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INTER-ORGANISATIONAL COLLABORATION:

SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING COLLABORATION

IN CHILD AND FAMILY WELFARE

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK BY COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH REPORT IN INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL WORK.

FEBRUARY 2010

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work by coursework and research report in Industrial Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination purposes in any other university.

_____: Mr. MADODA SITSHANGE

_____: DATE

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research report was to explore and describe social workers' perceptions of the concept of inter-organisational collaboration. This was done by delineating their understanding of the nature of collaborations, its purposes, specific hindering as well as its facilitating factors, and by analysing the impact of collaboration on the delivery of welfare services. Twenty-five social workers working in Child and Family Welfare were interviewed by the researcher using a specially designed interview schedule with closed-ended and open-ended questions. The research design was exploratory-descriptive using descriptive statistics and thematic content analyses to process and analyse the data. The research findings revealed that while some social workers actively participated in, and understood the importance of partnerships, their practice experiences tended not to be closely aligned with theory, a gap requiring more investigation. A number of researchers extrapolate specific elements in order to distinguish different forms of partnerships, i.e. networking, co-ordination, collaboration etc., something the research participants tended not to do. The implications for service delivery would match different types of partnerships with the nature of social problems social workers need to deal with, in order to enhance the quality of welfare services. Less intense forms of partnerships, for instance networking and co-ordination which does not require the integration of services, might not match or present an adequate strategy to impact long term on social problems; while collaborations, the chief characteristic of which is the integration of services, would be an adequate option to impact on social problems that one agency can not solve in a unilateral approach. Exploring and describing different forms may be a significant step in the application of service delivery strategies that would ultimately have a sustainable impact on the quality of welfare services.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION i

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES xii

LIST OF FIGURES xiii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Pre-Understanding and Rationale for the Study 2

1.3 Aims of the Study 3

1.3.1 Primary Aim of the Study 3

1.3.2 Secondary Objectives of the Study 3

1.3.3 Research Questions 4

1.4 Anticipated Value of the Study 4

1.5 Research Design and Methodology 4

1.6 Limitations of the Study 5

1.7 Definition of Terms 5

1.8 Overview of the Research Report 6

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 8

2.1 Introduction 8

2.2 Inter-Organisational Collaboration 8

2.2.1 The Scope of Inter-Organisational 10

2.2.2 The Collaboration Paradox 10

2.3 The Purpose of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 10

2.4 The Impact of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 11

2.4.1 Task and Process Goals 12

2.4.2 Relationship Goals 12

2.4.3 Achieving Collective Action 12

2.4.4 Professional Development 13

2.4.5 Leadership Skills Development 13

2.5 Human Relations 13

2.5.1 Trust and Inter-Personal Skills 14

2.5.2 Inclusion to Achieve a Win-Win Outcome 14

2.5.3 Diversity Management 15

2.5.4 Communication 15

2.6 The Factors that Hinder and Facilitate Inter-Organisational Collaboration 16

2.6.1 Respect 16

2.6.2 Cohesion 16

2.6.3 Resistance to Change 17

2.6.4 Communication 18

2.6.5 Goal Attainment 18

2.7 Social Work and Inter-Organisational Collaboration 19

2.7.1 Social Work Methods: Casework, Group Work and Community Development 19

2.7.2 Systems, Ecology and Person-In-Environment Perspective 20

2.7.3 The Focus of the Systems Theory 21

2.7.4 Service Integration 21

2.8 Inter-Organisational Collaboration and the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA 1997) 22

2.8.1 The Background of the South African Welfare System: Early Collaborative Work 22

2.8.2 The Formalisation of the Welfare System 22

2.8.3 The Alternative Welfare System 23

2.8.4 The Cost of Fragmentation 24

2.8.5 The Post-1994 Constitution 24

2.8.6 Policy Advocacy for Partnership Development 25

2.8.7 The Reconstruction and Development Programme 25

2.8.8 The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) 26

2.9 Child and Family Welfare in South Africa 29

2.9.1 The Concept of a Family 29

2.9.2 Family Disintegration 30

2.9.3 The Department of Welfare and Population Development 30

2.9.4 Child and Family Welfare 31

2.9.5 Key Challenges in the Delivery of Child and Family Welfare Services 32

2.9.6 Partnership Development as a Child and Family Welfare Service Delivery Strategy 32

2.10 Social and Economic Development 33

2.11 The Main Stakeholders 34

(i) The National Coalition for Social Services (NACOSS) 34

(ii) The South African Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS 35

(iii) The AIDS Consortium 35

(iv) The Community Police Forum 36

2.12 Conclusion 37

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 38

3.1 Introduction 38

3.2 Classification of Research Design 38

3.3 Research Methodology 38

3.3.1 Units of Investigation 39

3.3.2 Sampling Procedure 39

3.3.3 Research Tool 39

3.3.4 Pilot-Study of the Research Tool 40

3.3.5 Data Analysis 40

3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Research Design 41

3.5 Research Procedure 42

3.6 Limitations of the Research Design and Methodology 43

3.6.1 Sample 43

3.6.2 Research Design 43

3.6.3 Data Collection 44

3.6.4 Data Analysis 44

3.7 Ethical Considerations 44

3.8 Conclusion 45

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS 46

4.1 Introduction 46

4.2 Participants' Identifying Data 47

4.2.1 Professional Titles, Sector, Age and Fields of Practice 47

4.3 Participants' Experiences in Partnerships 48

4.3.1 Collaborating Partners 49

4.3.2 Reasons for Establishing Partnerships 49

4.3.3 Medium of Interaction and Interaction Frequency 50

4.4 Participants' Knowledge and Understanding of the Nature and Purpose of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 52

4.4.1 The Nature and Characteristics of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 52

4.4.2 Authority and Resources 53

(i) Authority 53

(ii) Resources 54

4.4.3 Identity, Roles and Functions 55

(i) Identity 55

(ii) Roles and Functions 56

4.4.4 Factors Motivating Inter-Organisational Collaboration 56

(i) Policy Directive 56

(ii) Legal Mandate 57

(iii) Leveraging Resources 57

4.5 Participants' Perceptions of Factors Compelling and Facilitating Inter-Organisational Collaboration 59

4.5.1 Very Important Factors Compelling and Facilitating Collaboration 59

(i) A Favourable Socio-Political Climate 59

(ii) An Adequate Cross-Section of Members 60

(iii) Communication 60

4.5.2 Important Factors in Compelling and Facilitating Collaboration 60

(i) Information 60

(ii) An Opportunity to Belong to a Group 61

(iii) To Share in Funded Programmes 61

4.5.3 Factors Regarded as Not Important in Compelling and Facilitating Inter-Organisational Collaboration 62

(i) Background in Collaborative Work 62

(ii) To Reach Compromises with Competitors 62

(iii) There was a Closed-Ended Duration 62

4.6 Respect, Trust and A Common Vision 62

4.6.1 Mutual Respect 63

4.6.2 Shared Vision 64

4.7 Practical Considerations: Flexibility, Adaptability and the Nature of Goals 64

4.7.1 Flexibility, Concrete Goals and Adaptability 64

(i) Flexibility 64

(ii) Concrete Goals 65

(iii) Collaborations Develop Adaptable Objectives 65

4.8 Professional Development 65

4.8.1 Gaining Information 65

4.8.2 Learning New Skills 66

4.8.3 Diversity of Skills and Experiences 66

4.9 Factors Supporting and Enabling Collaboration 67

4.9.1 Guiding Policy, Competent Convener and Funding 68

(i) Guiding Policy 68

(ii) A Skilled and Competent Convener 68

(iii) Funding 68

4.10 The Impact of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 69

4.10.1 Organisations' Best Interests 69

4.10.2 Collective Action 70

4.10.3 Sustainable Change 70

4.11 Participants' Perceptions of Factors Hindering Inter-Organisational Collaboration 71

(i) The Concept: Inter-Organisational Collaboration 72

(ii) Failure to Keep Stakeholders Informed about the Policies and Actions of the Collaboration 73

4.11.1 Lack of Diversity Management 73

(i) Cultural Differences among the Stakeholders 74

(ii) Mistrust among the Stakeholders 74

(iii) Competition 75

4.11.2 Limited Competencies in Managing Collaborations 75

(i) Conflicting Agendas 76

(ii) Lack of Leadership 76

4.12 Limited Impact 77

(i) Lack of Concrete Results 77

(ii) Inability to Control Flow of Rewards 78

(iii) Resources not Shared Proportionally 79

(iv) Lack of Incentives 80

(v) Lack of Support 81

(vi) Unilateral Action by One Organisation 82

(vii) Limited Space for Flexibility 83

5 Conclusion 84

CHAPTER 5: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 85

5.1 Introduction 85

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings 85

5.3 Conclusions 90

5.4 Recommendations: Theory, Practice and Research 91

5.4.1 Recommendations for Theory 91

5.4.2 Recommendations for Practice 92

5.4.3 Recommendations for Research 94

5.5 Ten Step Model for Best Collaborative Practices in Human Services Partnerships 95

BIBLIOGRAPHY 99

INFORMED CONSENT FORM 109

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 111

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Medium of interaction 50

Table 2: The Nature and Characteristics of Inter-Organisational Collaboration 52

Table 3: Factors Motivating Inter-Organisational Collaboration 56

Table 4: Factors Compelling/Facilitating Inter-Organisational Collaboration 59

Table 5: Practical Considerations 64

Table 6: Facilitating Factors 67

Table 7: Diversity Management 74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Continuum of Partnership Development 9

Figure 2: Profile of the Participants' Sector and Titles 47

Figure 3: Participants' Professional Titles 48

Figure 4: Interaction Frequency 51

Figure 5: Authority and Resources 54

Figure 6: Identity in Collaborations 55

Figure 7: Mutual Respect, Trust and Shared Vision 63

Figure 8: Information, skills and diversity 66

Figure 9: In Each Best Interest, Objectives and Sustainable Change 69

Figure 10: Participants' Understanding of the term Collaboration 72

Figure 11: Participants' Perceptions about Communication Failure 73

Figure 12: Participants' Perceptions of Lack of Leadership and Conflicting Agendas 75

Figure 13: Participants' Perceptions about the Lack of Results 77

Figure 14: Participants' Perceptions about the Inability to Equally Distribute Rewards 78

Figure 15: Participants' Perceptions about Resources being Shared Disproportionally 79

Figure 16: Participants' Perceptions about the Lack of Incentives 80

Figure 17: Participants' Perceptions about the Lack of Support 81

Figure 18: Participants' Perceptions about Unilateral Action 82

Figure 19: Participants' Perceptions about Limited Space for Flexibility 83