departments of Education and Social Development and exploring a multiple partnership with other Social Services Practitioners employed by NGOs
- The study, although having had as its focus learner behaviour in secondary schools, did not investigate the impact of the present partnership or the proposed partnership on the learners; hence no interviews were planned with learners directly.

1.6 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION: NATURE AND CLARIFICATION OF PROBLEM STATEMENT

This chapter will introduce the problem, the environment within which the problem is situated, the research design and methodology utilized in the study.

CHAPTER 2 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed relates to the conceptual framework within which the study is undertaken and the concepts investigated.

CHAPTER 3 - CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

The context within which the problem is situated, is explained in detail.

CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design and the methodology chosen for the study are explained together with the processes involved in the implementation of the conceptual model proposed.

CHAPTER 5 - PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Chapter 5 gives details of the research findings following the interviews and focus group discussions with the identified respondents.

CHAPTER 6 - RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents conclusions drawn and makes recommendations and suggestions for implementation and further study.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the problem situation, namely that of problematic learner behaviour, and the intervention strategies adopted, within the context of systems thinking. The literature reviewed considers the various perspectives to managing problematic learner behaviour by the different human activity systems, the processes involved in the development of a new partnership and the learning that take place through communicative discourse and action. It explains the concepts of partnerships, and communities of practice in relation to developing a new approach to managing learner behaviour. Social learning theory is discussed as it is related to the various processes involved in the development of the new partnership; the outcome being the consolidation of experiential learning and management of knowledge within communities of practice.

2.2 EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IN TERMS OF SYSTEMS THINKING

The sociological perspective of systems views society as being made up of interconnected components, which function to maintain the whole. Society is seen as comprising heterogeneous sub-systems in relationships with their environment. These sub-systems, through connections and constraints, are in turn disturbed by and impacted upon by their environment resulting in the sub-system evolving and adapting to the environment just as an organism would to its surroundings to ensure that equilibrium and stability is maintained (Jackson, 2000:54).

Jackson, (2000:54), points out that the benefits of the analogy of an organism were developed by Spencer (1820-1903) and Durkheim (1858-1917) who both viewed social systems as being made up of mutually dependent elements functioning in a manner that contributes to the maintenance of the whole. Therefore, societies to survive have to possess “functional prerequisites” which have to be satisfied by their parts; their elements and their institutions are best understood in relation to the contribution they make to the whole (Jackson, 2000:56).

An example of this would be Government determining the functions of its numerous departments that it creates to assist it in governing the country in an organized manner.

Jackson (2000:56) states that Talcott Parson's "equilibrium functional model", (Buckly, 1967), aimed to construct a model for analyzing all elements of the social world, with the notion that social systems are made up of the interaction of individuals. This is combined with the mechanical-equilibrium model and a form of structural-functional prerequisite which, for example, separate the different functions of Government into different departments for maintaining social order. Parsons differentiates four functions that distinguish sub-systems from each other and following his thinking into formal organizations, the goals and orientations of organizations are classified as being adaptive, goal-attainment, integration or pattern maintenance (Jackson, 2000:56).

If one considers the socialization and development processes of a child, members of his family, significant members of his extended family for example, his grandparents, cousins, his friends and his teachers, all have some function in the development of his values, attitudes, beliefs and mental models. In dealing with a child presenting with challenging behaviour a therapist will therefore examine the various sub-systems around the child for appropriate intervention. Likewise, in the larger system, there are an equal number or more sub-systems with functions to ensure adaptation, goal attainment, integration or pattern maintenance that can assist in re-aligning the development of the child's moral values, attitudes and beliefs toward positive world views.

The various perspectives to managing problematic learner behaviour by the numerous human activity systems is considered while addressing issues of accountability among the various stakeholders including learners, their parents and the community through communicative discourse and action.

From a structural-functionalist perspective, Government, with a view to regulating the system to bring about social order and to fulfil certain purposes in society, determines the policies of the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development. The Department of Education develops policies for attaining the goals of education for children and youth while the policies of the Department of Social Development ensure the provision of social services

to promote the development of children and youth for their adaptation, integration and stability in society. In terms of a systems perspective, each department, with components and sub-systems of their own, is also considered to be an organism in interaction with its environment and for meeting their goals will each adapt to conditions within its environment.

From an interpretive perspective, policies are seen as “creative constructions of human beings”, (Jackson, 2000:24), which are to be understood by trying to subjectively understand the intentions and the points of view of human beings who construct them. Within the system, the presence of human beings, viewed as having free will, impact on the analysis undertaken and getting involved in its activities add complexity to an already messy and chaotic situation (Jackson, 2000:24).

It is argued that Social Services Practitioners are also motivated by interest to be free of the constraints and challenges imposed by postmodernism, to enable them to engage in discussions, discourse, and exercise their creativity in finding solutions to difficult problems taking into consideration local conditions.

According to Jackson, (2000:33) Habermas, (1970), has greatly influenced the development of critical theory and he, (Habermas), argued that human beings possess two fundamental interests that direct their attempts to acquire knowledge, namely a *technical* interest and a *practical* interest which are dependent on ‘work’ and ‘interaction’.

“Work”, through the development of technical knowledge, enables human beings to attain material goals depending on the individuals “...ability to achieve technical mastery over natural and social processes” while “practical interest” is linked to “interaction” and is concerned with “securing and expanding mutual understanding among all those involved in social systems” (Flood and Jackson, 1991:49). However, within these social processes, the exercise of power can prevent open and transparent discussions necessary for the success of work and interaction (Flood and Jackson, 1991:49).

Human beings are said to have a third cognitive interest, an “emancipatory” interest in that they attempt to realize their full potential by “freeing themselves from constraints imposed” by

power relationships and by the accumulation of knowledge through a process of participatory democracy and in controlling their own destinies, (Jackson, 2000:35). Emancipation is therefore regarded as being possible through communicative action (Jackson, 2000:35).

Critical Systems Thinking has accepted the human emancipation interest as part of a broader commitment to taking into consideration all circumstances within which individuals can realize their full potential (self emancipation). Critical Systems Thinking, therefore commits itself to the achievement of 'local improvement' (Jackson, 2003:303) and in this instance, an improvement in learner behaviour and regeneration of moral values within an environment that is conducive to learning while providing opportunities for practitioners to understand and improve on their learning and practices.

Modernism, "...upholds reason and believes that rationality is the most important vehicle for helping human beings perfect themselves and their societies... essentially believes in the order of things and searches for unity, identity and consensus", (Jackson, 2002:35). It is within the paradigm of modernism, that an alternative partnership framework that redefines the current boundaries, within which the problem is situated, is proposed.

However, within the paradigm of post modernism, it is noted that reality is never the same, "...including the thought processes we use to understand it, is in a state of flux, a constant process of becoming" (McNiff, 2000:43), and any given situation never remains the same which points to the constant changing nature of systems; always calling for improvements.

It is within these boundaries that Social Services Practitioners, comprising pluralistic human activity systems with complexities of their own and within a partnership share new learning. This involves utilizing existing knowledge to address problems in a constantly changing, chaotic and complex system. This partnership, in turn, can develop into a community of practice where creativity and innovation is encouraged for the ultimate goal of empowering young learners to develop and influence the development of positive worldviews for the good of the broader society. However, the kind of knowledge that practitioners use to find solutions, although found in procedures and capabilities is not easily definable and Ryle (1949), refers to it as 'knowledge how', which has to be managed in creating new solutions (McNiff, (2000:40).

2.3 PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR MANAGING LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

2.3.1 Partnerships

“Partnerships offer a new approach to addressing and managing change – this can mean a change in working methods and procedures, in strategic planning or in attitudes and behaviour” (Kjaer, L & Tennyson, R, 2000:79).

A partnership is formed around common objectives and for various reasons, one of which is to respond to the ever-changing needs of society. Government departments are service-rendering organizations and therefore have to be in a position to respond to rapid changes in the environment. This requires that partnerships be forged with a view to utilizing existing resources and competences that the different partners bring with them into the relationship to respond to problems that are complex and require the capacities of more than one partner and when specific problem issues cut across the fundamental interests of the various stakeholders (Pierce, 2002:8).

In their study of partnerships, Kjaer and Tennyson, (2000:79) observed that two important factors contributed to the sustainable outcomes of the projects studied namely:

- (i) The sharing of new skills and competences among partners is a critically important component of the partnership and
- (ii) The added value that comes from integrating the skills and the experiences operationally within each of the organizations in the partnership.

Each partner brings in different resources in the form of funding, skills and competences and each has its own set of expectations and hope for the partnership per se as well as specific expectations of what other partners may contribute. While Government produces legislation and policies and provides funding for services to learners, it does not have all the resources and competences to deliver an effective and efficient service. It therefore looks to Non-Governmental Organizations, private individuals and business to complement its services.

Waddell, (2002, pp43-57), suggests that "...core competences are a major factor in growing collaborations (between) government, business and civil society..." and as stakeholders, each looks for partners who have competences that it does not have and who can accomplish what it cannot as it does not have the critical skills and competences. Each of these sectors has a core function of its own and when combined, this intersectoral collaboration depends on the "...unusual relationships with clear divisions of responsibilities based on core competences arising from the different logics of the organizational sectors" (Waddell, 2002, pp43-57). These core competences also form the basis for a 'mutual gain' framework within which the different relationships are formed.

This perspective is distinctive in that it focuses on issues, with relationships based on mutual exchange, peer-like power between stakeholders and change that is second order (where rules of stakeholder relationship change) or third order (where the fundamentals of the stakeholder system change), (Waddell, 2002, pp43-57).

Waddell, (2002, pp43-57) also presents an attributes analysis tool which assists in explaining the core operational challenge as the successful integration of the three operating frameworks; the distinct attributes giving an indication of the distinct resources and weaknesses of the respective sector. Each of the sectors is said to possess resources and weaknesses in varying degrees and collaborations are attempts to offset weaknesses and combine strengths to provide a "unique potential societal function", (Waddell, 2002, pp43-57). The core competence perspectives allows for the broadening of the intervention and increase the extent of intersectoral collaborations in an effective, disciplined and creative manner to address challenges. It also enables the undertaking of experiments by the designing of structures and processes in creative and innovative ways while exploring further the potential of the partnership relationship (Waddell, 2002, pp43-57).

With the common goal of working toward bringing about societal change, partners within the collaboration would be able to retain their own core competence through constant learning, identifying areas for change and implement strategies for improvement, as part of the work of the collaborations. Further, as learning organizations, each partner would be able to adapt to dynamic situations and adequately respond to environmental and other conditions based on their individual competences.

Payne and Calton (2002, pp37-52) introduce the concept of “learning” to multi- stakeholder dialogue referring to it as *Multi Stakeholder “Learning” Dialogue* which allows for growth, development and “learning opportunities through dialogue processes that explore and move beyond initial stakeholder assumptions about facts and values surrounding ‘messy problems’”. This kind of dialogue enables stakeholders to redefine the “messy problem” and in the process, “preconceived relationships between self and others change as new learning occurs” (Payne and Calton, 2002, pp37-52). The authors also elaborate on large–group interaction methods and assumptions. These include the adoption of a ‘whole systems’ orientation, creation of dialogue, focusing on processes and procedures, the capacity of individuals to self-organize around a shared set of universal values and stressing the need to engage communities thereby adopting a culture of participation and improving stakeholder learning opportunities (Payne and Calton, 2002, pp37-52).

The emphasis here again is on relationship building and they make a number of suggestions to overcome the challenges faced when developing multiple partnerships for mutual benefit. Partnerships formed around common issues and concerns within a domain and involving practitioners who meet on a regular basis can evolve into communities of practice as defined by the presenting problem area/issue of concern.

2.3.2 Communities of Practice

Wenger, (2005: pp 1-15), (<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities>) refers to communities of practice as “... groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”.

While groups of people come together regularly for various reasons, the notion of communities of practice reflects that these groups of persons come together for a particular purpose based on a common concern and with the intention of learning, individually or collectively, on how to do things better during their regular discussions.

Wenger, (2005: pp1-15), maintain that three characteristics or core elements define communities of practice, namely:

The Domain - members are committed to the domain. Their shared competences distinguish them from other people, their collective competence is valued, and they are constantly learning from each other in their discussions.

The Community - members engage in joint activities on a regular basis; discussions are held in pursuance of their interests in the domain or issue of concern, and in the process, they build relationships, which enables them to learn from each other.

The Practice – members are practitioners who develop “... a shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories...” Wenger, (2005: pp1-15).

Wenger, (2005: pp1-15), sees communities of practice “...as vehicles for developing strategic capabilities in organizations...” and as having the following benefits:

- Communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge required and recognizing that, given the proper structures, they are in the best position to do this, (Wenger, 2005: pp1-15)
- Communities among practitioners create a direct link between learning and performance because the same people participate in the community of practice and in teams, (Wenger, 2005: pp1-15)
- Practitioners can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing as well as the more explicit aspects (Wenger, 2005: pp1-15)
- Communities are not limited by formal structures; they create connections among people across organizations and geographical boundaries (Wenger, 2005: pp1-15)
- Governments adopt communities of practice because of the challenges of the increase in complexity and scale of knowledge. Despite the formal bureaucracy within its internal communities which can inhibit open knowledge sharing, there are typical problems that require coordination and knowledge sharing across the levels of Government and other sectors. Communities of practice also enable connections across formal structures and within Government there are organizational challenges to overcome (Wenger, 2005: pp1-15).

2.4 LEARNING: INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Every individual engages in learning at every single moment of our lives. We do so at various levels, individually and collectively as teams. Learning is a continuous process which in turn, influences our development and performance as individuals and within human activity systems. Learning also takes place in different spheres and depends on an individual's personality and environmental/situational factors.

In the learning process, new information is converted to *knowledge*, which when comprehended leads to *understanding* to create new patterns of relationships and develop new *skills* of doing things better, thinking and learning, coping and problem solving which then lead to changing *attitudes* including beliefs and values resulting in changed ways of *behaving* (Rogers, 2002:87).

Brown & Duguid, (2002: pp119-120), point out that knowledge is different from information in that it is firstly, attached to a person; secondly, given this attachment, it is harder to detach than information and thirdly, it is assimilated and requires the individual's understanding and a certain degree of commitment.

2.4.1 Individual Learning

Learning is viewed as an individual, cognitive act; the focus being on the mental processes connected to learning in that cognitive structures help the individual to make sense and create meaning to manifest in behavioural change, (Pettigrew et al., 2003: pp 72-94). A key assumption of the cognitive perspective is that learning is a change of the mindset, which in turn, reinforces the need for 'unlearning' (Hedberg,1981) cited by Pettigrew et al., (2003: pp 72-94), in organizations. Pettigrew et al (2003: pp72-94) also stress that the ability of any social system to learn and unlearn is closely linked to communication tools. This would involve regular meetings and discussions around issues of concern.

Richard Bawden, describes the process of learning as starting, "...with the immersion of the learner in a concrete experience from which as many observations as possible are gathered and perceptions recorded. Information gathering is then followed by a phase of thinking, during which attempts are made to understand what has been experienced, followed in turn, with

plans for action based on the understanding achieved... the planned action is taken, and as this changes the situation, the whole process is repeated thereby creating more knowledge...” (Bawden, p6).

Organizations exhibit different learning cultures that in turn, influence the learning patterns in the organization. Pettigrew et al (2003: pp72-94), maintain that learning is always context-bound and has to be understood and described as social/cultural processes of sharing and understanding between members of the organization and between the organization and the external actors. They identify two different styles of organizational learning:

Exploitative Learning (Levitt and March, 1988) cited by Pettigrew et al., (2003: pp72-94), is directed to the past and connected to the current practices in the organization to effectively evaluate and reflect upon them.

Explorative Learning is directed to the future, draws on the innovative capacity of the organization and refers to the creative force that enables individuals and groups to innovate and to break away from established ways of thinking (Pettigrew et al., 2003: pp 72-94).

Pettigrew et al (2003: pp 72-94), further explain that learning is situated in the cultural practices and shared understandings of the different learners and the specific learning culture of an organization can be both a restriction and a condition for learning and continuous change. From a change perspective, the communication aspects are crucial, and the ability to communicate in turn, depends on the cultural characteristics of the organization.

Social Workers have to continuously adapt services, that is, observe, reflect, re- think, re-interpret, and re-plan before action is again taken, in order to meet qualitative development and continuous transformation of the organization, the community and ourselves. While engaging in exploitative learning, in that we learn from accumulated past experiences (single loop learning which provides the theoretical framework for how we develop competences), we are also exposed to explorative learning, in that outside variables require us to reflect on our actions, re-interpret/re-connect , re-plan and re-do differently (double loop learning).

Brockbank et al., (2002:14), point out that learning occurs in a number of ways; through the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding, change in behaviour or attitudes, possible improvement in performance and transformation of service delivery. They surmise that, “When learners dare to traverse the double-loop by confronting their taken-for-granted (tfgs) they may transform their view of the world and therefore their organizations” (Brockbank et al., 2002:14).

2.4.2 Organizational Learning

Ng, (2004: pp93-100), argues that organizations, “...teams and individuals need to engage in a continuous loop of learning to sustain agility and transformation”. Organizations need to learn to become more effective, more efficient, more ethical, continuously relevant and adaptable, at the same time, creating and managing new knowledge.

In building the organization as a *learning organization* Senge (1990:6), explains five disciplines of learning as the founding stones of organizational- wide change and innovation:

- (i) *Personal Mastery*: The organization cannot learn until individuals within the organization also engage in critical and productive learning. The individual has to be self motivated, sets personal learning goals and develops the ability to engage with formal, informal and non-formal opportunities to achieve them and critically assess ones’ progress. On a personal level, individuals need to constantly clarify and deepen vision, develop patience and see reality objectively. Personal mastery is “an essential cornerstone of the learning organization” (Senge, 1990: pp7-8).
- (ii) *Mental Models*: Mental models are the “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations and images that influence” how individuals understand their world and how they react to it. They also allow one to process information and make quick decisions. However, very entrenched mental models can hinder active creativity because they act as filters that screen incoming information, (Ng, 2004: pp93-100). We need to focus our attention inward to uncover our deeply ingrained internal pictures and to question these critically so that we are open to the thinking and influence of others (Senge, 1990: pp8-9).

- (iii) *Shared Vision*: Building a shared vision of the future jointly created requires individuals mobilized into action, not because they have to, but because they want to. Organizations cannot be forced to change but sharing a powerful vision can mobilize teams in the desired direction. (Ng, 2004: pp93-100). This involves the skillful unearthing of shared “pictures of the future”, the ones that bring about “genuine commitment rather than mere compliance”, (Senge, 1990: pp9-10).
- (iv) *Team Learning*: Teams and not individuals are the fundamental units in modern organizations. When teams learn to do things together, they are capable of producing extraordinary results. Teams made up of individuals who share a common goal but come with different background, can brainstorm from various perspectives to produce an enormous number of ideas. The collective knowledge, insights and skills of the individuals in a team make all the difference to innovation (Ng, 2004: pp93-100). The discipline of team learning starts with “dialogue”; this is when team members suspend judgment and engage in serious ‘thinking together’, (Senge, 1990: pp9-10).
- (v) *Systems Thinking*: The essence of systems thinking lies in the shift of the mindset, to see interrelationships rather than a linear cause – effect chain and to see processes of change rather than snap shots. It points to looking beyond the symptoms to see the underlying interaction among the different parts of a system, to find the root causes of the problems, which have to be solved to prevent a host of problem symptoms in one attempt, (Ng, 2004: pp93-100).

Senge (1990: 12) explains systems thinking “...as the fifth discipline as it is the discipline that integrates the disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice...” but it still needs the other four disciplines to realize its potential.

It is through learning “... that we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it...we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life” (Senge, 1990: pp13-14). A learning organization is one, which is “...continuously expanding its capacity to create its future...” (Senge: 1990: pp13-14), and for which “adaptive learning” together with generative learning, enhance our capacity to expand and be creative (Senge ,1990:14).

A systems approach to solving problems involves the need to move away from the urge to blame individuals when things go wrong. We need to consider the underlying structures referred to as “systemic structures” that shape people’s actions and create conditions for the likelihood of certain types of events. “Systemic structures” refer to the “... interrelationships among key variables that influence behaviour over time...” (Senge, 1990:44).

Senge, (1990:44), points out that the structures are not easily noticed but are “subtle” and human beings are “part” of the structure and because of this, have the “power” to alter the structures within which we operate. Although we do not perceive this “power,” “*we just find ourselves feeling compelled to act in certain ways*” (Senge, 1990:44).

There are also multiple levels of explanation in any given complex situation and these, according to Senge, (1990: pp52-54), are:

- (i) Events explanation, which point to management which is reactive and where focus is on recurring events over a period.
- (ii) Patterns of behaviour explanations, focusing on identifying long term trends and assessing their implications thereby adopting a responsive stance to shifting trends.
- (iii) Structural explanations that are “inherently generative” and “address the underlying causes of behaviour *which can be changed*” (Senge, 1990: pp52-54).

With structure being able to influence behaviour, changing underlying structures can result in different patterns of behaviour and as such, structural explanations are “inherently generative”. Structure in human activity systems include policies, which influence the operation of the system and redesigning the way decisions are made, redesigns the systems structure (Senge, 1990: pp52-54).

The way in which an individual or a team thinks determine their ability to solve problems; generative learning is the ability to think systemically and “...to discover structural causes of behaviour”. Once members in a team understand these underlying structures in terms of how it causes behaviour, they are able to see the power to change such behaviour and adopt “...ordering policies that work in the larger system” (Senge, 1990: pp52-54).

2.4.3 Learning within Communities of Practice

According to Cummings & van Zee, (2005: pp8-22), the origins and primary use of the concept of communities of practice has been in learning theory. The term, which was coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their studies of apprenticeship as a learning model, referred to “the community that acts as a living curriculum for the apprentice, especially the social relationships through which learning takes place” (Cummings & van Zee, 2005: pp8-22).

Wenger’s social theory of learning (1998, pp12-13), is situated in the centre of intellectual traditions along two main axes and two intermediary diagonal axes:

- A vertical axis reflects the tension between theories of social structures (institutions, norms, rules) and theories of situated experience (dynamics of everyday existence)
- A horizontal axis with theories of social practice (addressing production, reproduction of specific ways of engaging with the world) and theories of identity (concerned with the social formation of the person) mediating between the poles of the vertical axis
- The first diagonal axis is provided by theories of collectivity (formations of social configurations of the various types) between social structure and practice and theories of subjectivity (the nature of individuality as an experience of agency) between identity and situated experience
- The second diagonal axis is provided by theories of power (the challenge is to find conceptualizations of power that avoid either simply conflictual perspectives or simply consensual models) between social structure and identity and theories of meaning (which attempt to account for the ways in which people produce meanings of their own) between practice and experience.

Wenger, (1996: pp1-6) (<http://www.wenger.com/theory/communities>) explains that learning arises out of our day-to-day experiences within our organizations; it is not an activity which we can start and terminate as and when we want. He explains the basic elements to such a perspective of a learning organization are founded on seven principles namely:

- (i) Learning is inherent in human nature; therefore, we need to create environments within our organizations to encourage such learning, (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).
- (ii) Learning is fundamentally social in that participating in that such “integrated social participation...makes learning possible, enduring and meaningful”, (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).
- (iii) Learning changes who we are in that “...learning transforms our identities as social beings...” and the manner, in which we relate to the world and with others, (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).
- (iv) Learning is “a matter of engagement in practice” referring to development of a competence to engage in “...socially defined activities and to contribute to a community and its enterprise” (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).
- (v) Learning reflects an individual’s participation in communities of practice, in that our participation in the various groups encourages shared practices, which play an important role in learning, (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).
- (vi) Learning means dealing with boundaries formed by communities of practices because of differences in perspectives, language etc., which reflect characteristics of each community of practice, and each individual belongs to more than one community of practice within any given moment in time.
Boundaries are also reflected in our identities which means that we are learning “...in the process of reconciling the different forms of membership” (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6). He also points out that, “...boundaries between practices are fertile grounds for innovation. As communities of practice collaborate, clash, merge, diverge, the required process of coordination, translation and negotiation is also a process of learning”, (Wenger, 1996:pp1-6).
- (vii) Learning is regarded as “an interplay between the local and the global” in that within communities of practice “where local activities are organized... the meaning of belonging to broader organizations is negotiated and experienced”, (Wenger, 1996: pp1-6).

Wenger's approach to the "connection between knowledge, community, learning and identity" is based on the following premise as identified by Cummings & van Zee, (2005: pp8-22):

- Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to what we value most, we take in what we want to, what we understand and act according to our worldviews
- Knowledge is a matter of participating in pursuit of our goals, thereby actively engaging in the world
- Meaning refers to our experiences with the world and the meaningful way in which we engage with it, is ultimately what learning seeks to produce
- Human beings are social beings and this is a central aspect of learning. This is supported by Brown & Duguid, (2002:140), who explain that people learn their way into language which is a social artifact, and in so doing "...they are simultaneously inserting themselves into a variety of complex, interwoven social systems".

Learning is therefore considered "...a vehicle for the evolution of practices and the inclusion of newcomers while also (and through the same process) the vehicle for the development and transformation of identities..." (Wenger,1998:13). Learning in a group also presents opportunities for its members to understand the structure of the new system created, constantly review it in terms of environmental changes and suggest changes to enhance its functioning thereby making learning "so fundamental to the social order that we live in" (Wenger, 1998:15).

2.5 CONCLUSION

Society is seen as comprising heterogeneous sub-systems in relationships with their environment. These sub-systems, through connections and constraints, are in turn disturbed by and impacted upon by their environment resulting in the sub-system evolving and adapting to the environment. The various perspectives to managing problematic learner behaviour by the numerous human activity systems is considered while addressing issues of accountability among the numerous stakeholders including learners, their parents and the community is proposed through communicative discourse and action.

Partnerships are formed around common objectives and for various reasons, one of which is to respond to the ever-changing needs of society. Each partner brings in different resources in the form of funding, skills and competences and each has its own set of expectations and hope for the partnership per se as well as specific expectations of what other partners may contribute.

Individual learning, learning within organizations with special reference to Senge's five disciplines of learning in attempts to create a learning organization and Wenger's communities of practice as a model of social learning theory are considered in pursuit of the development of an alternate approach to managing the problem identified.

Learning through the process of engagement occurs, when Social Workers identify with a common purpose; when individual goals and Departmental objectives are aligned to achieve Departmental effectiveness and when creativity and imagination allow Social Workers to broaden and transform their practices to include communal practices.

Learning also occurs when practitioners reflect on the transformation programmes aimed at building healthy communities taking into consideration the dynamics of the context within which such practices occur (Brockbank et al. 2002:197).

Learning in a community enables the acquisition of knowledge, which determines our identities, and give meaning to our lives. It also presents opportunities for its members to understand the structure of the new system created, constantly review it in terms of environmental constraints and suggest changes to enhance its functioning thereby making learning an important part of our social order and towards the creation of new knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to attempt to locate the problem identified namely, problematic behaviour among learners in secondary schools, within the partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education and in the context of a systems approach. The various legislation, policies, procedures and service delivery models determine the intervention strategies implemented by the community (through School Governing Bodies), Principals, Educators and Social Workers when learners present problematic behaviour. Discussions around the issue of moral degeneration have been taking place in the public domain and reports from the moral regeneration workshops convened by Government are reviewed.

3.2 LEARNER BEHAVIOUR, MORAL DEGENERATION AND MORAL REGENERATION

Behaviour is said to be problematic when it is outside the expectations of what is acceptable by the community within which the learner functions, for example, within a school, learners presenting with problematic behaviour do not observe the standards and norms of behaviour as set out in the school's Code of Conduct.

According to Santrock (1994:403), "...moral development concerns rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people". It would therefore involve:

- (i) A child's ability to reason or think about rules for ethical conduct, for example, whether or not stealing is acceptable.
- (ii) A child's behaviour in moral circumstances, for example, stealing to satisfy hunger given conditions in the environment which produce the need to steal.
- (iii) A child's feelings about the moral issue; whether or not he/she feels guilty to resist the urge to steal.

The processes of reinforcement, punishment and imitation within social learning theory, attempt to explain why children learn certain responses and reasons for their differing responses. The effectiveness of the processes of rewards and punishment are dependent on the consistency with which either is administered. The effectiveness of modelling depends on the characteristics of the model (power, esteem), and the "...presence of symbolic codes to enhance retention of the modelled behaviour" (Santrock, 1994:410), in this instance, the school's Code of Conduct.

Moral behaviour, however, is also dependent on the situation. A learner may not behave morally consistently in the presence of his peers who put pressure on him to steal or participate in drug taking. The issue of morality therefore concerns a person's ability to differentiate between right and wrong and to behave accordingly. This not only concerns an individual's ability to reason but to put thoughts into behaviour given the presenting pressures. Within a broader context, such behaviour becomes symptomatic of a society where there is a decline in moral values. This is reflected in the high incidence of crime, alcoholism, drug taking, a breakdown in family life, etc.

The above had become a cause for concern to the newly elected democratic Government, which convened Moral Regeneration workshops in February and May 2000.

Participants at the workshop agreed that morality has "...to do with acting in the common good..." hence behaviour is considered immoral if it is commonly unacceptable to all communities and "... are not the kinds of behaviour that can be condoned in any 'civilized' community or culture..." ('Freedom and Obligation: A Report on the Moral Regeneration Workshops I & II: pp 1-20, <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/moralregeneration.htm>).

The commissions at the workshop made certain observations regarding education and these included inter alia:

- (i) A lack of parental responsibility for the kind of education that their children receive.
- (ii) A lack of parental authority over the disciplining of their children.
- (iii) An abdication of responsibility by parents to nurture their children and dependence on teachers to do this.
- (iv) Some teachers are not teaching children what is acceptable behaviour in that they do not assist children "exercise independent judgment on 'right' and 'wrong'..."

Recommendations made at the workshops targeting youth included inter alia:

- (i) The restoration of the family as a social institution.
- (ii) The inclusion of moral education in the school curriculum.
- (iii) The need for Government to promote moral renewal through various means including schools.

A National Framework for Moral Regeneration was set up with specific recommendations being made: ('Freedom and Obligation: A Report on the Moral Regeneration Workshops I & II: pp 1-20, <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/moralregeneration.htm>).

1. National priorities were identified and those targeting youth, included inter alia:

- (i) The interpretation and education of the public about the list of social values enumerated in the Preamble of the Constitution, 1996.
- (ii) The need to monitor the implementation of legislation that would ensure the upholding of the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution.
- (iii) The need to establish shared values with a view to creating a South African culture which would involve stepping out of our own parochial cultures and transforming them.
- (iv) The need to education about democracy and the Bill of Rights.
- (v) The need to transform schools, most of which are faced with the problem of moral decay, into moral environments.
- (vi) The need to address the issue of poverty.

2. A National moral regeneration campaign was launched. The partners in the National moral regeneration campaign include the Presidency, all Government departments, organized labour, organized business, the youth, student organizations, Non Governmental Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and the media among others.

3. A steering committee was formed with the National Department of Education and the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) formally mandated to coordinate the process with the South African Chapter on African Renaissance.

4. An implementation strategy was determined which included inter alia:

Phase I: Rooting the Campaign in Society through a process of consultation and negotiation.

Phase II: Establishment of shared values to develop a common identity as South Africans.

Phase III: Focus on Priorities by identification of specialists to deal with specific problems and long term planning done jointly by the different Government departments for example, the Department of Social Development is tasked to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDS on children, and the Department of Education, to address issues of morality in subjects such as Life Orientation.

The issue of moral regeneration has been the topic of serious debate involving the many role-players identified; it continues to receive wide media coverage and all citizens are urged to become proactive in making a difference by “helping people to make ethical decisions from the start.” (‘Freedom and Obligation: A Report on the Moral Regeneration Workshops I & II, pp 1-20 [moralregeneration.htm](#)). The Department of Education is tasked with coordinating the processes of moral regeneration, however, it becomes incumbent on all government departments to contribute to and assist the Department of Education in its efforts to regenerate sound morals.

Problems presented by young learners are serious issues discussed in the public domain and in an article titled, ‘Home is key to pupil aggression’, published in Tribune Herald (22 March 2009, p 4), Psychologist, Anand Ramphal, reported that there is an increase in anti-social, aggressive and destructive behaviour among children. He maintains, “...effects of such behaviour are threatening to overwhelm the school process, as reflected in the high dropout rates and poor grade 12 results”.

His sentiments are supported in a subsequent article, ‘Hard School of Thought’, in the Sunday Tribune, 19 April 2009, (p26), in which Noelene Barbeau quotes a Secondary School Principal, as saying, the “...current breed of school children are arrogant, show no respect and display a blatant disregard for teachers”. It is therefore understandable why Anand Ramphal, in his article, (Herald, 22 March 2009, (p 4)), calls for “...interventions that are designed to minimize academic failure; social skills interventions designed to improve relationships with peers and adults; and behavioural interventions designed to discourage inappropriate behaviour patterns”.

3.3 STATUTORY FRAMEWORK ADDRESSING LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

The South African Constitution, Act 106 of 1996, being the supreme law of the country, guarantees every person the right to basic education (s29). This entrenchment of the right to basic education makes it obligatory on the state to ensure that there is delivery on this right. Section 28 of the Constitution also provides for the protection of the child's right to social services among other rights. A child is also defined as being under the age of 18 (eighteen) years. The underlying philosophy of the Bill of Rights within the Constitution, points to the guaranteeing basic human rights which were previously denied the majority of citizens. The subsequently enacted legislation therefore aim to provide the mechanisms within which this is achieved.

3.3.1 Government Notices and KZN Department of Education Circulars

Section 3 of the National Education Policy Act 76 of 1996 enables the National Minister of Education to determine education policy at a National level in accordance with the principles of the Constitution. It further provides for the determination of policies in respect of the various functions and activities of the Department of Education, the structures and processes involved when dealing with learner behaviour, including:

- Section 3 (4) (n) which deals with the 'control and discipline of students at education institutions' and further stipulates 'that no person shall administer corporal punishment, or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse'
- Section 3 (4) (p) which provides for cooperation between the Department and other state departments, 'provincial education departments, local government and Non Governmental Organizations with a view to advancing the National Education Policy contemplated in Section 3 and the Reconstruction and Development Programme'
- Section 4 of the Act determines that 'policy contemplated in Section 3 must be directed toward the advancement and protection of fundamental rights' as protected in the Constitution. This includes the right to basic education (s4 (a) (ii)), enabling the system to 'contribute to the full personal development of each student and to the

moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, advancement of democracy and peaceful resolution of disputes (s4 (b)).

The South African Schools Act 84, 1996, (SASA) ensures delivery on this right and attempts to redress past injustices in the provision of education (Govender, 2004:97). An example of this would be Section 3(2), which provides that every child be ensured of a place at school thereby making it compulsory on the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education to build the required number of schools.

This enabling Act, (SASA) and its accompanying Regulations also provide for the establishment of a Governing Body (GB) at school which is given powers to adopt a Code of Conduct (s8) according to guidelines provided by the Minister of Education (s8(3)), (Gazette No. 18900 issued on 15 May 1998, Notice 776 of 1998).

The Regulations also provide guidelines as to determining learner conduct at schools, which could result in a suspension and guidance on how to conduct disciplinary hearings. The Governing Body is also empowered by the Act and its accompanying Regulations to make decisions on whether to suspend a learner or to recommend expulsion to the Head of Department who has the final decision to expel, with the MEC for Education hearing the appeal against the decisions of the Head of Department.

The above actions are also subject to just administrative action as determined by Section 33 of the Constitution. This means that while Governing Bodies, the Head of Department and the MEC take decisions with regard to the suspension or expulsion of a learner, their decisions can be challenged under Section 33 of the Constitution. This section stipulates that decisions taken must have been procedurally fair, reasons for such actions must be given and grounds in terms of which administrative action may be reviewed must be indicated (Govender, 2004:98).

The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 provides the framework for schools to deal with discipline, safety and security issues while Government Notices at National and Provincial levels and circulars by KZN Department of Education provide guidelines to schools for the development of policies and procedures that comply with the required legislation.

3.3.1.1 Disciplining of Learners in Terms of Provincial Notice No. 285 of 21 August 1997

Circular 61 of 1998 provides guidelines setting out the procedure that must be followed when a recommendation is made to the Head of Department for the expulsion of a learner. It also provides for the parent or Governing Body to lodge an appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the MEC of Education.

3.3.1.2 Guidelines for Consideration by School Governing Bodies In Adopting A Code of Conduct for Learners In Terms of Government Notice 18900 of 15 May 1998

Guidelines issued in terms of this notice are designed to assist Governing Bodies determine behaviour that attract suspension and also gives guidance on how to conduct disciplinary hearings.

3.3.1.3 Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools in Terms of Government Education Notice 1040 Published in Government Gazette No 22754, 12 October 2001

Regulations relating to safety measures at public schools were set out by the National Minister of Education and guidelines were given to KZN schools in terms of the circulars referred to hereunder.

3.3.1.3.1 KZN Circular No. 55 of 2001, which provides for the establishment of a Discipline, Safety and Security (DSS) Unit, explains the responsibility for DSS at the different levels; the composition of the committee at each school and suggested duties and functions of the committee.

3.3.1.3.2 KZN Circular No. 3 of 2002, which provides guidelines to schools for developing Action Plans in respect of a number of issues, which include:

- The role of the school Governing Body and process of consultation
- Awareness raising, exercising control and developing a plan for dealing with injuries from dangerous objects

- Procedures to deal with violence and threats of violence
- Legal consequences of drug abuse, use of legal and illegal drugs
- Awareness campaigns and help available
- Health risks from the use of drugs and inclusion of contact details for help.

3.3.1.3.3 KZN Circular No. 143 of 2008, which provides guidelines to schools for the development of a policy for the management of learner attendance for the achievement of educational and learning outcomes.

3.3.1.3.4 KZN Circular No. 90 of 2001, which provides policy guidelines on discipline, safety and security in public schools, setting out identified problems, key consequences, policy directives and suggested corrective measures to be interpreted in conjunction with Circular No. 55 of 2001.

This circular emphasizes the importance of a Code of Conduct for learners, a Discipline, Safety and Security Action Plan as well as an Educators' Code of Conduct. It further stresses the involvement of School Governing Bodies, calls for closer cooperation between various levels of Government and between various Government departments such as South African Police Services, Metro Police, Welfare, Health and linkages with the local community, business sectors and politicians in addressing problems of discipline among learners. For example, it suggests as a corrective measure for the problem of bullying, that the services of school counsellors and Social Workers and the Department of Justice be accessed; the application of the Child Care Act, 1983, for the problems of moral decadence and the 'negative impact of living in deprived communities on the lives of learners' (pp5-6).

The above statutory provisions enforce the rights and responsibilities of the various role-players and provide guidelines for dealing with problematic behaviour. Learners have the right to education within an environment that is safe and conducive to learning, but they also have the responsibility to show respect to others, to uphold the Codes of Conduct and to be tolerant and considerate to the rights of others.

Educators, in respecting the rights of learners, have to conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner while ensuring that the various rules, procedures and Codes of Conduct of the school and the South African Council of Educators, are enforced in a manner that disciplines rather than punishes the learner using available resources.

School Governing Bodies representing the community, in turn, act as support structures to the school management and the parents and take decisions affecting the lives of learners while the various policies and procedures guide the processes within which such decision and actions taken.

3.3.2 Legislation and Policies determining Services to Children by Social Services Professional

Section 28 of the Constitution, 1996 provides a child with the right to social services (S 28©, amongst other rights and Government policies following the entrenchment of this right, ensure that services to children under the age of 18 years are in keeping with upholding this section of the Bill of Rights.

3.3.2.1 White Paper for Social Welfare in terms of Government Notice No. 1108 of 1997

This document provides principles, guidelines, recommendations, proposed policies and programmes for developmental social welfare in South Africa thereby ensuring that the individual's right to social services is also respected.

The White Paper on Social Welfare (p15), defines social welfare as “an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people”. The objective of social welfare is therefore to promote the well-being of individuals, families and communities through the rendering of a broad spectrum of social services aimed at enhancing the quality of life of South Africans and providing an enabling environment for the vulnerable, including youth and children, to achieve their aspirations.

Chapter 2 of the White Paper (pp15-24) provides for prevention, early intervention, statutory care followed by the continuum of care as the main levels of services from a strengths based and developmental perspective.

The National goals include the provision of social welfare services to South Africans, not only living in poverty but also those who are vulnerable and those who have special needs and include rehabilitative, preventative, developmental, protective services, facilities and enhancement of social functioning. This includes services to learners presenting with problematic behaviour.

It also calls for the promotion and strengthening of partnerships between Government, the community and civil society (Non Governmental Organizations with developed infra structures) and businesses involved in the delivery of social services as well as intersectoral collaboration between the various Government departments at the local, provincial and National levels (Chapter 3, pp 25-31). This is encouraged with the explicit purpose of sharing of resources and skills.

3.3.2.2 Welfare and Population Development: *Stratplan and Annual Performance Plans 2007/2008-2010/2011.*

The KZN Welfare and Population Development Strategic Plan sets out the overall vision and objectives of the Department taking into consideration the need for the Department to lead efforts in terms of Government mandates, from the traditional social welfare services to services that are developmental and integrated in nature. The plan also proposes the need to focus on partnerships with other stakeholders including other Government departments, businesses, private and civil society including Non Governmental Organizations.

It aims to ensure that services are rendered to the poorest of the poor, particularly women, older persons, the disabled, youth, people affected by substance abuse, children and those infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Services are delivered through:

- The provision of welfare and developmental services which are directed at enhancing the capabilities of people to address the causes and consequences of poverty and vulnerability and
- The development of programmes and policies targeting poverty, including income generation and food security programmes, youth development and empowerment, women development and empowerment and capacity building of the CBO/NGO sector.

The developmental approach to social welfare, while recognizing the need for an integrated and strengths based approach also recognizes that Social Workers amongst other Social Services Practitioners, play an important role in addressing the developmental needs of society (Welfare and Population Development. *Stratplan and Annual Performance Plans, 2007-2008 – 2010-2011, pp 10-11*). This would also entail the development of partnerships with other Social Services Practitioners and concerned organizations to jointly address messy problems by developing and empowering communities through such programmes.

3.3.2.3 White Paper on Transformation of Public Service Delivery in terms of Government Notice 1459 of 1997

This document stresses the need for transformation of service delivery within Government by public servants to ensure that the needs of people are prioritized. It is based on what are known as *Batho Pele* principles, which aim to make services to people more accessible, affordable, and efficient within existing resources and according to predetermined standards of service. It also highlights the need for public servants to treat all people with respect, courtesy and dignity. Public servants are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the Public Service published by the Public Service Commission in 2002. The Code of Conduct is based on values and principles enunciated in Chapter 10 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996.

In addition, Social Services Professionals are bound by a Code of Ethics determined by legislation governing their respective professions, for instance, the Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct as legislated by the Social Services Professions Act, 110 of 1978, makes it incumbent on Social Workers to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner.

3.3.2.4 The Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 as Amended by Act 96 of 1996

Prior to the Child Care Amendment Act, 96 of 1996, the focus of the Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 was on the care and protection of children and promoting their well being by seeking to hold parents “unfit or unable” to have custody of their child when the child is removed from their care.

Since 1996, the focus as with the Children’s Act 33 of 1960, once again shifted to a child being “in need of care” where attention was again on the child’s functioning and quality of life rather than on the inability of the parents. The focus is on the preservation of the family unit and the prevention of the separation of the child from his/her family as far as possible. In the event of any dysfunction within the family unit, then only are statutory services initiated. This ensures that early intervention services to the family and the child is rendered with the view to preserving, developing and strengthening the bond between parents and the children.

When early intervention has failed or if there is a crisis, the statutory intervention in terms of the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 serves as a preventive measure when placing a child in alternate care. However, this intervention is the last resort and can only be justified when parents can no longer serve the best interest of the child. For example, when a learner is presenting with problematic behaviour, and where all intervention efforts have failed the matter is taken to Children’s Court. An allegation is made in an inquiry that he/she is “in need of care” and the Commissioner of the Children’s Court has to determine whether such a child is in need of care following the hearing of evidence presented by the Social Worker. Recommendations made by Social Workers include the removal of the child to alternate care. This may be placement in foster care, at a children’s home or at a school of industries to enforce discipline and treat the dysfunctional family through various strategies, (Information Guide for Social Workers on the Practical Application of the Child Care Act, 74 of 1983, as amended and Regulations, pp1-14).

3.3.2.5 Integrated Service Delivery Model: 2006

The Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) a policy document, was published by the National Department of Social Development in 2006 and stresses the shift from a social

welfare service delivery paradigm to a developmental paradigm which focuses on the development and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities to enable them to become self reliant.

The ISDM calls for intersectoral collaboration involving Government departments' at all three levels (local, provincial and national), between NGO's, CBO's, FBO's and the private sector (business) and acknowledges social processes that:

- Bring about changes in relationships
- Support the individuals' and communities' potential, local knowledge and expertise in transforming and pursuing their own development
- Transform attitudes, institutions and structures
- Influence formulation and implementation of appropriate policies and
- Encourage the continued reorientation of Social Services Practitioners.

The ISDM also provides guidelines for change management at an individual level by, amongst other suggestions, calling for the involvement of the employee at every stage from the conception of the model to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases and at an organizational level by the:

- Definition of roles and responsibilities of the various levels of Government, NGO's, CBO's, FBO's and Private Practitioners/Consultants
- Redefinition of organizational structures for efficient and effective service delivery
- Identification of competencies for the various roles and sectors and development of a competency model
- Evaluating and assessing employees against the newly defined role competency requirements to determine individual competencies, competency gaps and development needs
- Development of a training strategy and performance management system and
- Reviewing and alignment of workflow processes, systems, and procedures in terms of the model which can be done in terms of organizational strategy, organizational policy, organizational business plan or organizational culture.

The need for intersectoral level communication strategies are considered crucial for effective implementation, monitoring, evaluation and for assessing the success of developmental service provision. It calls for the use of existing structures for sharing of programmes, activities, ideas and providing feedback on whether or not services respond to the needs of clients in terms of the objectives of the Department of Social Development.

The model was introduced in response to the growing need for the integration of policy across Government considering the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of social problems and the need to address it holistically. As the social phenomena and the manner in which they are addressed by the various departments are interrelated, it is important to obtain a clear understanding on the roles and responsibilities of other Government departments and the other sectors in relation to the Department of Social Development to bring about effective integration of developmental efforts. Services provided in the sphere of social service delivery to the learner for example, are in terms of

- Levels of intervention, namely, prevention, early intervention, statutory intervention/residential/alternate care, reconstruction and aftercare and
- Nature of services, namely, promotion and prevention services, rehabilitation services, protection services, continuum of care services, mental health and addiction services in terms of specific legislation, policies and international protocol, including the Child Care Act, 74, 1983 as a last resort, (Integrated Service Delivery Model, Towards Improved Social Services, 2007, pp 1-49)

3.4 DEVELOPMENTAL AND PREVENTATIVE PROGRAMMES TO EMPOWER LEARNERS

3.4.1 Empowerment and Related Concepts

Services to learners presenting with problematic behaviour are largely at the prevention and early intervention stages aimed at strengthening, building capacity and rendering of developmental and therapeutic programmes to assist those identified as being at risk before they require statutory services, intensive intervention or placement in alternative care.

Promotion and prevention services also 'aim to enhance the process whereby people are empowered through various programmes and provided with ways and means of taking control of factors that impact on their well-being (Integrated Service delivery Model, 1996, p 20). This calls for a holistic approach taking into consideration individual, environmental, socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to the problem and taking preventive action to reduce the incidence of undesirable conditions and to empower individuals and communities within an integrated strategy involving all role players.

Perkins and Zimmerman, (1995:pp569-578), quoting Rappoport, (1981,1984), define empowerment as "...a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change".

The term theoretically refers to the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of the individual and his ability to function within the broader social and political environment. It also calls for focusing and exploring factors in the environment that can positively influence social problems rather than attributing blame.

According to Perkins and Zimmerman, (1995: pp 9-578), empowerment focused interventions lead to enhancement of wellbeing while attempting to eradicate social problems, provide opportunities for their recipients to develop skills and knowledge and enable collaboration among professionals who are otherwise authoritative experts.

Amongst the numerous definitions of empowerment, Gutierrez et al, (1995: pp534-541), provide a working knowledge of the construct by pointing out that:

- (i) Empowerment is a theory and practice that focuses on issues of "power, powerlessness and oppression" and how they impact on individual, family and community problems and their effect on relationships, (Gutierrez et al, 1995: pp534-541).
- (ii) The goal of empowerment is to ensure that "personal, interpersonal, political power", is increased so that action can be taken to improve the situation, (Gutierrez et al, 1995: pp 534-541).

- (iii) Empowerment as a process consists of “sub-processes: development of group consciousness, reduction of self-blame, assumption of personal responsibility for change and enhancement of self-efficacy”, (Gutierrez et al, 1995: pp 534-541). It also takes place at an individual, interpersonal and community levels of intervention.
- (iv) Empowerment occurs through intervention methods that include, among other actions, basing the helping relationship on collaboration, trust, accepting client’s definition of the problem, building upon strengths of the client, actively involving client in the change process and mobilizing existing resources that enhance functioning and bring about some improvement (Gutierrez et al, 1995: pp 534-541).

Empowerment programmes developed by Social Services Practitioners for learners at schools, therefore seek to educate, capacitate and equip learners with knowledge and skills to take responsibility for their actions taking into consideration the impact of numerous environmental factors and interrelationships thereby bringing about change in attitude and improvement in their behaviour. Programmes developed at a collaborative level enable the various specialists to address the numerous problems systemically while respecting the learners’ right to self-determination.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Behaviour is said to be problematic when it is outside the expectations of what is acceptable by the community within which the learner functions. The issue of morality, which is central to what is acceptable or unacceptable in terms of behaviour, concerns a person’s ability to differentiate between right and wrong and to behave accordingly. This not only concerns an individual’s ability to reason but to put thoughts into behaviour given the presenting pressures. Within a broader context, unacceptable behaviour becomes symptomatic of a society where there is a decline in moral values. Moral regeneration has been the topic of serious debate involving the many role- players identified and all citizens are urged to become proactive in making a difference by assisting people to make ethical decisions from the beginning.

Legislation enacted at a National level determine the various policies in accordance with the principles of the Constitution and further provide for the determination of policies in respect of the various functions and activities of the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development including the structures, policies, procedures and processes involved when dealing with learner behaviour. A common purpose of legislation is to bring about and maintain some order in an otherwise chaotic and ‘messy’ society.

From a systems perspective, the manner in which legislation is interpreted and the intention with which these structures, policies, procedures and processes are implemented, determine whether or not the purposes of legislation is achieved. Legislation, policies and procedures become technical activity systems created and implemented by human activity systems with purposes of their own.

The challenge therefore lies in human activity systems adopting a common understanding of the problem situation and the legislation, policies and procedures that aim to address the situation. It also calls for problems to be dealt with holistically and not in isolation. Taking the research problem into consideration the need therefore is, to identify the scope of the domain, through common interests of the various role players; establishing a community of practitioners to share their knowledge and experience; and within this practice, identifying the common knowledge required to address the problem holistically without losing sight of the individual learner’s right to self determination.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research study was aimed at engaging role-players in a process of dialogue to obtain their cooperation in developing a model involving a multiple partnership for the management of problematic behaviour among learners. The current partnership between the Department of Education and Department of Social Development is sustained through legislation, policies and procedures subject to interpretation and implementation by the representatives of the respective departments. Critical Systems Thinking entails that the problem situation be viewed from various perspectives to be holistic. In an attempt to explore the purposes of the different role-players and to promote creativity, diversity and learning through a process of dialogue, Soft Systems Methodology had been adopted as the methodology of choice. The research therefore involved the identification of gaps in the current system; assessing the roles of the different role-players; identifying the available resources in the form of the different skills, abilities and knowledge, and developing a multiple partnership, which planned, implemented and evaluated a pilot project aimed at empowering and developing learners and equipping their parents with lifeskills.

4.2 AN EXPLANATION OF CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING AND CRITICAL SYSTEMS PRACTICE

Critical Systems Thinking (CST) and its metamethodology, Critical Systems Practice (CSP) (incorporating Total Systems Intervention), influence the research. Critical System Practice pursues a holistic approach within which systems ideas and concepts are used to understand and intervene in problem situations while being creative in the manner in which systems thinking is used. Creative holism, (Jackson, 2003:301) is therefore about the creative use in combination of the different ways of being holistic.

CSP is also designed as an ‘action research’ approach, within which the practitioner seeks to improve their understanding of the work and use this understanding to contribute to research and improve social situations. It also provides organizations to take responsibility for the continued learning of its employees, encouraging individual learning thereby working toward

realizing their own potential and giving them opportunities to question structures and processes that stifle growth and development (McNiff, 2000:59). It can be used flexibly and adapted to different situations in terms of both the methodologies, methods, models and techniques used (Jackson, 2003:307).

Total systems intervention entailed the consideration of the Department of Social Development as both human and technical activity systems directed toward achieving its objective. The technical activities include organizational processes; involving the flows and controls exercised over the flows, within the Department, including its relationships with stakeholders, other organizations and the community it serves, and organizational design; within which the processes take place and which determine the functions performed, control, and coordination over these functions. The human activities are performed within an organizational culture taking into consideration individual and cultural differences as well as the common history shared understanding, sense of belonging and shared learning among people within the organization. The organization's political environment gives a sense of who holds power and how this power is used to influence or disrupt the flow of events within the organization (Flood, 1995:22).

The Department is also viewed as a human activity system in interaction with other service rendering organizations as separate human activity systems within an environment made up of sub-systems including that of learners in secondary schools. Problems presented by learners are considered problems of the system, namely the larger community; problem solving required that the processes involved in improving learner behaviour be analyzed; attempts were made to design, implement and appraise or reflect upon a system that attempts to find alternative processes of addressing problematic learner behaviour (Checkland, 1999:147).

The underlying philosophy and theory of CST is based on the principles of **critical awareness** which involved the researcher considering not only the theoretical underpinnings, strengths and weaknesses of the different systems methodologies but also that the various constraints in the environment within which the research was conducted be taken into account.

The research takes cognizance of the constraints faced by the various sub-systems; for example, learners may be exposed to various pressures from dysfunctional family relationships to peer pressure to conform; the educational system has its own pressures and so does the Social Services sector of which the shortage of skilled professionals and inadequate funding are major constraints.

CST is also committed to achieving '**local improvement**' expanding on Habermas's third interest of human emancipation to "realizing those circumstances in which all individuals could realize their potential" (Flood and Jackson, 1991) as quoted by Jackson, (2003:303). In this study, the aim of the partnership is not only to bring about some improvement in learner behaviour but to encourage each Social Services Practitioner within a community of practice to realize his/her full potential given the presenting constraints.

Human beings have the potential to better their lives. The research would propose that the multiple partnership approach within which learning takes place would address the presenting problems by not only educating and creating awareness but also developing individual action plans for therapeutic intervention in continued problematic behaviour.

CST adopts **pluralism** in that different systems theories, methodologies and methods are used in combination and has established generic systems methodologies with guidelines for 'constitutive rules' of methodologies offered by Checkland and Scholes (1990) quoted by Jackson (2003:307). This approach enables the researcher to consider the research from the perspectives of the different paradigms as well as the different methodologies, depending on the dominant concern at the given period. The proposed study for example, is influenced by the philosophy and theory of the interpretive paradigm in terms of which intervention was aimed at exploring purposes, alleviating distress, generating learning and conducted based on stakeholder participation, one that promotes diversity and learning.

According to the interpretive paradigm, human activity systems, such as organizations, are founded on the purposes that people have and these in turn, depend on their interpretations of the situations in which they act and interact. The interpretive paradigm attempts to understand the different meanings that the different actors bring into a joint activity, discover shared

meanings and share purposeful activity (Jackson, 2003:39) making the use of the Soft Systems Methodology as the dominant methodology in the research.

The social learning theory implicit in Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is interpretive as systems are seen as expressing various viewpoints based on their different worldviews embodied in 'root definitions' which can be turned into conceptual models which are one sided representations of reality. The implications of these different perspectives through debate and discussion can be compared and contrasted with the purpose of generating systemic learning and opportunity for participants to understand and appreciate other viewpoints bringing about possibilities of change, consensus or accommodating divergent values (Jackson, 1994: pp213-229).

4.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research was:

- To determine/confirm the effectiveness of existing partnerships in managing problematic behaviour in the context of community of practice and learning

The objectives of the research were:

- To evaluate policies that determine the current partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education in respect of services to learners at secondary schools
- To modify/adapt these policies, procedures, practices and models of service delivery to include other partners thereby extending the community of practice within which the Department of Social Development functions
- To develop a programme to address problematic learner behaviour within a partnership, that includes other Social Services Practitioners who would have the skills, capacities and interests to bring about positive changes in the life of a learner, adopting a developmental approach and empowering the learner and the parents.

The study is intended to answer the following questions:

- What is the current arrangement between the two departments in the management of problematic learner behaviour?
- What policies and procedures determine the partnership between the two departments when dealing with problematic learner behaviour and what are the challenges identified?
- What alternative intervention strategy can be offered in addressing problematic learner behaviour and moral degeneration?
- How can other partners who provide specialized services to youth be included in the partnership and within a community of practice where learning is considered to be continuous?

4.4 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

Data collection involved a holistic approach, taking into consideration the influences and impact of the following sub-systems on the learner:

- The family, peers, educational and the extended family within the larger system comprising the community and other sub-systems like the Department of Social Development, Non Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and
- The community which can also influence and impact on the learner either directly or indirectly in terms of bringing about changes in behaviour, with the broader goal of maintaining some semblance of order in society by utilization of existing knowledge and seeking creative solutions to messy problems.

Data collection was undertaken as follows:

- Review of policies and procedures that determine the partnership between the two departments when dealing with problematic learner behaviour and the current practices
- A quantitative analysis of the number of cases involving learners referred to Social Workers with respect to the nature of problems presented that would involve expert

intervention by Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) e.g. SANCA, through statistical information collated from discussions and interviews with Social Workers

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Principals and Educators from five (5) schools in the district of Chatsworth, namely Wingen Heights, Newhaven, Westcliff, Protea, and Arena Park Secondary Schools, on learner behaviour, referral procedures and other relevant issues
- Focus group discussions held with seven Social Workers from the Department of Social Development to determine intervention strategies in terms of the Integrated Service Delivery Model
- Focus group discussions held with Social Services Professionals from five (5) Non Governmental Organizations/Government Departments rendering specialized services to youth and families namely, FAMSA, NICRO, SANCA, Department of Health (RK Khan Hospital), Newlands Park Rehabilitation Centre and a Psychologist in private practice.

The qualitative method for data analysis was utilized as the researcher focused on the interactive processes involved in the study with a view to understanding the present situation through:

- Analyzing the information obtained from the information from interviews and focus group discussions with Social Workers and other professionals involved in the study for their inputs and contributions to the proposed partnership. Proceedings of these discussions were recorded to identify similarities and differences in the opinions of participants
- The identification of challenges in the processes and identification of the structural and process elements of the interaction and relationship between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education with reference to communication patterns and of the implementation of policies and procedures that underlie the present partnership between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development
- The identification of the structural and process elements determining the interaction and relationships between the Department of Social Development and NGO's rendering specialized services through discussions, and interviews to understand how Social Workers view the Department in relation to their environment and vice versa.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research intervention was undertaken in the phases, as proposed in the methodology of Critical Systems Thinking, (Jackson, 2003:306).

4.5.1 The ‘Creativity’ Phase

The ‘creativity’ phase involved the elucidation of ideas about the problem situation in which the researcher had to consider the problems in terms of perspectives of the different paradigms and also as reflected through the concerns of the different metaphors.

In focus group discussions with Social Workers from the Department of Social Development, the use of metaphors was encouraged in an attempt to understand how Social Workers viewed the Department and their roles within it with specific reference to problematic learner behaviour, in relation to other service rendering organizations, schools and the community **(see Appendix A).**

The research entailed, from an organizational and structural perspective, an evaluation of the current referral system between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education (in particular, secondary schools in Chatsworth) through a study of the different legislation, policies, procedures and reports.

The role of the Department of Social Development in relation to the Department of Education was analyzed through the various legislation and policies of both the departments, to identify gaps in service delivery. From an educational perspective, legislation such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1997, the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, policies and procedures such as Codes of Conduct regulating learner behaviour, impact on the referral procedures adopted by school personnel.

Legislation such as the Social Service Professions Act, 110 of 1978, the Child Care Act, 74 of 1983, and other relevant policies and procedures determine intervention strategies by Social Services Practitioners at the Department of Social Development. This also involved an evaluation of the implementation of Integrated Service Delivery Model, (2006) that has been

adopted by the Department of Social Development for effective service delivery with specific reference to youth at secondary schools in terms of the different programmes offered to learners by social workers.

Legislation and policies are developed by human activity systems themselves and are therefore subject to variation depending on the individuals and groups objectives and purposes pursued. It would therefore be from an interpretive paradigm that the policies and procedures guiding Social Services Practitioners and Educators are reviewed. Cognizance has to be taken of the resources available and the constraints within which the two departments are expected to implement the various legislation and policies.

From a functionalist systems paradigm, the Department, as an organism and as a service-rendering component of Government, is considered goal directed and purpose driven. It is in constant interaction with its environment; as such has to respond to environmental needs and is guided by environmental demands. In attempts to adapt, Social Workers find different ways to intervene and respond to problem situations within a culture of continuous learning. Further, Social Services Practitioners are bound by professional ethics that demand that they conduct themselves according to the prescribed Code of Conduct of their respective professions.

The 'culture' metaphor of 'putting people first' and the shared values that guide service delivery (Batho Pele Principles) within the Department was also explored through organizational development and individual learning interventions in terms of Otto Scharmers' Theory U (2007, pp 530). These attempted to elicit individual employees' feelings about themselves and their co-workers within the organization in pursuit of organizational goals. Activities focused on:

- Improving on staff relationships by getting people to relate to each other on a personal level, developing honesty, trust and respect for fellow workers while promoting understanding. It also allowed people to suspend their judgment and to speak from an *open mind*
- Improving staff performance and the capacity to work together on related issues by understanding each other and each others' roles in the organization by appreciating

negative qualities about themselves, by introspecting and speaking from an *open heart* to appreciate relationships to cultivate team building within the workplace

- Enabling people to realize the need for positive thinking and act with an *open will* when faced with challenges and to equip them to deal with broader issues and improve service delivery.

Within a paradigm of modernism, it can be stated that Social Services Practitioners seek to maintain order and unity within society and its members. However, as creative individuals they are also motivated by an interest to be free of the constraints and challenges imposed by postmodernism to enable them to engage in discussions and exercise their creativity in finding solutions to difficult problems taking into consideration local conditions. It is within such a 'learning culture' that Social Services Practitioners are continuously developing creative ways of dealing with complex social problems and convert experiential learning into new knowledge.

4.5.2 The 'Choice' Phase

The 'choice' phase involved seeking alternative solutions to the problem in accordance with the strengths and weaknesses of the different systems methodologies. The research was predominantly informed by the interpretive paradigm, which considers the processes involved in the interactions between the various sub-systems.

A Soft Systems Methodology was adopted as the dominant methodology in the 'choice' phase of CSP as it is best suited to the research problem of exploring purpose of organizations/partnerships while promoting diversity within the interpretive paradigm. The researcher, nevertheless was also influenced by Ulrich's (1983) list of twelve questions which is meant to be "used heuristically to interrogate what the system currently *is* and what it *ought* to be" (Midgley, 2000:139).

According to Jackson, (2000:246), Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), was designed by Checkland and his colleagues (1969), as an action research programme which extends "...the usefulness of systems ideas to ill-structured management" and "...the aim was to produce a methodology capable of intervening in "soft" problem situations".

In the first stage of the seven-stage approach, SSM uses systems ideas and methods such as drawing rich pictures to illustrate the problem situation in terms of structural elements namely, the Government and NGO sectors involved and process elements referring to the process of interaction between the sub-systems.

The second stage involves the expression of the problem situation taking into consideration the various issues that emerge from the picture as well as the relevance of the various sub-systems in improving the problem situation by allowing the expression of their own viewpoints. It also involved exploring the problem from different perspectives seen as “the mental constructs of observers in the world... different descriptions of reality, based on different world views, (which) are embodied in root definitions...” (Jackson, 2000:249).

During the third stage root definitions of the problems, which cannot be readily structured to answer questions about what should be done and how it should be done given the complexity of the problem, are constructed with consideration to the following elements: customers, actors, transformation process, world views, owners and environmental constraints.

In the fourth stage, root definitions are turned to conceptual models that are one-sided representations of world views leading to structured debate around the implications of the different perspectives of reality (Jackson, 2000:254) and in this instance, looking at maintaining and improving existing stakeholder relations within a learning paradigm. These conceptual models are regarded as being contributions to discussions and debates around change and implementation of agreed upon changes while also “embracing a paradigm of learning” (Jackson, 2000:247).

The fifth stage then involves a comparison of the conceptual models with what is perceived to exist in the problem situation as seen in the rich picture. SSM takes into consideration the cultural interconnections between individuals and groups and the meanings they attribute to situations; works with the “... different perceptions of the situation, setting in motion a systemic process of learning in which the different viewpoints are discussed and examined in a manner that should lead to purposeful action in pursuit of improvement” (Jackson, 2000:248).

The emphasis that SSM places is on ‘*what*’ ought to be done and on participation, learning and “relationship-maintaining” as referred to by Vickers, quoted by Jackson, (2000:248).

The sixth phase entailed accommodation of the different views and agreement on the changes that are considered desirable and possible which would result in the seventh phase of taking action in the form of implementing the desired changes.

4.5.2.1 Application of Soft Systems Methodology to the Research Problem

In implementing Soft Systems Methodology as a learning system, the proposed research was undertaken in the seven-stages as proposed by Checkland, (1999). Soft Systems Methodology allowed the researcher to view the problem not only from the Department’s perspective but also from that of other role-players involved thereby adopting a holistic approach.

The problem situation identified

This phase involved the gathering of information surrounding the issue of concern from school personnel and Social Workers to gain their understanding of the issues.

The intervention involved an initial assessment by the researcher of the problematic behaviour presented by secondary school learners and the challenges experienced by Social Workers at the Department of Social Development in addressing it. A quantitative analysis of caseloads indicated that approximately 50 learners from secondary schools were referred for social work intervention in a period of three months. Discussions with Social Workers revealed that Principals and Educators were referring the majority of these learners at the stage where suspension from school or the threat of suspension was invoked.

This assessment led to holding a workshop with School Principals, Educators, Non Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations. The purpose at that stage was to clarify roles between the Departments of Social Development and Education in managing problematic behaviour in relation to other organizations dealing with specific behaviours presented. Facilitation was directed at dialogue rather than debate and this allowed participants to stop and listen to others instead of ‘blaming’ each other and the processes of

co-initiating, co-sensing and co-creating appeared to flow smoothly from one to the other (Scharmer, 2007: pp 530). There was an agreement that behaviours presented by learners were symptomatic of moral decay in society in general. Discussions centred around the role of parents, peers and the community in influencing problems such as school truancy, substance abuse and violence.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Educators from the five secondary schools identified for intervention based on high incidence of problems as reflected in Social Workers' caseloads. Questions asked focused on problems presented by learners, steps taken to resolve the problems, role of the School Governing Body, role of the school disciplinary committee and relationships among the two departments and Non Governmental Organizations (**Appendix B**).

The problem situation expressed

In this phase, an attempt was made to understand the situation in terms of the involvement of the various activity systems and the interrelationships between them.

Focus group discussions with Social Services Practitioners from the Department of Social Development were held; they expressed their viewpoints in rich pictures as to their own roles in relation to that of other organizations and in relation to problems presented by learners. Discussions centered around the identification of challenges experienced by Social Workers in respect of referrals from secondary schools to the Department of Social Development and Non Governmental Organizations.

Participants identified the structural and technical processes in the interaction and relationship between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education with reference to referral procedures, policies and guidelines that determine the partnership arrangement between the two departments. Challenges in the current partnership arrangement were also identified. Social Workers also identified the processes determining the interaction and relationships between the Department of Social Development and NGOs rendering specialized services giving the different perspectives in terms of the intervention strategies.

Questions posed in discussions centered on referrals from schools and challenges experience, intervention strategies, linkages and partnerships (**Appendix C**).

Similar questions as those posed to Departmental Social Workers were then posed to Social Services Practitioners from Government departments and Non Governmental Organizations based on the nature of services provided to learners within the geographical area.

The participants at the discussions were able to identify with the common purpose, even though at first, each of the different organizations looked at the issues and challenges faced in relation to youth, from their own organizational/departmental perspective.

Root Definitions of the Problems

The various viewpoints of the involvement of different human activity systems are an indication of which systems appear to be relevant in the problem situation.

Root definitions of the problem from a multiple partnership perspective were developed and elements identified according to the mnemonic CATWOE (Checkland, 1999).

The root definition identified by role-players for the purpose of intervention was:

“A system, based on a multiple partnership approach, to develop, to implement, monitor and evaluate intervention strategies to regenerate sound morals and improve the quality of life of young learners and their families within the community”.

Agreement was reached that the customers or clients being served, namely learners and their parents are the focal point of intervention. The actors rendering these services are the various state departments, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders including the wider community based on their respective competences.

The transformation process would result in a partnership involving multiple partners to address the problem holistically taking into consideration root causes of learner behaviour.

World views, which point to each organization viewing the problem from their own perspective, were challenged to develop a common purpose to bring about positive changes in learner behaviour and enhance the existing partnership. Role-players identified the Department as the principal agency in ensuring the coordination of the partnership, while ownership of the project remains with all stakeholders. Impact of environmental constraints such as inadequate funding and shortage of skilled professionals had to be taken into account and strategies developed to address these would include training of Peer Counsellors and Volunteer Counsellors to provide supportive services.

Development of a Conceptual Model

This step involved the development of a conceptual model by the role players, comparing this to the problem situation, reaching agreement on a model that would accommodate all viewpoints, and one that would lead to the transformation as described in the previous step.

At the numerous discussions and meetings held with stakeholders in the community, the root definition of and the causes of the problems were identified as being symptomatic of moral degeneration. A conceptual model was designed to involve all role-players based on their specialist skills in a project to address the root causes of problematic learner behaviour and implemented by the Department of Social Development to improve the quality of life of families and regenerate sound morals.

The aim of the project was to develop, maintain and sustain a partnership between the Department of Social Development and Department of Education, (Secondary Schools in Chatsworth) in collaboration Non Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and other role-players focusing on the area of concern.

The objective was addressing the presenting challenges, to develop and sustain strategies for the empowerment of the learner and his/her parents and the regeneration of sound values and moral standards through the following activities:

- Developing, implementing and evaluating workshops and services to youth to reduce harmful behaviour and improve the quality of life

- Developing, implementing and evaluating workshops equipping youth with lifeskills to become valuable members of the community
- Developing, implementing and evaluating workshops equipping parents with parenting skills to discipline learners
- Developing, implementing and evaluating workshops equipping volunteers and interested community members with skills to support and monitor progress of youth in programmes
- Continuous monitoring and evaluating the newly created partnership and implement the necessary changes.

The Department looked to NGO's that are subsidized, other Government departments and other organizations that have the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities to join in this joint initiative. Key role players such as SANCA, NICRO, FAMSA, were included as it was recognized that these organizations focus on rendering social work services according to various specialist fields and specific areas of expertise to effectively reach learners within the Chatsworth area and they are subsidized by the Department.

Comparison of Conceptual Model to Current Model

This step involves the comparison of the proposed model to the current situation. It gives an indication of parts of the system that need to be changed to alleviate the problem situation, taking into consideration the cultural interconnections between individuals and groups, comparison of the different perspectives of the situation, and allowing a process of learning to occur while maintaining and developing relationships (Jackson, 2000:248).

Elements of the system identified for attention in comparison to the current situation included:

- Review of the effectiveness of the current system of referring learners from the Department of Education to the Department of Social Development
- Changing the focus of intervention strategies adopted in handling learner behaviour from one that focused on symptoms to one which focuses on root causes and targets learners and their parents
- Involving specialized organizations in a joint project to address root causes of problematic behaviour to deal with the problem holistically.

A new system has to address the behavioural trends displayed by learners as observed at the various schools in the Chatsworth area. Intervention has to include both the learner and his/her the parents. Partners are identified in terms of their expertise and experience in dealing with specific issues and problems relating to youth following an analysis of learner profiles. Topics identified for the lifeskills package, and interactive presentations involving the learners undertaken by the Department/NGO considered the expert in dealing with the particular issue, included the following:

- Enhancing Self Esteem/Mental Health – Department of Social Development
- Dealing with Peer Pressure/Para Suicide – R.K. Khan Hospital
- Education on Teenage Sexuality – Department of Social Development/Aspen
- Awareness and Education on Substance Abuse – South African Council for Alcoholism
- Developing Sound Communication Skills – Department of Social Development/Aryan Benevolent Home Council
- Developing Quality Decision Making Skills – Department of Social Development, South African Police Services/National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of the Offender
- Developing Effective Parenting Skills –Family and Marriage Society of South Africa.

The roles that Community Based Organizations have in providing crucial support to service providers in the welfare and education domain were acknowledged and these organizations (Anti Drug Forum (ADF), Refocus and Upliftment Foundation (RAUF), Peace Players International) were involved in co-facilitating sessions during the workshops.

Making Feasible Changes

The focus in this step is to identify possible changes in the “structure, in procedures, and in ‘attitudes’” (Checkland, 1999:180).

Consideration to the different roles performed by the various role-players and their views as to their contributions, resulted in a sustained partnership between the secondary schools in Chatsworth and the Department of Social Development, Chatsworth in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

The following changes were agreed on:

- The Department of Social Development will not be the only organization that deals with referrals from schools; other specialist organizations are also equipped to intervene. However, the most appropriate intervention would be a joint one involving relevant organizations
- Procedures in referrals to be re-looked at with a view to making an appropriate referral prior to the learner being suspended from the school
- Human beings, within their individual and collective consciousness, reflect certain characteristics, referred to as 'attitude'. These refer to changes in expectations, influence, and readiness to rate different kinds of behaviour as reflective of positive or negative change. The researcher had to monitor changes in 'attitudes' so that when changes had to be made in the problem intervention, there was general perceptions that there is agreement that there is an 'improvement'(Checkland, 1999:181)

Role-players, given their shared experiences, agreed to pilot a project with a selected number of secondary schools to address the challenges of moral degeneration among youth through developmental and empowerment strategies to:

- Reduce the incidence of socially unacceptable behaviour among youth in the community through various strategies
- Enhance parenting skills and to capacitate parents with the necessary skills to address present day challenges
- Capacitate youth with leadership skills to enable them to provide the necessary guidance and support to their peers
- Capacitate volunteers and interested community members with skills to enable them to assist professionals in their service delivery.

Implementing Changes

This phase involved taking action by the actors in the form of implementing the desired changes in the problem situation.

Having agreed on the nature of the intervention strategies, role-players were identified according to their fields of expertise, to participate in a joint pilot project coordinated by the Department of Social Development, to develop and empower learners and their parents to improve their quality of life, through workshops addressing root causes of problematic behaviour.

The pilot project targeted approximately 70 learners from 5 schools in the first three-day workshop and 30 more in the second. Of the number of parents targeted, only 30 parents attended the first day of the first workshop and only six chose to attend the rest of the programme.

One Peer Counsellor workshop at one of the schools was conducted with 15 learners identified by their peers, to equip and capacitate them with life skills to provide guidance and support to their peers. A Volunteer Counsellor workshop was conducted with 20 volunteers and interested stakeholders to capacitate them in their efforts to assist Educators, Social Workers and other professionals in addressing the challenges.

4.5.3 The 'Implementation' Phase

The 'implementation' phase involved taking action in the form of planning and implementation of a project targeting learners presenting problematic behaviour based on the alternate partnership proposed utilizing SSM. Cognizance had to be taken of the presenting boundaries. A boundary is referred to as being the area where decision-making processes within the system have the power to bring about changes or not. It also generally refers to the distinction that an observer makes between an entity taken as a system and the environment surrounds it (Checkland, 1999:312).

In the study, the following had to be taken note of:

- The socio-economic and cultural factors prevalent in the communities, in which the schools are situated and which influence learner behaviour
- The legislative framework which determines policies and in effect, the structures within which social services are rendered to the community

- The ‘power’ relationships between Government departments and Non Governmental Organizations created and determined by policies for example, Government’s funding policy
- The differing levels of commitment that each individual person brought to the learning and change processes.

It also involved managing the change processes within the Department and at the broader level when involving all relevant stakeholders while promoting learning among Social Services Practitioners and other participants.

4.5.4 The ‘Reflection’ Phase

The ‘reflection’ phase involved learning about the problem situation in a holistic manner and evaluating the workshops with role-players to assess the new partnership and the learning experienced to improve the partnership. As an ‘action research’ initiative, the project is of a continuous nature, which allows Social Services Practitioners to develop competences in dealing with problem situations as a collective. It intends extending the current community of practice within the Department to other practitioners as well as reinforcing the idea that joint efforts actively contribute to research and the creation of knowledge.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The research was informed by Critical Systems Practice, which allows for the researcher to be holistic in that system ideas and concepts are used to gain understanding of problem situations taking into consideration that human activity systems (organizations) are guided by specific purposes.

Soft Systems Methodology was identified as the dominant methodology with its seven-stage approach, which is suited to solving unstructured problem situation such as that of problematic behaviour among learners. It allowed a collaborative effort by multiple partners with specific skills, abilities and knowledge to equip learners with different lifeskills.

Role-players, through dialogue, identified and clarified the problem situation, developed root definition of the problem, developed a conceptual model which resulted in changes in some elements of the current system and implemented a pilot project which targeted learners from five schools. The impact of environmental constraints such as inadequate funding and shortage of skilled professionals had to be taken into account and strategies developed to address these would include training of Peer Counsellors and Volunteer Counsellors to provide supportive services.

Soft Systems Methodology is also flexible as it allows for creativity without imposing, choice without being prescriptive, implementation taking into consideration the dynamics of the situation and reflection on the consequences and implications of action taken and the need for continuous change and development on the part of the Practitioner as an individual and part of a community of practice.

As an 'action research' initiative, the project is of a continuous nature, which allows Social Services Practitioners to continuously engage in learning while developing competences in dealing with problem situations as a collective while reinforcing the idea that collaborative efforts actively contribute to research and the development of knowledge.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the research findings following the implementation of the proposed conceptual model, which was developed with the cooperation of role-players through engagement in a process of dialogue. Meetings were held with relevant stakeholders, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Educators from the schools targeted and focus group discussions with Social Workers from the Department and Non Governmental Organizations were held. As the researcher was very involved in the research project, a qualitative analysis of the information obtained was undertaken. Research findings are reported according to the steps suggested in Soft Systems Methodology though they did not necessarily take place in that order.

5.2 UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT IN RELATION TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PROBLEM SITUATION

In the ‘creativity’ phase of Critical Systems Practice, focus group discussions were held with Social Workers from the Department of Social Development and the use of metaphors was encouraged in an attempt to understand how they viewed the Department and their roles within it with specific reference to problematic learner behaviour, other service rendering organizations, schools and the community. There was unanimous agreement among the seven Social Workers that the Department represented a ‘human heart’ in that they viewed the organization as being central to all social service activities within the community, confirming the description of the Department as an ‘organism’.

Figure 5.1 explains the various roles and functions undertaken by the Department in relation to other organizations and the community it serves. The functions undertaken are described as those undertaken by the ‘human heart’ as an organ. These functions include that of providing stability, direction and nourishment, giving and sustaining life, in synergy with its environment, as a pacesetter, coordinating, regulating and monitoring the functioning of the other organs or organizations within the community in the case of the Department.

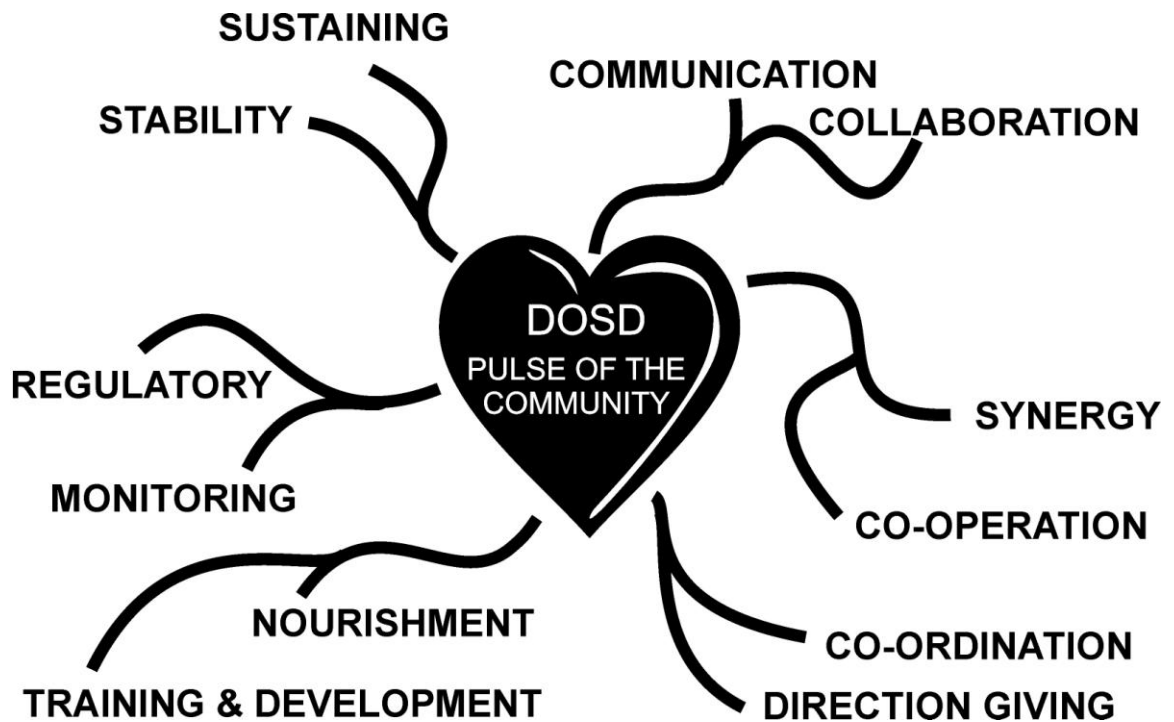


Figure 5.1 Diagram: The Metaphorical Functioning of the Department as a ‘Human Heart’

According to Morgan (1997: 34), the description of an organization as an organism points attention to the relationship between the organization and its environment and the effectiveness of its functioning.

A review of legislation and policies of the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education was undertaken to analyze the respective roles and to identify gaps in service delivery. The following was noted:

- Legislation and policies determine purpose, provide guidelines and procedures for dealing with issues
- The interpretation and implementation of these policies, guidelines and procedures are done having regard to prevailing socio-economic, political circumstances, human emotions and any other factor which may have some influence on decision making

- The manner in which policies, guidelines and procedures are implemented or not implemented is a subjective decision based on a value judgment on the part of the official concerned.

The above observation is supported by Lockett & Grossenbacher (2003:147), who explain that the difficulties that public agencies have in achieving public goals are due to the assumptions held by conventional management approaches to problem solving at the interface of policy and implementation. These assumptions fail to take into consideration factors such as the willingness or capacity to implement policies, values among role-players differ, and the fact that organizations are not closed entities but are in constant interaction with their environment (Lockett & Grossenbacher, 2003:147).

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE APPLICATION OF SOFT SYSTEMS METHODOLOGY TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

A total systems intervention entailed that the various subsystems impacting on the learner be identified through information obtained in completed learner profiles, their influences analyzed, intervention strategies implemented based on the dominant problems presented, identification of and contributions by other Social Services Practitioners with the aim of addressing problematic learner behaviour holistically. Given the dynamics of the various systems in interaction with each other within an environment that is constantly changing, SSM was adopted in pursuit of attempting to find an alternate way of addressing learner behaviour.

In implementing Soft Systems Methodology as a learning system, the proposed research was undertaken in the seven-stages as proposed by Checkland, (1999). This allowed the researcher to view the problem from various perspectives including that of the state departments as well as the service rendering NGOs adopting a holistic approach to problem solving. In the problem identification stage, rich picture drawings pointed to viewpoints expressed by Social Services Practitioners from the Department of Social Development in terms of their own roles in relation to that of other organizations and in relation to problems presented by learners.

Figure 5.2 identifies the challenges, the processes involved and the different services offered by the Department of Social Development to learners presenting with problematic behaviour. School personnel refer most of these cases directly to the Department for services. In some instances the learner comes into conflict with the law and the judicial processes are followed which would involve the Department and NICRO at some stage. Some cases are then referred by the Department to NGOs (e.g. SANCA) for specialized services if the Department's Social Worker deems it necessary. Community Based Organizations, when unable to contain the problems, then refer the case to the Department.

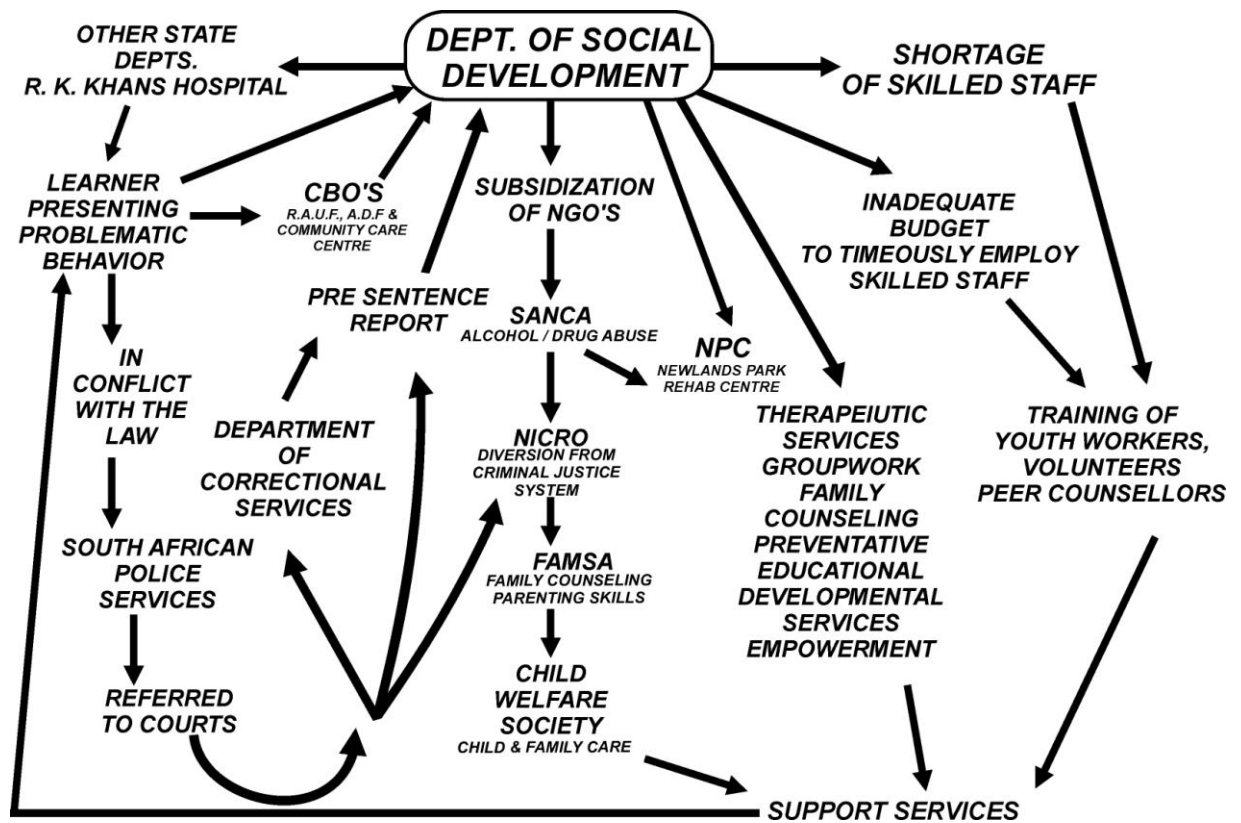


Figure 5.2 Diagram: Challenges, Processes in terms of Intervention and Services by the Department.

Figure 5.3 identifies the specific behaviour targeted by the NGOs in terms of their fields of expertise. Non Governmental Organizations subsidized by the Department employ Social Workers who are trained to render specialized services; for example, SANCA renders services to alcoholics and drug dependents; NICRO, services to youth in conflict with the law among other services, targeting specific areas for intervention. Social Workers employed by the

Department provide generic services to youth and other vulnerable groups as determined by legislative mandates. The Department also refers to or has cases referred from other state departments which include the Department of Justice (courts), Department of Health (hospitals and clinics), South African Police Services and Department of Correctional Services. Certain problems such as gangsterism cannot be adequately addressed by any one organization and require an integrated approach.

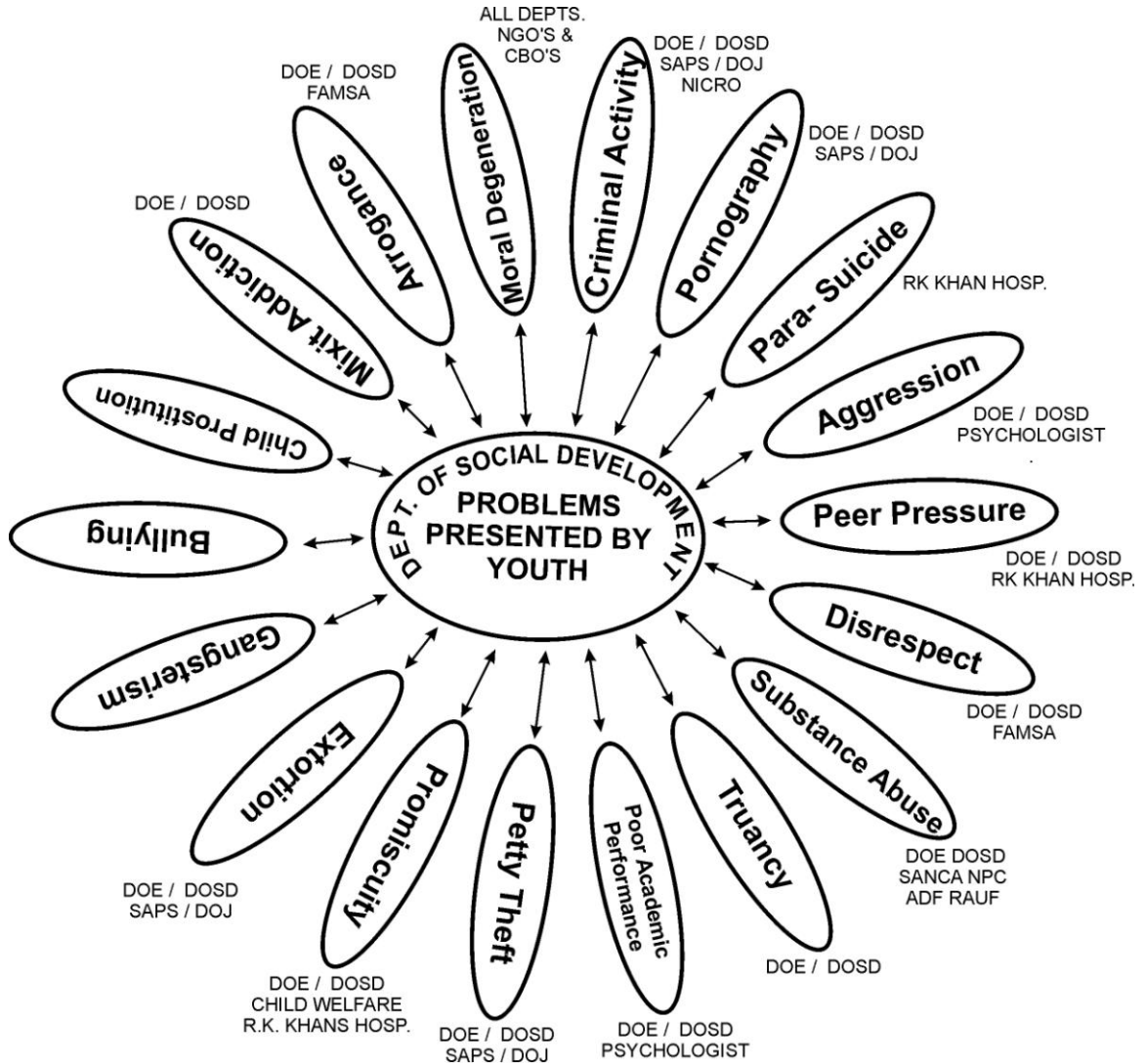


Figure 5.3 Diagram: Services Rendered by NGO's Specializing in terms of Intervention in Specific Problems Presented.

Evaluation of the initial discussions pointed to the relationships formed between the schools and the Social Workers, being based on the referral procedures adopted by the school management. The structural and technical processes in the interaction and relationship between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education with reference to referral procedures, policies and guidelines that determine the partnership arrangement between the two departments and challenges in the current partnership arrangement were also identified.

Figure 5.4 illustrates the processes followed by school personnel in identifying problematic behaviour; the referral system between the Departments of Education and Social Development; steps taken by the respective departments in addressing the problem and services offered by relevant organizations. This also reflects the legislative and policy directives that determine the steps to be taken, indicating the involvement of both technical activity systems and human activity systems and human activity system.

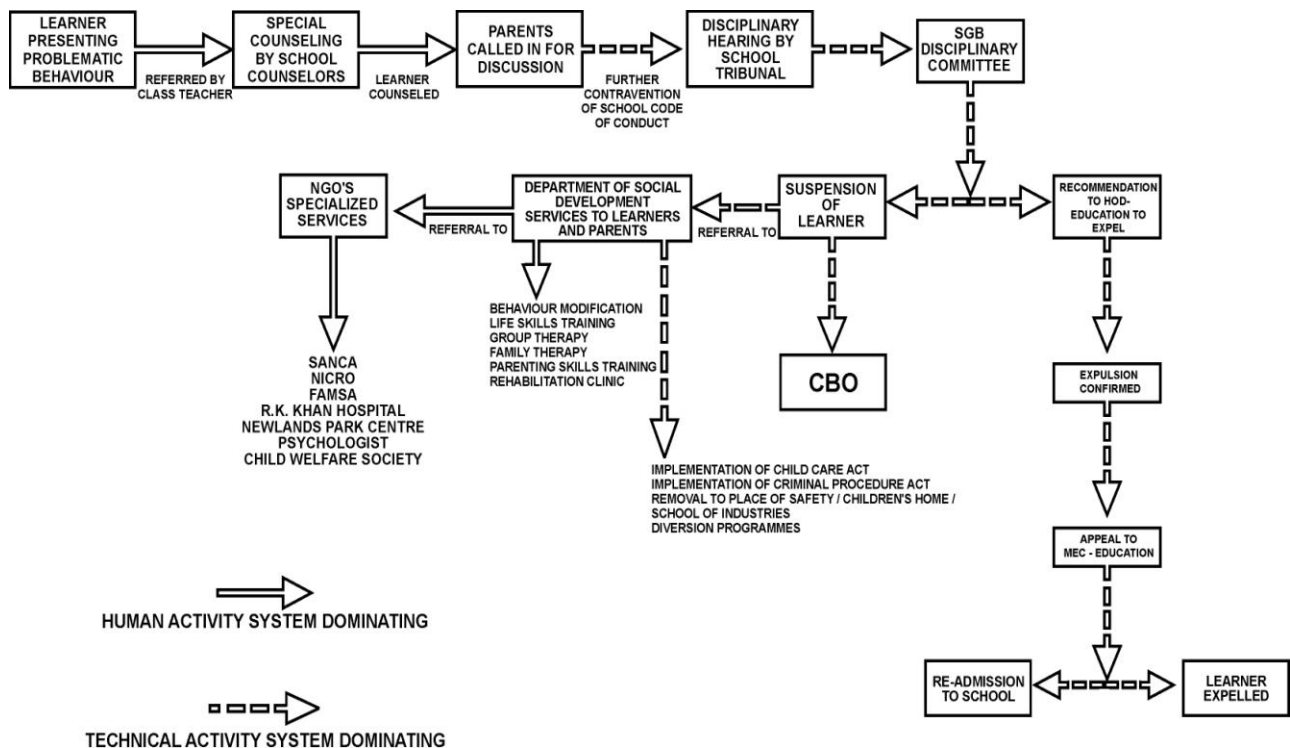


Figure 5.4 Diagram: Intervention in terms of Technical Activity and Human Activity Systems in Problematic Learner Behaviour

At a meeting with school personnel and other role-players in October 2008, numerous concerns were expressed. These included:

- Learners exhibited behaviour such as a lack of respect for parents and figures of authority, lack of discipline, aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour
- Parents are not equipped to deal with their children's behaviour and due to various reasons do not sufficiently respond to the schools efforts to discipline their children
- Service providers are working in isolation of each other when dealing with youth and problematic behaviour
- Service providers do not have sufficient trained personnel to render services after hours
- Caseloads of Social Service Professionals are high and there is a shortage of skilled personnel.

The roles of the various service providers required clarification. This included the Department of Social Development in partnerships with a number of NGO's which are being subsidized by the Department for various programmes. **Table 5.1** gives an indication of the specialized rendered by the specific NGOs within the Chatsworth district; all subsidized by the Department.

ORGANIZATION	SERVICES RENDERED
SANCA	The South African National Council for Alcoholism (and Drug Dependence) renders education, awareness, prevention and treatment services in respect of substance abuse.
NICRO	The National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders renders education, awareness, prevention and treatment services in respect of crime and criminal behaviour.
FAMSA	Family and Marriage Society of South Africa render education, awareness, prevention and treatment services to dysfunctional families.
Chatsworth Child and Family Welfare Society	Renders statutory and treatment services to families and children under age 12years. The Department renders services to children above age 12years and their families.
Durban Mental Health Society	Renders education, awareness, and prevention and treatment services in respect of mental and emotional wellbeing.
Aryan Benevolent Home Council	Provide residential care to children and other vulnerable groups.

Table 5.1 Non Governmental Organizations Operating within the Chatsworth District

Role clarification proved to be difficult as numerous challenges were identified. These included:

- Schools are not equipped with sufficiently trained personnel to handle the complexities of problems presented and the Social Worker identified for the area is inundated and therefore not easily accessible
- Schools have an inadequate number of Educators to deal with large numbers of learners and the high levels of stress results in a high absenteeism rate among Educators, which in turn places undue stress among the rest of the staff
- The Department of Social Development is experiencing a shortage of skilled professionals and the inadequate numbers of Social Workers are unable to provide a holistic service to the large number of learners referred by the schools. NGO's also experience the similar shortages of skilled Social Workers
- The services of NGOs are limited by the funding received from the Department and in terms of the nature of services provided to the specific focus groups served. Referrals are made by some schools to CBO's who assist in stabilizing the presenting problem but which are inadequately equipped or unqualified to handle critical issues
- There is a need for a multiple partnership approach to address the various causes of problematic behaviour in a holistic manner targeting learners and their parents.

Structured interviews were then conducted with Educators from five secondary schools. Responses to the question, *how do problems of uncontrollable behaviour manifest itself in your school?* were as follows:

- Poor attitude displayed by learners towards their education and their lack of discipline
- Learners show a lack of respect for authority figures and fellow learners
- Increase in incidence of criminal acts of violence
- Increase in incidence of substance abuse
- Parents lack involvement in their children's activities in school and outside
- Inadequate parenting skills among parents whose children presented problems
- Rebellion, aggression and arrogant behaviours presented by learners.

The general world view expressed by the respondents pointed to dysfunctional family systems, breakdown of value systems, degeneration of morals in society, poverty as a consequence of socio economic factors and the impact of modern technology, namely cell phones (mxit) and the resulting problems caused by its abuse. These findings are supported in the report on the Moral Regeneration Workshops ('Freedom and Obligation: A Report on the Moral Regeneration Workshops I & II: pp 1-20, moralregeneration.htm).

In response to the questions of *who identifies problematic behaviour and how is this done? when and at what stage are the parents called in? and explanations of intervention strategies in terms of legislation, policies and procedures*, there was general agreement that the following procedures are followed:

- When a class teacher identified a learner presenting behaviour that deviated from the school's Code of Conduct, the learner is referred to the identified school counsellor for further attention if the teacher could not deal with it herself/himself
- Depending on the seriousness of the contravention, the counsellor would either counsel the learner or immediately call in the parents
- If there are repeated contraventions or if it is very serious, the matter is referred to the school tribunal for an investigation, hearing and recommendation regarding a sanction
- The Disciplinary Committee then decides on the matter and makes a ruling; in the majority of cases, this results in a suspension of the learner for a given number of days
- In the event of an expulsion, which is very rare, the decision is referred to the Head of Department for Education for confirmation and if endorsed, the learner is expelled. The learner and his parents then have the right to appeal against the decision to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for the Department of Education
- When the learner is suspended, his return to school is conditional, in that there has to be confirmation that he is receiving social services
- Most cases are referred to the Department of Social Development while a few are directly referred to CBO's which then refer the learner to the Department when they cannot deal with the complexity of the matter

- The Department of Social Development, if necessary, then refers the family for specialized services to NGOs such as SANCA, FAMSA and NICRO
- Schools have trouble in referring a learner to the Social Worker or Educational Psychologist of the Department of Education due to the high volume of cases awaiting assessments.

Responses to the questions on *the role of the School Governing Body* which indicates the involvement of the community, differed from the SGB being closely involved in the management of discipline within the school (four schools), to only governance, monitoring, supervising the financial management of the school and playing a supportive role in disciplinary issues (one school).

The role of Disciplinary Committees is reported as playing a functional role to address and prevent serious violations of the Codes of Conduct. Responses also differed on the issue of the number of times that the Disciplinary Committees met from once a year, quarterly, every fortnight and two schools reported weekly meetings. One school reported an average of twenty suspensions in the first four months of the school calendar indicating the active role played by the School Governing Body.

In expressing the problem through focus group discussions, Social Workers from the Department, pointed out that the bulk of referrals of learners presenting with problematic behaviour are from schools. In a few cases, parents themselves approach the Department for services.

Referrals to the hospital, the rehabilitation centre or to a NGO rendering specialized services are done via the Social Worker from the Department in most of the cases, and in some via the Courts or Child Welfare Society.

Major challenges reported by Social Workers from the Department and other organizations include:

- Schools refer learners for social work intervention at the point of the learner being suspended or when threatened with suspension

- Schools do not refer with written reports; most referrals are done telephonically or via the parents
- There are inadequate professional resources such as skilled counsellors in schools or specialized psychological services
- Some schools have unrealistic demands in that they expect immediate improvements upon intensive services rendered to the learner
- Problems presented are often complex and root causes are not dealt with, leading to repeated contravention of the Code of Conduct
- There are insufficient specialized treatment facilities for young learners; for example, learners with substance abuse problems are admitted to the state rehabilitation centre for adults, only when it can accommodate a group of learners within the same age group for a programme targeting that age group. This often means a long waiting period before admission
- Some parents are uncooperative and show little interest in the welfare of their child while the majority of parents lack adequate parenting skills.

The root definition identified for the study was developed with the cooperation of all participants who were in agreement, that a multiple partnership approach has to be adopted in an attempt to address problematic behaviour. This was after the researcher challenged mental models that reflected each participant as representing their organization as the main role-player in the intervention process rather than the learner as a focal point of intervention.

Figure 5.5 explains the conceptual model participants agreed to as a joint initiative based on their competences, with the common purpose of improvement in the lives of learners and their families, which in turn, would lead to improvements in community life. The model points to identification of root causes of problematic behaviour underlying symptoms of problematic behaviour presented by learners as identified by Educators; systems involved in the direct intervention and systems supporting intervention aimed at keeping the learner in school.

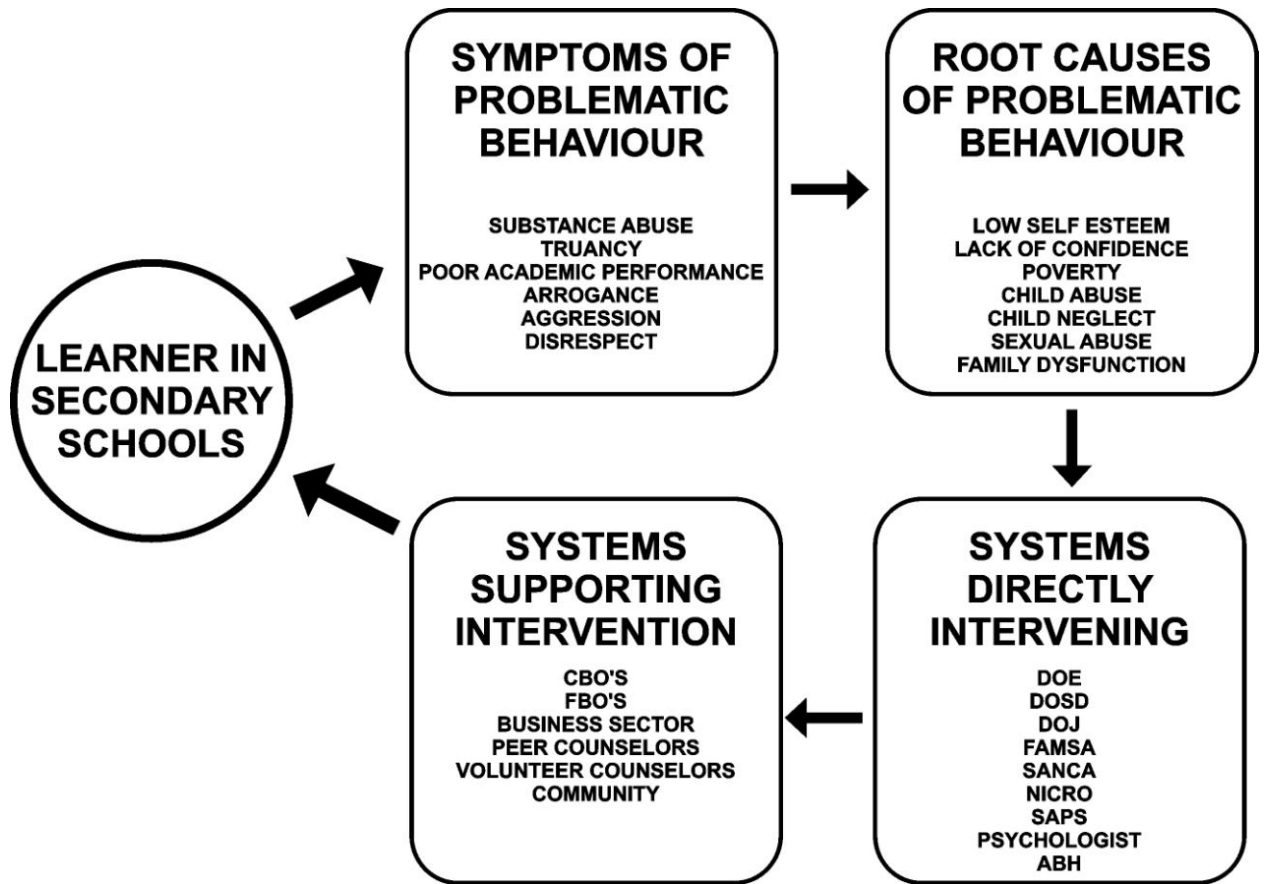


Figure 5.5 Development of the Conceptual Model: Symptoms, Causes, and intervention Systems

For the development of the conceptual model Social Services Practitioners agreed that:

- Intervention at the earliest stage is the best option, possibly at the primary school level
- The Department of Education must be proactive in identifying unacceptable behaviour and involve key service providers at primary school level
- Services must be at an educational and preventative level, which is helpful in early identification of root causes of dysfunctional behaviour
- Services must be rendered to both learners and parents and holistic intervention has to take place at the level of the various sub-systems taking into consideration bio-psycho-social and cultural factors

- Networking and referral systems need to be changed to include a multiple partnership approach
- Value systems must be addressed at the family, school and community levels
- A multi-disciplinary team approach or a multiple partnership approach is required to address learner behaviour holistically. There must be strong relationships among the different partners based on the strength of each partner
- Each organizations role and functions must be acknowledged to prevent duplication of services
- The role of the specialist must be accessed for optimum benefit to the learner; each role-player brings his/her expertise into the partnership
- Linkages are created when role-players acknowledge and understand each others' roles and develop common purpose and goals
- Communication has to take place regularly through the development of forums which must be created for the benefit of the community. A directory of service providers in the community must be created enabling easy access to services
- Forums provide opportunity for exploring and developing different modes of treatment and intervention strategies that are realistic and can be effective
- Community organizations and businesses have a role to play in providing positive role models with whom learners can identify and for the regeneration of sound morals.

Figure 5.6 explains the processes involved in the application of the conceptual model proposed. It starts with the identification of the problematic behaviour presented by learners; referral of the learner and the parents to empowerment and lifeskills programmes undertaken jointly by the Department of Social Development with NGO's followed by specialized services if the need for this has been identified alternatively, support services by CBOs , trained Peer Counsellors and Volunteer Counsellors.

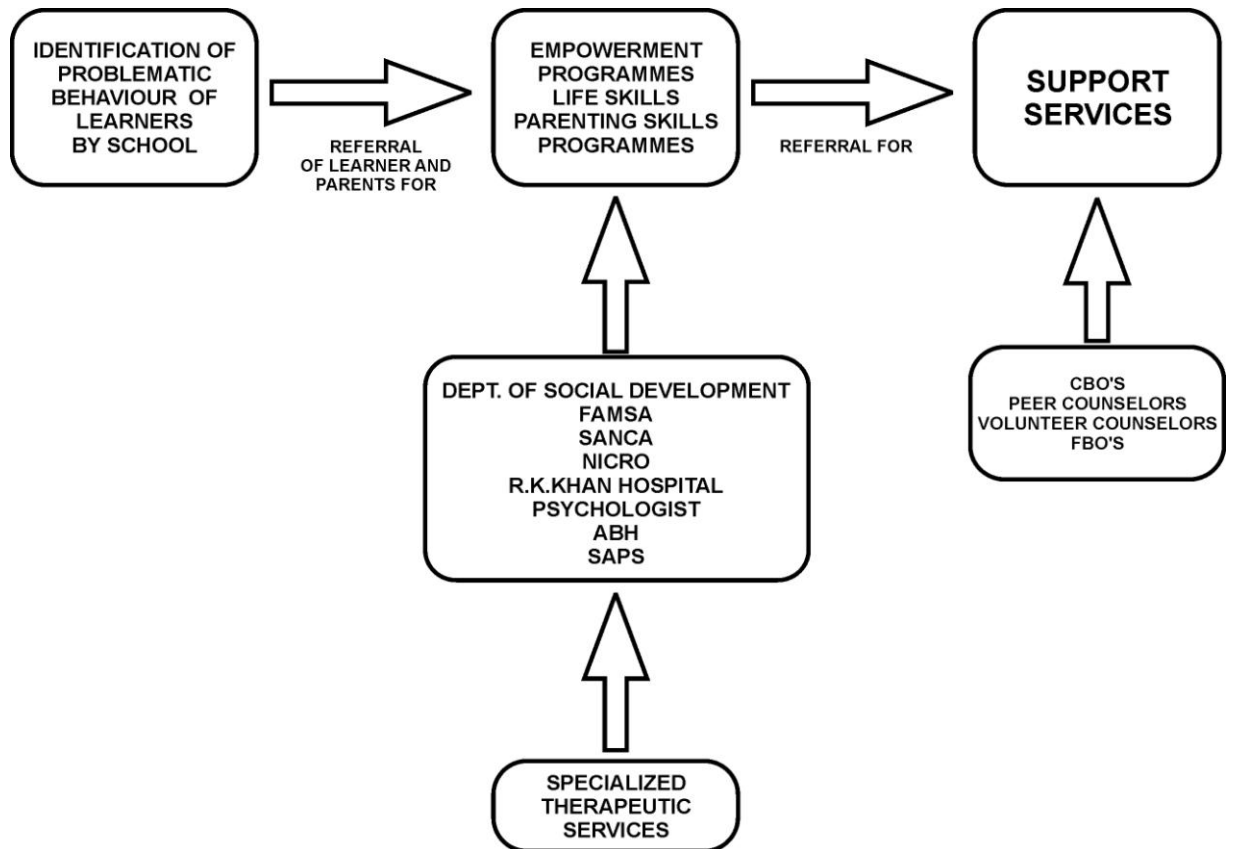


Figure 5.6 Diagram: Proposed Conceptual Model

In comparing the proposed Conceptual Model with the real situation, the following elements within the current system were identified for attention:

- **The Referral System**

The current situation addressed problematic learner behaviour at a crisis point, having observed a pattern of dysfunctional behaviour on the part of the learner, which leads to his suspension from school. This action by the school puts undue pressure on the Department of Social Development to attempt to correct the learner’s behaviour within a short period. The school follows procedures, which allows for the suspension of the learner. However, readmission of the learner is conditional and in effect, does not guarantee improvement in behaviour upon intervention by a Social Worker. Participants agreed that behaviour that is cause for concern must be identified as early as possible, and referrals for psycho-social intervention must not be delayed until the learner is suspended from school.

- **Focus of Attention**

Changing the focus of intervention strategies adopted in handling learner behaviour from one which focused on symptoms to one which focuses on root causes was identified as being crucial. Social Services Practitioners are, in most cases, dealing with symptoms of social pathology, for example, a learner turns to drugs therefore he/she must be treated for substance abuse. Underlying causes, such as parents' inability to discipline their children, are secondary to ensuring that the learner has to return to school due to the condition imposed.

- **Targets of intervention**

Addressing the above aspects, point to the targets of the intervention strategy from the focus of the learner to a holistic one to include the family, namely the parents and the learner. A systems perspective to problem solving within a family situation requires that the focus of attention not be on one member of the family only. The various interrelationships and the interactions between the different members must be taken into consideration together with the impact of environmental factors. Parents play a vital role in the upbringing of their children; any dysfunction within the relationship between the parents or within the parents as individuals, will affect parenting skills and responsibilities. A critical systems approach therefore requires that services to a learner presenting with problems, be addressed holistically from inception. Intervention strategies aimed at empowering learners and their parents include building trust and collaboration in the helping relationship, small group discussions, viewing the problem situation through the clients' perspective, identifying strengths of the clients, teaching skills to be utilized in specific situations and actively involving the learners and their parents in the change process (Gutierrez, et al., 1995:533).

- **Partners in the Intervention**

Involving specialized organizations in a joint programme to address root causes of problematic behaviour is crucial in dealing with the problem holistically. This would not only lessen the burden on the current service providers, like the Department, but also allows for the learner and the parents to gain a wider understanding of their situation and equip them with skills to make informed choices. Such an approach enables the sharing of resources, skills, knowledge and expertise. It also prevents the

duplication and overlapping of services among organizations and can lead to the effective implementation of the Integrated Service Delivery Model which aims to promote a developmental approach, inter-organizational and inter-governmental relations for effective service delivery.

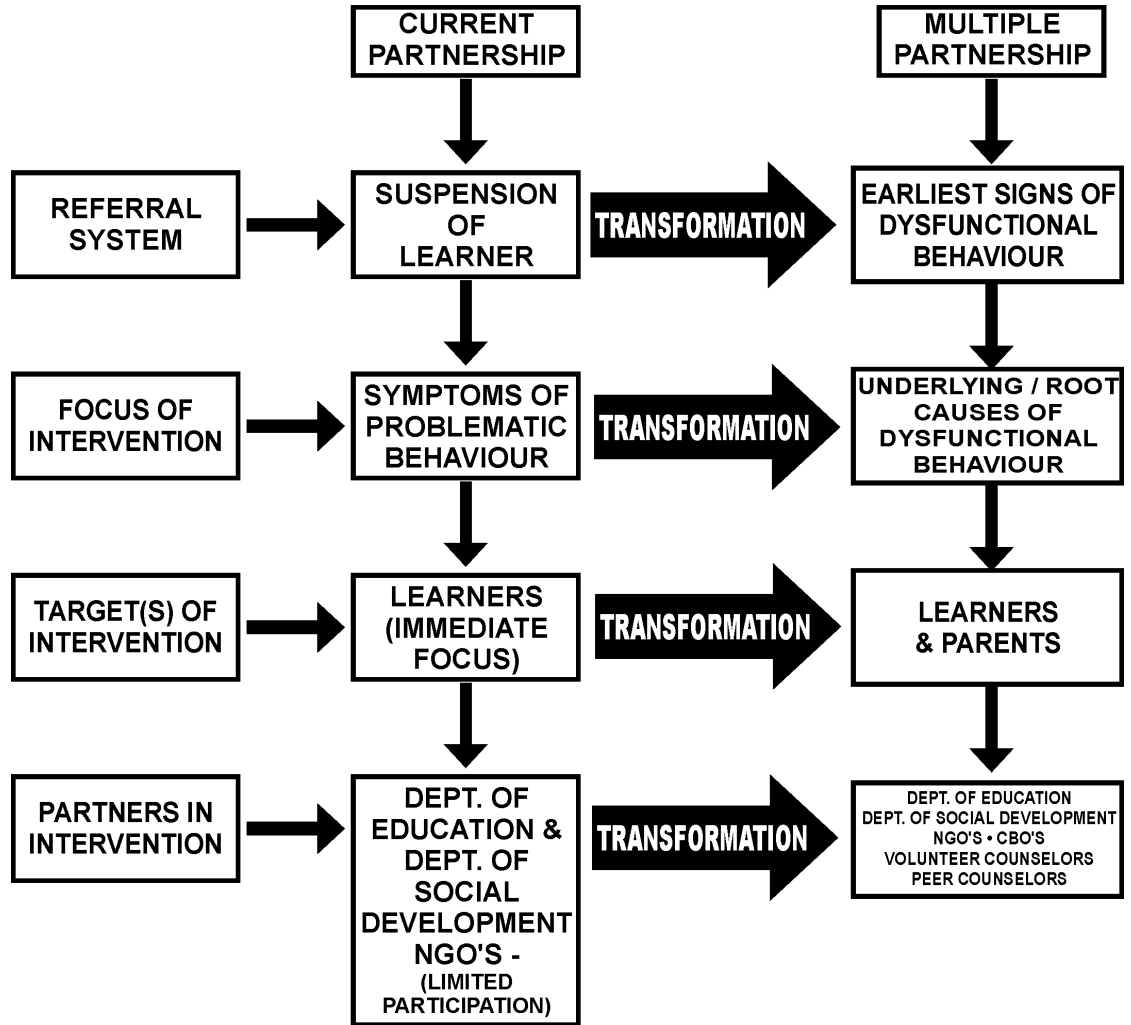


Figure 5.7 Diagram: Comparison of the Conceptual Model to the Current Situation

In comparing the current partnership to the proposed conceptual model in **Figure 5.7**, four elements of the current system required intervention and transformation to accommodate a holistic approach to dealing with learner behaviour.

The elements identified for intervention include:

- The referral system to shift from referral at a crisis point to early detection of problematic behaviour
- The focus of intervention to shift from symptoms to root causes of behaviour
- The target of intervention to now include the parents of the learner
- The partners in the intervention to be extended to include other Social Services Practitioners rendering specialized services.

5.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Having agreed to the new partnership arrangements, the conceptual model was introduced as reported. The first workshop, which was interactive in terms of its content, aimed at developing and educating learners on the relevant lifeskills, was evaluated by organizations participating, and changes were made to accommodate other organizations such as NICRO in the second workshop.

What was of interest was that a group of learners in the first workshop was extremely uncontrollable and assaulted a learner from another school, which led to their exclusion from the workshop on the last day. They were subsequently suspended from school and it again became the responsibility of the Department to find creative ways of dealing with the new problem situation. As Manager of the office, the researcher arranged for NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of the Offender) to include the learners in a diversion programme to hold them accountable for their actions which could have resulted in criminal charges pursued against them. The programme is run by NICRO as part of an integrated effort to divert young offenders charged with a criminal offence in Court, away from the Criminal Justice System through a process of educating the offender on the consequences of his actions and teaching him quality decision making skills.

It then became apparent that some changes had to be implemented as the kind of behaviour presented, warranted stricter measures be taken. The presenters reduced the numbers of learners at the next workshop to enable stricter discipline and control. NICRO and SAPS were included in the next workshop as their roles in terms of addressing criminal behaviour could

not be effectively dealt with by any other organization or the Department. In this respect, boundary judgments had to be made, considering the areas of specialty of both NICRO and South African Police Services (SAPS).

The researcher also noted the following:

- Non Governmental Organizations funded by the Department may have been coerced into participation by that fact and not of their free will
- A few Social Workers within the Department were initially apprehensive to participate in the research with one of them refusing to participate in the research despite being given the assurance that all information will be treated confidentially
- The researcher is the Manager at the Department office from which the research was conducted and being in a position of authority, could have influenced a number of decisions that had to be made during the research, an important one being referring a group of learners for a diversion programme implemented by NICRO
- The learners who were exposed to the pilot project were from different schools. Many learners shared similar socio-economic backgrounds, but a few were considered as not displaying serious problems that warranted serious attention. This also points to subjective judgments made by Educators when assessing learners for the programme
- Different schools also identified learners as per their interpretation of the schools rules; some appeared to be adhering to the procedures religiously as indicated in the frequency in which their Disciplinary Committees met in comparison to the other schools where the frequency of the meetings were much less
- SAPS, Chatsworth, who were invited to participate in the first programme, failed to attend and the reason given was the change of management at the station, hence the presenter did not have the necessary permission to attend from his management.

Boundary judgments are unavoidable when undertaking a qualitative analysis of information and when the researcher is actively involved. Midgley et al, (1998:467-478), explain that critical awareness in Critical Systems Thinking also entails the researcher be critically aware of the many boundaries which may be used in the analysis and the effect that these may have on the intervention.

Boundary judgment is also closely linked to value judgments as the adopted values determine the boundaries that define the knowledge relevant to the intervention. This process of determining boundaries is an ethical one that involved critical reflection on the gaps in the current system and what changes ought to be made (Midgley et al, 1998:467-478).

5.5 REFLECTING ON THE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ADOPTED

The pilot project was conducted based on the need to extend the current partnership between the Departments of Social Development and Education to include other Social Services Practitioners. The 'reflection' phase involved reflecting on the problem situation in a holistic manner and evaluating the workshops with role players to assess the new partnership and the concretization of learning to improve the partnership.

Having participated in the pilot project, the Educators interviewed expressed the following comments in respect of the *benefits of the programme on the learners, challenges identified and turnaround strategies*:

- Some learners who attended showed enthusiasm and interest and in some cases there was marked improvement in behaviour as reflected by improved school attendance
- One school reported that in the absence of the learners who attended the programme the rest of the school enjoyed 'peace'
- Schools require the professional expertise of Social Services Practitioners to deal with the kind of issues experienced in dealing with problematic behaviour
- There is a critical need to involve parents in a similar programme as many learners do not have positive role models to look up to
- Educators also need to be addressed as learners complain of victimization by their teachers
- Educators must be involved as co-facilitators in the programme, especially those trained in psychology
- The programme must be ongoing to bring about definite changes in behaviour and attitude
- One Educator 'saw a difference rather than challenges'
- In one school, fellow pupils mocked learners who attended thereby labelling them, which in turn, resulted in further problems.

The pilot project is one of an 'action research' initiative and is of a continuous nature, which allows Social Services Practitioners to develop competences in dealing with problem situations as a collective. The intention is to extend the current partnership community of practice within the Department and to reinforce the idea that joint efforts actively contribute to research and creation of knowledge. Feedback from participants from the Department and other organizations on *whether or not learning took place* included:

- Individual strengths can be used collectively to achieve desired outcomes, such as change in learner behaviour
- The lack of resources and the widespread nature of problems call for collective learning to benefit all
- As long as the mind remains open, learning takes place constantly
- Some schools have learnt to streamline their referrals
- Collective resources; various role-players with different functions lead to integration of resources and promotes individual and collective learning
- Experiential learning has taken place over the years of rendering services and this improves service delivery within the organization as well
- Learning takes place as we draw from each other as individuals and collectively thereby enabling the use of this created new knowledge for individual benefit
- Learning takes place by creating a conducive environment; such learning opportunities must be tried and tested and models must be utilized and promoted.

Learning was found to be taking place at both the individual and collective levels, confirming the possibility that the community of practice within the department can extend to include other role players when such joint programmes are held. It confirms that such projects provide opportunities for participants to understand the structure of the new system created, review it for environmental impact and changes, suggest changes to enhance its functionality and experience learning as part of the social order that we live in (Wenger, 1998:15).

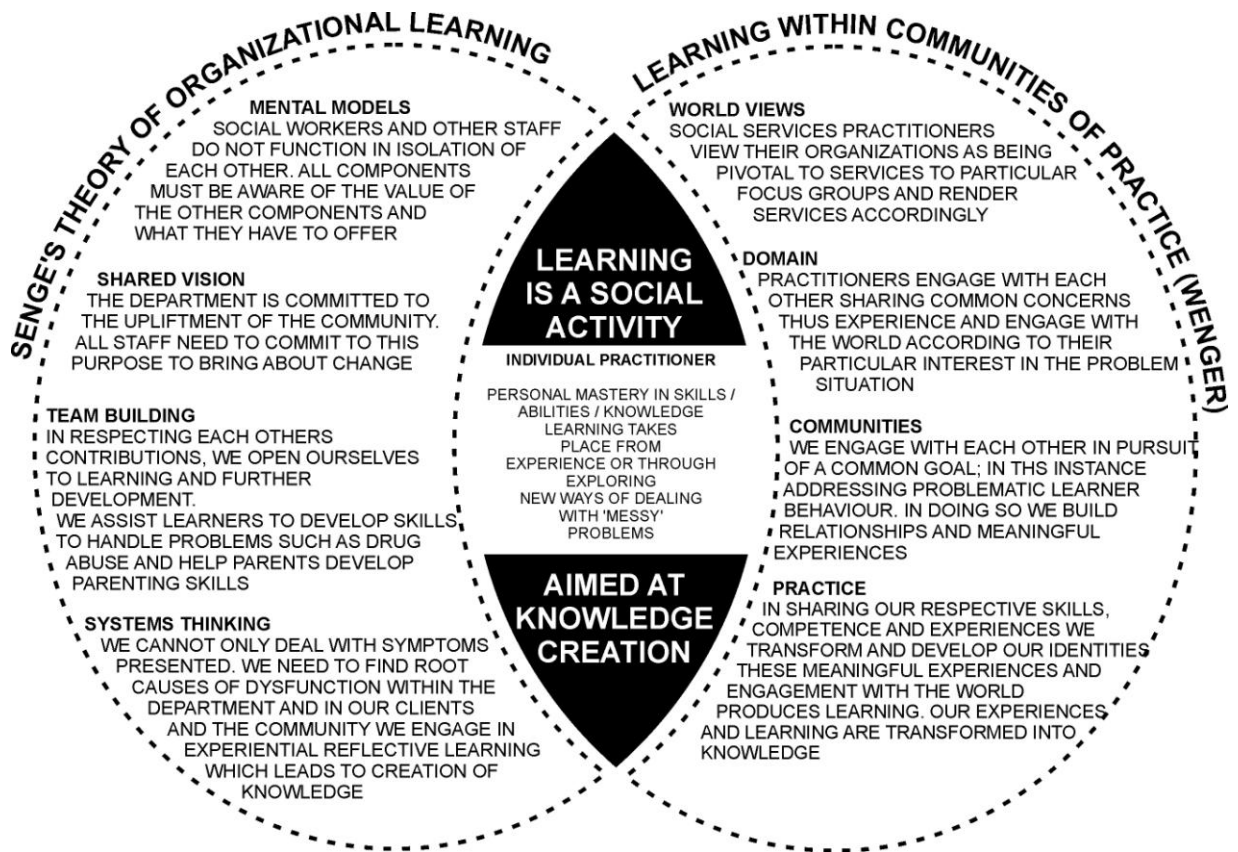


Figure 5.8 Diagram: Linkage between Individual Learning, Organizational Learning and Learning within Communities of Practice

Figure 5.8 attempts to explain the linkages identified in the processes of learning as individual practitioners, where each has certain skills, abilities and knowledge that they exercise for the benefit of the organization, and as teams, with specific reference to the problem domain. Senge's five disciplines of learning within organizations has been adopted to make comparisons with Wenger's definition of communities of practice to indicate the similarities in the processes involved when we engage in the learning processes at the different levels.

All participants also responded positively to the *possibilities of linkages between their organization and the other human activity systems for the promotion of a partnership in dealing with problematic learner behaviour* with the following comments:

- Organizations compliment each other in that one cannot function without the other
- There are pre-existing linkages that interface to intervene in problematic learner behaviour
- Opportunities to work together in forums can lead to exploring and developing modes of treatment that can be effective and realistic.

The following *benefits of the joint partnership* were noted:

- The strengths, knowledge and expertise of the various service providers benefited the learners participating in the programme
- Relationships between the service providers strengthened
- There was improved networking, communication and collaboration
- There was a clear demarcation of services and role definition among the various role players
- Pooling of resources lends to a strengths based approach that benefit the clients.

Kjaer and Tennyson (2000:79) who explain the benefits of partnerships for sustainable outcomes support the above findings. Waddell, (2002, pp43-57), also confirms the importance of relationships based on core competences.

Participants also viewed the pilot project as being beneficial to the learners although there were a few logistical problems experienced and one participant expressed the sentiment that ‘joint programmes removes pressure from an individual Social Worker doing therapy and they assist in coping with the lack of human resources to undertake programmes which can become the sole responsibility of the Department’.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In implementing Soft Systems Methodology as a learning system, the proposed research was undertaken in the seven-stages as proposed by Checkland, (1999). This allowed the researcher to view the problem from the different perspectives thereby adopting a holistic approach to problem solving.

The structural and technical processes in the interaction and relationship between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education with reference to referral procedures, policies and guidelines that determine the partnership arrangement between the two departments and challenges in the current partnership arrangement were identified. The research, however, confirms that the respondents interpreted and addressed problematic learner behaviour according to their subjective assessments.

The root definition identified for the study was developed with the cooperation of relevant participants who agreed that a multiple partnership approach had to be adopted in an attempt to address problematic behaviour. The conceptual model, which participants agreed to as a joint initiative, was based on their core competences. The model points to identification of root causes of problematic behaviour underlying symptoms of problematic behaviour presented by learners as identified by Educators; systems involved in the direct intervention and systems supporting intervention aimed at keeping the learner in school. Elements of the current system were identified for intervention and transformation to accommodate a holistic approach to dealing with learner behaviour.

The approach adopted in the research confirms that involving specialized organizations in a joint programme to address root causes of problematic behaviour is not only crucial in dealing with the problem holistically but also enables the sharing of resources, skills, knowledge and expertise and leads to the effective implementation of the Integrated Service Delivery Model. The core competence partnership model not only allows for the retaining and improvement of an individual partners' competence in the process of sharing of resources that are critical for modern day problems but also provides an alternative to Government which is unable to cope with the challenges presented.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the findings of the research and draws conclusions based on the literature studied and the legislation, policies and procedures reviewed in determining gaps in the current partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education in dealing with problematic learner behaviour. It makes recommendations based on feedback from respondents and evaluations of the 'action research' project which resulted in the creation of the alternative partnership as proposed. It also takes cognizance of the limitations of the research and makes suggestions for future studies.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

Systems thinking advocate that human beings do not function in isolation; each one is in constant interaction with the other from birth and the interrelationships between human beings have profound impact on one's development and future wellbeing. A learner as a system made up of various sub-systems (physical, mental, psychological) is in constant interaction with other human beings who are also systems with the same sub-systems in a larger system. The quality of the interrelationships among the systems within the family determines the extent to which the learner would adapt or not to the demands made upon him by the other systems he meets. Amidst the chaos that prevails in postmodern society, there also is a need for orderliness in society, sound morals and values while respecting the need for individualism and diversity.

Critical Systems Thinking enables practitioners to view the broader picture of messy situations in terms of relationships, interrelationships, causes, influences, sub-systems involved and numerous other systems dynamics including the boundaries within which the sub-systems functions. Learners presenting with problematic behaviour, do so for various reasons. In attempting to realign such behaviour to that which is acceptable to society, legislation, policies and procedures are designed by Government and other roleplayers. Such legislation, policies and procedures are creations of human activity systems in response to gaps in the current system and which function within constraints of their own, (Vickers, 1973:177). They are in turn, interpreted subjectively by other human activity systems

within systems that are unique and exhibit dynamics of their own in the implementation of such legislation, policies and procedures.

Systems are constantly changing and efforts made to address problem situations are only attempts to improve the situation with further efforts made to improve on the improved situation. Programmes developed for empowering learners with lifeskills are designed to improve quality of life taking into consideration various constraints within the system and existing legislation, policies and procedures. The way in which we, as Practitioners explain situations, from patterns of behaviour, events or a structural analysis also determine our response to problem solving. It points to our abilities to address policies and processes in the workplace that can hinder progress. In so doing, we engage in learning as a social activity and obtain knowledge that assists us in attaining our goals. In the process, we gain meaning and develop our identities through our interactions with others and in the way in which we experience the world.

A systems approach to learning, in the course of practice, enables individuals and groups within organizations to understand complex systems as having a number of elements and interrelated relationships. It encourages discussions and dialogue to obtain a common understanding of complex problems, to learn from each other, to develop and implement solutions jointly. It assists in identifying challenges in existing mental models and through the processes of feedback and double loop learning, enables the re-structuring of reality taking into consideration multiple viewpoints. It is also a tool for identifying internal and external processes and influences that threaten or harms the organization and to seek out opportunities for its continued growth and development.

Learning as an activity, is not separate from any other activity; it forms part of an organization and takes place as we learn to separate the boundaries of the various communities of practices to which we belong. Within a community of practice, we engage with the world, we are given opportunities to transform and realize our full potential in attempts to bring about some improvement while adapting to changing structures and processes, at the same time contributing to the development of new knowledge. In research of this nature, the processes involved in the creation of and concretization of experiential learning are considered to be just as important as attaining the objectives of the study, if not more.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

- 6.3.1 Principals and Educators within a particular geographical area, should meet as a community of practice, on a regular basis to discuss the various legislation, policies and procedures offered as guidelines in the management, education and disciplining of learners to develop a common understanding of the implementation of the published policy documents.
- 6.3.2 Similarly, Social Services Practitioners should also meet as a practicing community, depending on the domain of interest, to discuss and gain a common understanding and implementation of legislation, policies and procedures guiding the profession.
- 6.3.3 School Governing Bodies (representing parents and the community), Community Based Organizations and Faith Based Organizations must take an active role in addressing issues of concern in the community such as that of morality and the regeneration of sound values.
- 6.3.4 Educators must involve parents at the earliest signs of problematic behaviour to address root causes of such behaviour and referrals for social services must be made timeously and not at a crisis point. To this end, the relationship between the Department and the school has to be strengthened in the interest of the learner as a beneficiary. The Department of Social Development must coordinate the joint intervention programmes.
- 6.3.5 A multi-disciplinary or a multiple partnership approach must be adopted by Social Services Practitioners as a strategy for addressing problems of a complex nature, such as that of moral degeneration among young learners.
- 6.3.6 The Department of Social Development must continue funding Non Governmental Organizations in terms of its Financing Policy (1999) based on the organization's involvement in the community and at an inter-organizational or inter-agency level.

This is to ensure strengths based partnerships and for the adequate utilization of scarce skills, knowledge and abilities in under resourced areas. It also promotes the implementation of the Integrated Service Delivery Model.

6.3.7 The following recommendations are made for further studies:

- 6.3.7.1 The intervention be replicated in other communities given the dynamics of existing conditions of the particular community.
- 6.3.7.2 The multiple intervention strategy be continuously evaluated to include other partners given the nature of problems presented and the specialist skills required.
- 6.3.7.3 A multiple partnership approach as an intervention strategy, be adopted for seeking solutions to other problems depending on the problem domain and the systems dynamics of the particular community.
- 6.3.7.4 The impact of the multiple partnership approach be measured through research involving learners targeted in the intervention.
- 6.3.7.5 Learning to be encouraged in communities of practice within the Department and other organizations through ‘action research’ projects and such communities of practices extended in joint interventions in particular problem domains or areas of interest.

6.4. LIMITATIONS

Critical Systems Thinking and its methodology Critical Systems Practice (incorporating Total Systems Intervention) encourages consideration of problems from various perspectives, the interactions and interrelationships between and among the human and technical activity systems and the prevailing environmental situation.

The activity systems are mediated by the ‘technical procedures, socio-cultural and socio-political rules and practices’, (Flood, 1995:22), and there must be coordination among them for the overall achievement of the purpose of the organization. However, allowance has to be made for individual interpretations of the organization’s purpose, how this is to be achieved in relation to one’s own role and functions within the organization, control over events and overall impact on an individual’s own needs for growth and development.

As Manager at the office where the research was conducted, the researcher was fully involved in the area of study and had to be aware of the above organizational dynamics with great sensitivity to divergent views and differences of opinion, which had to be accommodated in pursuit of the overall purpose of the Department.

Soft Systems Methodology was the methodology of choice, given the unstructured nature of the research problem and the fact that it allowed the researcher to take into consideration the cultural, political and organizational contexts and boundary judgments.

The application of Soft Systems Methodology to the research problem enabled the researcher to view the problem from various perspectives. The methodology also seemed best suited to the research problem, which could not be easily defined due to subjectivity of the participants involved. Each would have defined the problem of learner behaviour as he/she perceived it taking into consideration the values that were important to him/her.

One major limitation was the fact that the recipients of the services of Social Services Practitioners in the multiple partnership, namely, the learners themselves, were not interviewed for their inputs which may have helped improve on the intervention strategies. The researcher excluded this group for ethical reasons in that parental consent would have been required to interview learners and for the fact that the impact of the intervention of the multiple partnerships on learner behaviour and the resultant changes in behaviour, was not an objective of the study.

Further, boundary judgments about the importance of one's expertise were unavoidable taking into consideration the specialized nature of services rendered by the organizations that participated, although most Social Services Practitioners are able to undertake similar services. The methodology also allowed participants to share similar sentiments (thereby agreeing) when expressing appreciation for improvement that had been noted in learner behaviour, considering the fact that such a judgment involves emotion, that is, feelings about changes in behaviour, and is not an objective evaluation or measurement of a tangible outcome of the intervention.

The element of trust in a partnership or a community of practice is also crucial in determining the extent to which boundaries can be crossed and managed. The level of trust or the lack thereof among the various role-players is also critical in determining lifespan of the partnership or community of practice and inevitable the extent to which societal goals are achieved.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken with the intention of assessing the current partnership between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education, identifying the gaps in addressing the challenges in services to learners and exploring an alternative partnership that includes other partners who provide specialized services to youth, to attend to the problem holistically through 'action research'. In so doing, the research also attempted to address the issues of learning within a community of practice where learning is continuous.

Analysis of the responses point to the need for an alternate partnership, which enables specialized skills to be utilized in dealing with specific problems, promotes the sharing of resources, ideas and a common purpose to deal with the problem holistically. It also facilitates learning by encouraging teamwork at an organizational and inter-organizational level and enables Practitioners to draw from each other. The research further confirms that relationships in intersectoral collaborations, based on mutual exchange and mutual gain, enable the partners involved to retain responsibilities when designing structures and processes in creative and innovative ways while exploring the potential of the partnership relationship (Waddel, 2002, pp43-57).

The benefits of the pilot project, based on the core competences of its multiple partners, outweighed the challenges experienced, thereby giving an indication that the new system can be implemented with the continued cooperation of all role-players. In the process, it points to implementing the Integrated Service Delivery Model adopted by the Department of Social Development in its efforts to provide developmental services based on a core competence partnership approach.

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Appendix A

GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH SOCIAL WORKERS: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Description of environment within which the organization (Department) functions metaphorically (machine, organism, brains, cultures, political systems, etc.)
2. Description of the external environment within which the Department functions with rich picture drawings with reference to problematic behaviour presented by learners.
3. Suggestions for management of learner behaviour taking into consideration how the organizational environment is described as in (1) and the role of other partners (CSP incorporating TSI and SSM methodology) .

Appendix B

RESEARCH ISSUES FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY SCHOOLS)

1. How do the problems of uncontrollable learner behaviour manifest itself in your school?
2. What is the world view expressed at your school about problematic learner behaviour?
3. Who identifies problematic behaviour and how is this done?
4. When and at what stage are the parents called in?
5. Explain intervention strategies utilized in terms of case management in terms of your Departmental legislation, policies and other documents according to which your professional intervention is informed and guided.
6. What referral systems are used?
7. What is the role of the Governing Body?
8. What is the role of the Disciplinary Committee?
9. Having been part of the pilot programme, what benefits would the programme have on your learners?
10. What were the challenges experienced in the joint pilot programme and what turnaround strategies do you propose?

Appendix C

RESEARCH ISSUES FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS/NGO'S/CBO'S

1. How do referrals in respect of problematic learner behaviour come to you and what are the challenges experienced in dealing with the problems?
2. At what stage does the referral come to you?
3. Do you think that intervention at an earlier stage would be helpful/hinder services within the paradigm/model of intervention from which services are rendered?
4. What do you think should be done to treat problematic learner behaviour holistically?
5. What linkages can be made between your organization/department and other human activity systems for the promotion of a partnership in dealing with problematic learner behaviour?
6. How do you see your services complimenting that of other departments and NGO's?
7. Are you able to see learning (individual/collective) taking place and if yes, how?
If no, explain why not?
8. Having participated in the pilot programme with other service providers, indicate benefits of the joint partnership.
9. What were the challenges experienced in the joint pilot programme and what turnaround strategies do you propose?
10. Do you see the joint programme as being beneficial/detrimental to the learner and in what respect?