

## CHAPTER 2

### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is the concept that is at its earliest stage of development in South Africa. It is a concept that both influences and is influenced by the social transformation. It is about replacing the old ways of life with new ones, therefore, it is a movement from underdevelopment towards development. Community empowerment concerns knowledge, skills and attitudes which those who were disadvantaged utilise to take lead of their own development. It is an important concept in the social work profession these days because it presupposes that community development is possible when communities actively participate in addressing their own problems.

In outlining community empowerment the current chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section defines and describes community empowerment as concept in detail. The elements of community empowerment namely; community empowerment is part of community development, entitlement, large membership, power, facilitation, social action, conscientization, inclusivity, redistribution, behavioural change, financial resources and self-reliance, are discussed. The section also discusses the historical roots of community empowerment. According to the historical roots of community empowerment, the approach has undergone three major periods to date, namely; early years period between 1893 and 1917, the wartime and interwar years between 1917 and 1945; and the recent period which is of years between 1945 and to date.

In the second section of this chapter, the five theoretical perspectives of community empowerment, namely, the developmental perspective, ethclass perspective, critical perspective, feminist perspective and the ecological perspective are discussed.

The third section of this chapter outlines discussions around the community empowerment process and the roles of social work practitioners during that process. Community empowerment process has six phases, namely; identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiations, implementation and evaluation.

During the community empowerment process, social workers play a number of roles. The roles for social workers were categorised into two sections, namely; the directive and non-directive roles. Directive roles require more active involvement whilst the non-directive ones, require passive involvement on the part of social work practitioners.

## 2.2. THE CONCEPT COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

This section attempts to define and describe the concept community empowerment. It will name and discuss its twelve elements and the historical roots.

There is a variety of definitions of the concept "community empowerment" in literature, but the researcher has in this study selected a few that he feels would simplify understanding of it to the readers. The definitions for community empowerment were derived from Chambers and McBeth (1992) and Christian (1998).

Community empowerment is the process of enhancing the communities' capacity building standing so that they become self-reliant and self-sufficient. It is a foundation on which community development takes place wherein people develop ownership of their projects and programmes thereby sustaining their growth socio-economically and politically. According to Chambers and McBeth (1992:21), community empowerment includes members' active participation when they transfer

skills, knowledge and attitudes from authorities and the outsider experts to themselves and their communities.

Community empowerment is facilitated by the project managers, co-ordinators and community developers who usually come from the funding institutions. The process of community empowerment occurs only in a peaceful and resourceful environment. The mentioning of the word “empowerment” in the social work profession has today become so high that an outsider may feel it is a synonym of the community work method. Community empowerment is termed “community encouragement” to denote that it “suggests activities related to both economic betterment programs and the enhancement of local leader skills and capacities” (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:26).

Christian (1998) sought out different definitions of empowerment from grassroots community activists who took part in the Objective One Status Programme which was funded by the European Community, and came up with six that are listed as follows:

- \* “Empowerment is a social mechanism which allows underprivileged individuals, communities and groups to be able to take advantage of social opportunities. Black empowering means acceptance on an equal basis of a black society within the UK” (Brooks in Christian, 1998:21).
- \* “A process of positive action to redress the balance of 400 years of institutional racism, that will enable black individuals and organisations to activate their full potential in British society” (Broad in Christian, 1998:22).
- \* “There is no definition of empowerment of black communities in Britain because the term is based on assumption (i.e. there are black communities) and depends on the full co-operation of people with power (i.e. white people). Ideally, a simple definition would be to ensure access to all employment opportunities, resources and services regardless of race, colour, gender or



religious affiliation and one could monitor the situation through contract compliance based on percentages" (Bryson in Christian, 1998:22).

\* "Empowering Black Communities in Britain is: 1) To ensure that Black people are able to control their own destiny (including economic development etc.). 2) Identifying and developing mechanisms to harness investments (i.e. in the local area [Liverpool] to ensure job creation and employment opportunities for Black local people" (Downes in Christian, 1998:22).

\* "Supporting the Black Citizens' power and aspirations to collectively organise and promote the positive contributions and active citizenship Black people offer towards the Economic, Social and Political Advancement of all citizens" (O'Shea in Christian, 1998:22).

\* "Empowering the black community should be a process by which people who are excluded through racism gain knowledge, skills and the power to challenge decisions that affect their lives and the wider community. Equally it is about having the power to make decisions. The concept has been expropriated by public policy makers and watered down into the notion of creating partnership - the consensus approach. [However] If we have no power we are unequal partners and therefore powerless in the decision making process" ( Yardly in Christian, 1998:22-23).

The six empowerment definitions cited by these Liverpool community activists indicate that in order for empowerment to occur, there should be an unequal distribution of social, economic and political resources in the community. Empowerment is accordingly invited to redress this state of affairs and provide the disadvantaged communities an equal footing to participate actively in controlling their own destiny, i.e. development for people by people themselves.

A valuable definition of empowerment is obtained from Kent (in Schwerin, 1995:56), which states "to be empowered is to increase your capacity to define, analyse, and



act on your own problems.” Empowerment means an individual, group, organisation, or community has reached a state of gaining mastery over own life. The concept of empowerment in professional fields is closely associated with words like self-esteem, self-reliance, self-actualization, self-transformation, competence, power, coping skills, active participation, community building and the global social or political transformation of an individual, group, organisation or community.

important topic

Community empowerment is concerned with the taking over of power, knowledge, skills and attitudes by the disadvantaged communities to redress their own community problems. This also means that the community which is successfully empowered is able to improve its own life with minimum reliance on the outsiders.

The proceeding section will discuss the elements of community empowerment individually.

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## **2.3. ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

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It is necessary to divide the concept community empowerment into parts that will be discussed individually. In this regard twelve elements of community empowerment, namely; community empowerment as part of community development, entitlement, large membership, power, facilitation, social action, conscientization, inclusivity, redistribution, behavioural change, financial resources and self-reliance were identified. These elements indirectly explains in detail what community empowerment is.

economic

### **2.3.1. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AS PART OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

development

The first element of community empowerment maintains that the approach itself is part of community development. This means that community development is achieved through a series of approaches, one of them being community empowerment.

Community development is a holistic approach of developing all the sectors of the community so as to improve the well-being of community members. Schurink (1998:406) defines it as “a process designed to create conditions of economic and social process for the whole community with its active participation.” Community empowerment is dependent upon community development and is therefore its important component. This means that in each community developmental project, one identifies a community empowerment element that is attached to it. Community empowerment occurs *vis-a-vis* community development process. Community development is therefore a general concept and community empowerment a specific part of it.

Community development aims at promoting the welfare of the community in components such as physical, economic, political and empowerment (Ferguson-Brown, 1996:189). Community development is aimed at comprehensive development and “the improvement of the quality of life of the individual and the community on the physical, social, economic, and political terrains” (Lombard, 1991: 205 - 206).

Looked closely community empowerment and community development have similarities as they address the importance of a community to decide on its own, they both are primarily process oriented, they promote self-help and they both concentrate on the development dimensions of a community such as physical, economical, social and political. According to Lombard (1991:212-217), physical development means community infrastructures such as roads, housing, dams etc., economic development means mining, agriculture, self-help projects, etc., social development is primarily aimed at human development and secondarily at the development of services and lastly, political development concentrates on the development of network of organisations and structures, the democratic involvement of a community in its own programmes, the election of steering committees, etc.

### 2.3.2. ENTITLEMENT

Entitlement is legitimacy over something.

Community empowerment “is a psychological state, a sense of competence, control and entitlement that motivate individuals to move to a higher quest for positions that have more power” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:228). When members go about discussing the causes of their problems and how to best address them, they are said to have enhanced their competence. The word “entitlement” concerns who the legitimate claimant of resources or power is. Entitlement has a social, economical and political connotation, in that it can be used similarly with the rights that are defined as “powers and privileges to which members of a political entity are entitled by designation and assignation of the state in which they belong” (Simon, 1994:19). People qualify for certain entitlements through their demographic characteristics, e.g., the poor, disabled, the aged, etc.

The democratic social system is that which accesses individuals/groups/organisations/communities to their political rights. Only empowerment is able to enhance community social and political participation and democratisation (Schwerin, 1995:174). If every individual, group, organisation or community is positively accessible to their democratic rights, there will be minimal social problems in their environment and alternatively in the whole society.

### **2.3.3. LARGE MEMBERSHIP**

The third element of community empowerment was identified as large membership which means that in order for the community empowerment process to take form, there should be citizenry participation.

The importance of public input and members' participation is highly acclaimed in the process of community empowerment. The practitioner has to have adequate recruiting skills of bringing members together for a common goal, as suggested by Mondros and Wilson (1994:34). According to them, large memberships make the organisation seem powerful to power holders and the public so that it seems more legitimate and a sufficient representative of the larger communities. Large



membership easily threatens the authority with confrontation and does not suffer breakdown when members drop-out through attrition (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:37).

By only bringing the large membership together will be nothing to the empowerment process unless efforts to drive the membership or constituents towards action to redress their socio-economic and political standing are also made. This is where the mobilization concept comes to picture. Mobilization is defined as “the collective activation and application of community or group resources towards the acquisition of social and political goods by the social action organizer” (Morrison, 1987:3). Mobilization is employed to improve the socio-economic and political conditions of the disadvantaged, therefore in order for it to occur, there should be uneven distribution of resources in the society.

Mobilization that led to political empowerment in Bolton, Mayersville and Tchula counties in Mississippi in the United States, for example, occurred because racism excluded blacks and other minorities from participating in the politics of their communities (Schwerin, 1995). Mobilization should be viewed as modernization as it replaces all forms of traditionality. Organizers have tasks of encouraging grassroots with a commitment and willingness to challenge the *status quo*. For mobilization to be strong and effective, civil rights organisations should link networks with the local, national and international organisations. These organizers should have characteristics such as, having outstanding leadership skills, education, good socio-economical and political status, charismatic leadership, received training in a career and should be young and active.

Through mobilization, the masses are enabled to yield more power that will access them to taking over governance of their local organisations. This suggests that mobilization concentrates on decentralisation. The Government (which should be regarded as a centre) should be forced to decentralise power (that is, it should give control to the communities). Control by grassroots is stronger and more effective than that of the centre.

Organizers should use good recruitment skills in drawing large membership for their organisations. Large membership is the base for an organisation and is effective in bringing about social change. Recruitment is meant for fundraising, marches, demonstrations, boycotts, campaigns, recruitment of new members, letter writing, etc. Successful recruitment resolves member attrition (Mondros and Wilson, 1994:43-75).

Four stages in the recruitment process of members were cited in Mondros and Wilson (1994) and will be discussed in this section. These stages are (i) identifying a member pool, (ii) creating and communicating the message, (iii) initial engagement, and (iv) sustaining and deepening participation.

#### \* *STAGE 1: IDENTIFYING A MEMBER POOL*

This stage is characterised by the recruitment of those members who will in turn attract their significant others into joining the organisation. Members of this kind are usually the respected individuals within the community such as a school principal, a priest, a politician, etc. Social gatherings, clubs, churches, schools, hospitals, etc. are places where recruitment of large numbers of people could be done at a very short space of time.

Organizers should consider recruiting the minorities and coopt them into their organisations.

#### \* *STAGE II: CREATING AND COMMUNICATING A MESSAGE*

Recruiting messages should be moulded with the recruits in mind. Firstly an organizer should assess the interests of those who are to join the organisation and despatch the messages during the community meetings, conventions, conferences, etc.

People are attracted into joining organisations by their self-interests and some seek help from the organisation for the problems that they cannot solve themselves. It is therefore very effective for organizers to include people's self-interests in their recruiting messages. Self-interests could also be a drawback due to the fact that most people usually leave the organisations immediately after their problems were solved and to counter this, organizers should add other messages to their recruiting ones.

Organizers implement methods of recruiting such as personal contact, door-to-door visits, telephone calls, attend community meetings, mail, media, etc, and "the best recruitment method is one that costs little and yields many of the right kind of people" (Mondros & Wilson, 1994 :59). Organizers could also influence their recruits to recruit from their own social networks. The recruitment process should be an ongoing task of organisations.

#### \* *STAGE III: INITIAL ENGAGEMENT*

According to Mondros and Wilson (1994 :65), the organizers try "to capture the interest of new recruits so that they come to participate more regularly and intensively in the organisation and its activities." Recruits come with diverse hopes to the organisation, and it is up to the organizer to marry their hopes with the organisation's abilities. Plugging-in process takes place when the organizer identifies tasks that could be performed by some new members and allocates those tasks to them. Plugging-in is the process that should be quickly and speedily implemented, otherwise new recruits will feel uncomfortable and leave the organisation. New recruits could also be provided with training and support for action when they transit from being members to being activists.

#### \* *STAGE IV: SUSTAINING AND DEEPENING MEMBER INVOLVEMENT*

People are the most important resource for power and as such their member attrition after their problems were resolved should be avoided through the sustenance of



their involvement. According to Mondros and Wilson (1994:75-76), sustained members are those who continuously renew their membership and attend activities of the organisation, whilst members whose involvement has deepened take on tasks that are demanding, for example, being the chairperson and/or the secretary. The former make few contributions to the organisation, are general members and receive less communication whilst the latter put more of their energy to the existence of the organisation, are members of the organisational structure and are decision-makers.

#### Membership

The organizers see to it that members are influenced to replace their passive roles with the active ones within the organisation. If members are given enough of their own way, provided with enough responsibility, staff and organizers refrain from doing tasks that members can do, are trained, and have right and obligation to participate, the membership attrition can be minimised. Sustaining involvement could be increased by rewarding members with gifts, salaries and/or praises, recognition or compliments. Deepening the members' involvement is to groom them into leadership roles.

#### The role

Organizers are the ones who make social action organisations a success by recruiting participants, acquaint them with the organisational issues, and facilitating their action through a vast number of skills. Most of them have a strong sense of justice, fairness, responsibility to people, analysis of power and are students of need and/or expectancy theory schools of thoughts. They are able to transform private problems into public issues. They are expected to have an in-depth understanding of both the communities' socio-economic and political environments. They should train members on developing own organisational structures, fund-raising events, accountability, responsibility and commitment. The organizers send the message which helps people feel they are not alone in the problem, they are not to be blamed for the problem and that they have the right to be protected from the problem. Organizers help members to think and act for themselves whilst at the same time they become their "comrades-at arms" ( Mondros & Wilson, 1994 :25). Organizers organise for social change.

#### The process

Social change is achieved through mediation.

Mediation is defined as “an effort by a neutral third party to resolve a dispute through the conduct of a face-to-face meeting between the disputing parties” (Schwerin, 1995:7). Mediation is a form of conflict resolution that is empowering to both the disputants, the mediators and the larger community. Mediation is non-coercive, reaches resolutions that are mutually agreeable, is easy to reach and is inexpensive. Negotiation, conciliation and arbitration are forms of mediation. Mediation hold social groups and communities together thereby maintaining the social control and bringing peace and justice to the neighbourhood. It is through this conflict resolution method that disputants’ communication is encouraged and enhanced. Mediation is a vehicle that enhances democratic participation and is preferred over authoritarianism by most social work practitioners.

#### 2.3.4. POWER

The fourth element of community empowerment was identified as power which means the control over resources and an ability to take decisions.

Solomon (in Lee, 1994:12) stated that empowerment concerns the transfer of power from the advantaged to the members of the disadvantaged groups. It pertains to “powerlessness” that should be removed in order to advance the well-being of the people (Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984:3). Power is getting someone do something he/she would not do in an ordinary life situation and it serves an individual’s interests.

The absence of power makes an individual or community feel alienated from self and could lead to poor participation in activities that are geared at constructing own environment. The powerless have inadequate consciousness and do not regard their immediate social institutions as intimidating and oppressing to them. Powerlessness is exacerbated by the stigmas that are attached to people such as the poor, patient, dependant and women.

Actually in the real life situations, people with problems are experts and principals of their own accord. Social work practitioners should believe that people can change and that they can also alter their own environments. This suggests that power could take the form of knowledge, skills or expertise. Community members can be trained into technologies of doing their own community assessments and then take action afterwards (Gibson & Worden, 1984:30).

There are four different types of power relations that were distinguished by May, namely; power over, against, for and power with (Schwerin, 1995:72). For Fay (1987:120-121), power over, against and for is exploitative, manipulative and authoritative as it compels the other party in the relationship to do something out of own will. Power over is undemocratic and exposes many individuals/groups and/or communities to serious environmental problems. In this fashion the practitioners apply the medical model which consider clients as stage, "battleground or stage, the patient devolves into a passive and on-looking object, rather than a subject acting in concert with the doctor (or social worker) on his or her own behalf" (Simon, 1994:124). This power relationship is coercive as it stifles the active participation of people with problems to address their own problems.

Power with is constructive, and the empowerment scholars agree that this type of power is empowering, integrative and has a win/win orientation.

### 2.3.5. FACILITATION

The fifth element of community empowerment was identified as facilitation. Facilitation means propelling community members into doing something for themselves.

Successful empowerment has positive results on the development of skills and competence in individuals, and these skills and competence are encouraged through facilitation which may mean to inspire people in doing something. Community



empowerment is a social work intervention that usually takes place with an involvement of the practitioner as a facilitator of community members. People organise themselves with the practitioner's support to exploit their own skills and knowledge to meet their needs for existence.

Simon (1994:11) writes about the collaborative relationship between the helper and the helped. According to her, collaboration means that the practitioner and community members are alliance who develop the reciprocal relationship where each of them learn from the other. This means that one of the empowerment prerequisite is a "helping relationship based on collaboration, trust and the sharing of power" (Drower, 1991:147). Both community members and the practitioner are equals but much is expected from the former in their helping relationship, i.e. it is the client who is more active in bringing about change into his own world.

It would be accurate to argue that the practitioner is more powerful than the community members because he/she is an expert and more knowledgeable in the professional requirements. The practitioner should strive to delineate the importance of the community members' capabilities in that collaborative relationship. That is building on the client's strengths.

### 2.3.6. SOCIAL ACTION

The sixth element of community empowerment was identified as social action. Social action is another method of community development, followed by locality development and social planning.

Community empowerment closely resembles social action organisation in which the social work practitioners have a task of converging the goals of people, their profession and/or their agencies into a coherent whole. Social action refers to a group of individuals who strive to transfer power from the authoritative institutions to themselves, and that "the accumulation and wielding of power is the primary goal of social action organisation" (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:1).

Some authors associate empowerment with forceful terms such as “radical pedagogy”, “the struggle” and “the liberation” (compare Lee, 1994:14; Reid, 1995:173; Lum in Lee, 1994:105), respectively.

But Simon (1994:6) rejects the role of a practitioner as a “liberator” in that he maintains the liberator has a tendency of blaming the disadvantaged for their problems by stating they “view clients as victims of their life circumstances.”

The social actionists put the underdevelopment blame on the social environments. Community empowerment, especially in South Africa, has, “to be understood within the broader struggle for liberation from political oppression and material deprivation” (Taylor, 1995:171). This is enforced by the new South African laws, e.g., the Constitution which guarantees that everyone has the fundamental right of equality. This notion calls for “equality in the social, political and economic spheres of all persons and groups in society” (*Equity Bill*, 1997:9).

The term “organizers” was mentioned in Mondros and Wilson (1994:11), who maintain that it means those people in the payroll of the governmental and nongovernmental institutions “who are the bringers of a vision of change and its real possibility”. The organizers’ main tasks, “are to enhance the organisation’s pursuit of its goals in supporting members to feel more powerful in performing their activities” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:7). The organizer must ensure the smooth functioning of the organisation and should be adept in the interpersonal, group dynamics and management skills. A worker under the empowerment process is a person who likes people and is open to meet strangers and challenges.

Of importance to this study, Lombard (1991: 90-91) listed six characteristics of social action, namely;

- \* *An environment:* there should be an environment in which the action takes place. The environment is a community. Communities could be categorised

according to their geographical areas, their geographically functional and their functional classification. Community members are the ones who will decide who and who are not to be included into their community.

\* *Need or problem identification and definition*:- the community action process progresses well if this phase of identifying and defining a need or problem has been successfully achieved. Community members are the ones who identify and define needs or problems themselves.

\* *Goals and objectives*:- Goals will involve assisting communities to demand more control over their community empowerment projects. Goals are general and could be translated into objectives which are specific and more detailed in nature, e.g. "objectives should spell out what needs to be achieved, how well it needs to be achieved (level of achievement) and according to which criteria" (Lombard, 1991:86).

\* *Community action strategy*:- Communities could utilise conflictual or negative strategies in the social action. Strategies include campaigns, boycotts, strikes, letter writing or petition signing.

\* *Power*:- the power which is to be utilised by communities to advise their community action lies in the groups rather than individuals.

\* *Participation*:- Involvement of community participation in the community action is an important component of the action implementation process. Social change in the community is effected by the community members themselves (Lombard, 1991:91).

### 2.3.7. CONSCIENTIZATION

The seventh element of community empowerment was identified as conscientization which means awareness raising.



Community empowerment always commences with consciousness-raising which Freire in Mondros and Wilson (1994:15) term “conscientization” and is defined as “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality”. Conscientization is again defined by Fay (1987:106) as “the development of a radical consciousness, learning to see that certain social forms are oppressive and that they can be altered by exploiting certain social, political, and/or economic contradictions; it also includes the utilisation of this radicalized consciousness to initiate and guide action against the oppressors.” Members attend the self-education forums wherein they learn about their rights, about how to organise and ultimately about changes in the social order.

Empowerment is concerned with those who are oppressed by the socio-economic and political conditions of their social worlds who yearn for freedom, justice and fulfilment of their humanity. By being involved in this process, clients benefit both personally and socially. Empowerment means personal transformation and favourable social change.

People do not act individually but rather with others towards social change goals. Community empowerment is necessary to involve as many members of a community as possible in the process of improving democracy through participation (Maser & Kirk, 1996:170). It has to do with the mobilization of people towards a concerned issue.

### 2.3.8. INCLUSIVITY

The eighth element of community empowerment was identified as inclusivity which is concerned with a fair representation of community members or stakeholders in their community based organisations.

Community empowerment programmes and processes in South Africa should be directed towards empowering the poor at grassroots (Taylor, 1995:175). An effective strategy for empowerment involves the grassroots structures and the

encouragement of people to make their own decisions and acquire knowledge and skills (Triegaardt, 1993:10). The African National Congress (ANC) and its alliance have designed a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) with the aim of addressing the basic needs of the majority of all South Africans.

The *White Paper on Public Works (1997:15)* stipulates the government's aims of redressing the socio-economic imbalances in South Africa through its Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP). The CBPWP is concentrated at empowering people especially the rural poor, women, youths and the disabled. In its opening the paper states "every South African should enjoy a wide range of economic, social and cultural opportunities" (*White Paper on Public Works, 1997:1*). People's aspirations, skills and collective determination are what the government needs as human resource which will make empowerment a success.

Community empowerment is possible when those who are experiencing the problem are involved in its eradication. Inclusivity in community empowerment therefore means the involvement of every sector of the community which are termed stakeholders and comprise of, say, the traditional leaders, civic associations, religious groups, the politicians from different political parties, different governmental departments, non-government organisations and the technicians from both the government and private sectors. Every member of the community should be afforded an opportunity to participate in the economies of his/her own community. The mentioned stakeholders combine to form a community.

According to Coe (1990:18), community participation determines the success or failure of community empowerment programmes. When an open focus approach which encourages high community participation is implemented towards community development, there is a higher probability that projects will succeed, whilst on the other hand, the closed focus approach leads to failures. Coe (1990:19) discussed the importance of open focus approach in which participatory democracy is enhanced, that is, grassroots are included in the decision making, they take active participation roles in the development and solving their own problems and are

accessible to leadership positions in their community based organisations. The local communities enter into a collaborative relationship with social work practitioners and other stakeholders to form the community based organisations. Open focus approach increases communication between the constituents and their organizers.

Inclusivity is synonymous with participation and both terms are concerned with the representation. Participation to Coe (1990:32), addresses three main elements, namely,

- \* the use of evocative leadership in the style all stakeholders in the organisation are actively involved in the processes of the programme
- \* an effective communication that ensures that good social network links members of the organisation
- \* there should be a collaborative vision meaning a clear definition of the goals of the programme.

But how is community participation related to community empowerment and community development? Abbott (1995:158) writes that he “concludes that community development is actually a specific form of community participation.” Community development was utilised by the First world to develop democracy in the Third world, and was highly concentrated at economic development without regard of the involvement of the people in those countries. That form of development was seen by Mayo in Abbott (1995:160), as a tool for neo-colonial expansion which was directed at counteracting the spreading of communism.

If community development venture does not involve the participation of the disadvantaged people, it leads to a failure as was indicated above. Abbott (1995:4) is of the opinion that where community participation is limited, community development would be successful mostly in a condition where the disadvantaged are in a serious economic and social distress. According to him, community



empowerment needs to demand autonomy from the government. Government or powerful institutions will regulate the open focus approach which allows people an opportunity to a balanced influence or power. Community participation will lastly address the inclusivity of all the minorities of the society into the development of the whole.

### 2.3.9. REDISTRIBUTION

The ninth element of community empowerment was identified as redistribution which means the proportional allocation of resources to the communities.

The South African government through its Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), intends distributing resources to those who were previously disadvantaged, such as the rural poor, women, youths and the disabled. GEAR was introduced as an element of rendering the societal redistribution of resources, but it was heavily criticised by the South African Communist Part (SACP) as a practice that continues to broaden the gap between the richest and the poorest (Paton, 1998:5).

“Problems are becoming worse than ever if the process of redistributing resources from the haves to the have-nots is not achieved” (Russel-Erich & Rivera, 1987:2). For these authors, community empowerment practitioners should take the radical perspective stance when they together with the communities identify problems and their possible solutions to ensure the quality of life of communities. This perspective explains that more resources are in the hands of the minority owners of means of production. This state of affairs totally disenfranchises the majority economically. Redistribution could be achieved through radical means, i.e. people should organise and demand more resources for their communities. People should acquire the mobilised participation through which they become conscious of the social, economic and political conditions of their environments. People should take an active “political participation and civil disobedience” in the process of demanding the redistribution of resources in their communities (Russel-Erich & Rivera, 1987:6).

### 2.3.10. BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The tenth element of community empowerment was identified as behavioural change which concerns the changes in knowledge development, skills and attitudes that are eminent in the community, the social work profession and the community work practitioner soon after the community empowerment programme was implemented.

Drower (1991:141) writes that social workers in the new South Africa need to be aware of issues that are relevant to the broader socio-political context of the country. Social workers should be in line with the current social development and reconstruction processes. But professionals are said to be ambivalent towards change. This is due to the fact that they were conditioned by the apartheid ideology, in that they fail to consider that people can change and in turn change their environments. Russell-Erich and Rivera (1987:2) say they are wondering why there are too many battles with so little time to begin to fight them.

According to Nkuhlu (1993:12), any developmental process should concentrate on the present and the future only, with disregard of the past which may evoke negative emotional states in people. He advises that professionals should change their mind-sets and behaviours, and that they should believe that people could make positive change towards their own development only if they were afforded an opportunity to do so.

According to Simon (1994:73-82), social work practitioners have important aspects which need to be considered when empowering disadvantaged individuals/groups/organisations/communities. These aspects are as follows:

- \* *Offering support:-* the disadvantaged lack both the materials and nonmaterial resources in order to attain their community empowerment. Material resources should be met earlier than the nonmaterial ones. The disadvantaged need to be assured of their competence and capabilities in addressing their own problems.

\* *Teaching Skills:-* community members need to be provided with the conflict resolution, negotiation and the basic communication skills (Schwerin, 1995:43)

\* *Involving participation:-* social work practitioners need “to involve clients actively in shaping the helping and problem - solving process “ (Simon, 1994:77). The disadvantaged communities are apathetic and would do nothing to improve their environments unless they are inspired to do so by the social work practitioners.

\* *Making agency data publicly useful:-* people, the funding institutions and/or the government will always want to know about the processes in the community based organisations. Other agency information could be disseminated to the public in the form of pamphlets, newsletter and conferences (Schwerin, 1995:151)

\* *Establishing social security:-* social workers should establish social security measures to assist their impoverished aged, disabled, orphaned and the unemployed. Social security is meant only for those who are unable to secure incomes due to their physical or mental disability and/or due to the hazards caused by their environments.

\* *Phasing the interventions by beginning with direct responses to clients' request:-* the paternalistic approach which applies the medical model is the one which should be avoided as it does not give the client opportunity to define his/her own problems and how he/she wishes to resolve it. The resolution of problems according to the community empowerment paradigm heavily lies in the hands of the troubled party.

### 2.3.11. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

This element is concerned with the allocation of funds to the programme.



Programmes are possible when funds are made available to them by the funding institutions.

To empower the South African rural communities will require quite a number of different resources. These will include, most importantly, the financial assistance coupled with an increased democracy. Taylor (1995:145) argues that empowerment in South Africa would not be a success due to the fact that the National Party government has mismanaged funds leaving the ANC-led government inheriting huge sums of debts. Other obstacles to community empowerment were cited as violence and conflicts which affect transition to democracy.

Some bigger companies seem to be responding to the call of empowering people. This is evidenced by Tongaat-Hulett Group which has sold 80% of its supervisor food services (SFS) to a black-controlled consortium as a start to empower blacks economically (Harris, 1994:16). This gives us hope that in the near future, many institutions or non-governmental organisations will come nearer to the communities and empower them thereby reducing the effects of social problems in South Africa.

### 2.3.12. SELF-RELIANCE

The twelfth element of community empowerment was identified as self-reliance which means that after programmes were implemented, communities are able to do future programmes on their own without reliance on outsider experts.

Community empowerment removes dependency, apathy, helplessness, alienation and backwardness from poor communities and replaces them with self-reliance. Community empowerment fosters self-development, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. All forms of the previous practices of doing *for* the communities are replaced by the modern forms of *helping communities to help themselves*. Communities are able to acquire even the most sophisticated skills and knowledge that are required in their own development.

People are the most important prerequisite for community empowerment process. The developmental approaches like the modernization, underdevelopment and dependency theories failed at developing communities because they did not regard the involvement of people into making a positive input to their own development (Nkuhlu 1994, du Toit 1998). Du Toit (1988:82) maintains that the sustainable development of the South African communities in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was a success because it respects the inputs of communities towards their own development. Community empowerment is endogenously oriented as against those theories mentioned above which were exogenous and led to failures.

Conflict is seen as a necessity towards development, because once consensus is achieved, peace resurfaces and development is sustainable in the process (du Toit, 1998:83). Conflict management skills are necessary for communities to effectively run their community empowerment programmes. Community organisations should include people from all the cultural backgrounds in their development programmes. Social work practitioners are advised to study all the different South African cultures to enable them to move freely from one group to another. Social work practitioners should create a comfortable environment for all the people from the multi-cultures (du Toit, 1998:88). This author writes of an environment that humanises all the individuals through a South African concept "ubuntu" which means extending oneself towards others because it is others that makes him/her human. The principles of "ubuntu" were listed as unconditional acceptance, respect, human dignity, compassion, hospitality and stewardship (Mbigi in du Toit, 1998:89)

From the discussion above, it is interesting to indicate that community empowerment is a broad concept which cannot be explained in a single paragraph. This concept was divided into twelve sub-concepts which were individually discussed to explain it.

In the succeeding part, the historical roots of community empowerment will be discussed.

## 2.4. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

According to Simon (1994), the intellectual and political foundations of the concept community empowerment are categorised into three periods, namely; the early period (1893-1917), the wartime and interwar years (1917-1945), and the recent years (1945- to date ). In this part, the influential movements, ideas and beliefs will be discussed under the mentioned three periods.

The transformationalists view the world today as dysfunctional and is featured by a series of problems such as population explosion, poverty, nuclear wars, ethno-political conflicts, crime and Aids. To address social problems more effectively would be to transfer them to the grassroots who are experiencing them to address them themselves. This is community empowerment. Community empowerment should be developed into a theory because it is effective in addressing social problems.

The development of community empowerment to what it is today has evolved over a period of 108 years, that is, from 1893 to 2000, (Simon, 1994). The historical roots of empowerment were derived from Simon (1994) and are summarised in this section of the chapter.

### 2.4.1. EARLY PERIOD: 1893-1917

The first period of community empowerment development is called the early period and it took place between 1893 and 1917 (Simon, 1994:47).

The early period of empowerment development has the intellectual, religious and political influences such as the populism, social gospel, unionism, feminism, pragmatism and the du Bois and the Niagara Movement (Simon, 1994:47).



- \* *Populism:* According to the populism, the majority should mobilise and resist the monopolistic holding of power and control by the central government and the elite. Power and resources should be transferred to the common people.
- \* *The Social Gospel:-* In order to fulfil Christ's promise of heaven on earth, people should work co-operatively in abolishing all forms of capitalism and its features of poverty, homelessness, crime, private ownership, etc.
- \* *Unionism:-* Unionism is a brotherhood movement of workers who mobilise to improve their working conditions. Their oneness is strengthened by their slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" when they mobilise to make common claims.
- \* *Feminism:-* Sisterhood movements who mobilise to resist institutions that discriminate people by virtue of their gender, race, age and class. Feminism is discussed in detail in the second section of this study.
- \* *Pragmatism:-* there is a transitive relationship between man and his environment and therefore the well-being of men is dependent upon the healthy community life. Individuals should improve their communities in order to benefit problem free lives from their environs.
- \* *Du Bois and the Niagara Movement:-* People should develop their subculture institutions which should be contributory to the larger society. They should learn to improve their conditions even when they are living in a society that is hostile and indifferent to them.

The influences of the early period of empowerment development propagated mostly on the need for people's mobilization around the improvement of their societies.

#### **2.4.2. WARTIME AND INTERWAR YEARS: 1917-1945**

Wartime and interwar years took place between 1917 and 1945 (Simon, 1994:82).

During this period, empowerment development obtained its influences from Freudianism, Marcus Gravy and Black Nationalism, existentialism, Marxist and Socialism.

- \* *Freudianism:* Social work practitioners should attempt to understand the totality of client's inner experience. Clients should be encouraged to define in detail themselves, their environments and how they intend to improve the environments, what is termed "talking cure" (Simon, 1994:89).
- \* *Marcus Gravy and Black Nationalism:-* Propagated for the total emancipation from capitalism. Blacks should mobilise and resist the racial taboos that see whites as superior over blacks.
- \* *Existentialism:-* Philosophers and novelists inspire individuals with the assistance of the social work practitioners to direct their strengths into securing their meaningful lives.
- \* *Marxism and Socialism:-* People should mobilise and resist private ownership of resources by the minority. Mass power organisations should be the mouthpiece of the local grassroots.

During this period, people were influenced to strive for their meaningful life, be involved in their own development and that they should mobilise and redress their environments.

### 2.4.3. RECENT PERIOD: 1945- TO DATE

The final period of empowerment development is called the recent period and it took place between 1945 and today (Simon,1994:124).

During the recent period, empowerment development is influenced by the ideas, beliefs and movements of Ghana, Chinese consciousness-raising, Africa Independence Movements, Freire, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, maximal feasible participation, liberation theology, The New Left, self-help movements, gay and lesbian liberation, feminism and the disability rights movement.

\* *Ghana*:- People in the Third World should resist colonialism, and learn to rule themselves.

\* *Chinese Consciousness - raising*:- This movement's influence is similar to conscientization which was discussed in the previous section.

\* *African Independence Movements*:- Influence from Memo, Anon and Nkrumah that inspire people in the Third World to resist colonialism, racism and capitalism.

\* *Freire*:- People should have increased awareness of their socio-economic and political realities, and that they should take action in transforming these realities to their own benefits.

\* *The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements*:- Blacks should have confidence in their inherent power that could be positively and peacefully utilised to resist all forms of racial discrimination in their societies.

\* *Maximal Feasible Participation*:- The disadvantaged should have access to the planning and implementation of their own developmental programmes. Projects should be controlled by the local common people.

\* *Liberation Theology*:- Societies should scrap classes that put more resources in the hands of the few minorities, the state, the church, elite, etc.



\* *The New Left*:- Participatory democracy should prevail in that poor people should be given opportunity to improve their own conditions.

\* *The Self-Help Movement*:- This movement mistrusted experts and larger institutions. Disadvantaged individuals should utilise their own strengths, those from their immediate group supporters and from the larger community without dependence on professionalism.

#### The section

\* *Gay and Lesbian Liberation*:- Stigmatised communities of gays and lesbians mobilised and are resisting the heterosexist domination. The mobilization in the United States of America in 1973 resulted into the removal of homosexuality as a form of pathology from the American Psychiatric Association list (Simon, 1994:151).

\* *The Disability Rights Movement*:- The disabled should be accessed to socio-economic and political control of their communities like other members of the society.

#### The development

\* *Feminism*:- Feminists are divided into three, namely; the radical feminists who are against the women's subordination to men, the liberal feminists who question the social, political, legal, religious and cultural set-up of communities which discriminate against people due to their sexual orientations, and the social feminists who propagate that societies should be classless.

There are many ideas, beliefs and movements that influence the development of empowerment today. Most of these influences have a commonality of addressing the imbalances that were created by colonialism and its capitalism which place power and resources in the hands of the few and violation of human rights by institutions.

In the second section of this chapter, the researcher will discuss the five theoretical perspectives of community empowerment, namely; developmental perspective,

ethclass perspective, critical perspective, feminist perspective and ecological perspective.

## **2.5. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

### **2.5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This section discusses five theoretical perspectives of community empowerment, namely; developmental perspective, ethclass perspective, critical perspective, feminist perspective and ecological perspective as stipulated in Lee (1994) and Mondros and Wilson (1994).

#### **2.5.1.1. DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

The first theoretical perspective of community empowerment to be discussed is the developmental perspective.

The developmental perspective of community empowerment explains that in order for empowerment to occur, there should be a life stressor within communities. The concept life stressor means the presence or absence of something which exposes individuals to a problem that needs to be solved. People should raise their consciousness. The appearance of these stressors and the mobilization of people to find solutions are symbolised with the developmental stages of a human being from birth to adulthood, which are coined as “a necessarily long-term process of adult learning and development” (Mondros & Wilson, 1984:9).

The developmental perspective in fact discusses the community empowerment process. The empowerment process follows four developmental stages, namely; birth, later childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Mondros and Wilson's (1994) phases of participation marry harmoniously with the developmental phases cited above. As a consequence participation phases will be used to explain the behaviour of participants during the developmental stages.

\* *BIRTH*:- Schwerin (1995:86) terms this stage of development the “Era of Entry” and explains that it is during it that community members feel the injustice nature of their environment. Social mobilization takes place and it leads to participatory competence. People feel something should be done about their situation.

This is the stage when people experience a sense of belonging, want to create a community of their own, and they no longer want to keep quiet while others act on their behalf (Biklen, 1983:5). A community is “a group of people with similar interests living under and exerting some influence over the same government in a shared locality” (Maser & Kirk, 1996:16). The community serves its members with participation, mutual aid, economic production, socialisation and social control. These factors are the most important components of the community empowerment process. The practitioner has a task of selecting those members who have the necessary characteristics towards a problem at hand. Social problems can be easily solved if people act collectively. People need to be organised in order to be empowered and their “organising is concerned with constituency development” (Brager & Specht, 1973:28). This is called “identifying a member pool” stage wherein a practitioner applies a snowball method of recruiting more and more members of the group (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:43).

Heterogeneity of the group members is favoured over that of homogeneity as it is stronger and representative to everybody including the minority, what could be called “to attract a rainbow membership” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:46). People recruited are called participants. Participants are those people with the capacity to influence the decisions which cause socio-economic and political changes, and participation means “the means by which people who are not elected or appointed officials of agencies and of government influence decisions about programs and policies which affect their lives” (Brager & Specht, 1973:34). The group that has been formed during this phase of the community empowerment process is called socialisation and is characterised by members teaching each other values, behaviours and expectations of the organisation.



A social problem that is experienced by a particular community or society is a motivation for people to join a group. If there are no social problems, there is no need to act and to change and therefore the organizer has no reason to organise. A problem could seem a social problem to the outsiders but until it is defined as such by the people who experience it, it cannot be said to be a social problem. Problems are conditions which “interfere with the satisfaction or make the dissatisfactions more likely to occur” ( Biklen, 1983:33). A social problem involves many people in the community and can be defined in terms of concepts such as “malfunctioning” and the absence of something. Social problems in the South African context are mainly caused by channelling more socio-economic and political resources to the few in the expense of the majority. Social problem as an issue is a public matter. Lastly, people learn better when they are collectively participating in combating problematic circumstances in their environments.

*\*LATER CHILDHOOD:-* This stage is called the “Era of Advancement,” (Schwerin, 1995:86).

During this stage, community members increase their understanding of the authority. Community developers who are outsiders and experts in that field are always available to assist communities. The reciprocal relationship between the members and the outsider expert develops where the latter is supportive towards the former’s fears and frustrations. Through regular meetings and actions, members become aware of social, economic and political meanings of their environments.

During this stage of the community empowerment process, the practitioner creates and communicates the message of the group. This is directed at changing people’s personal interests to those of the group. Members become interested and are involved in the activities of the group. Community meetings are of utmost importance during this stage, because during discussions problems and issues of the group are considered in detail. Members feel that it is only through a group vehicle that they can be able to solve their own problems because individuals within

a group “bring various types and levels of interest, willingness, values, knowledge, and skills (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:8).

The peer (primary) group is formed and is featured by members feeling more affectionately towards one another. A sense of belonging is maximised. It is also a fact that although many members had personal interests prior joining the group, their interests are more likely to be similar as argued that the “disadvantaged people have interests in common” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:52). It is supported that there is a high social and economic similarity among the disadvantaged classes (Borich, Korsching & Petrzeka, 1993:72). Involvement is particularly higher when people of the same locality experience the same social problem and feel they should take action to remove or reduce it. Involvement is an important component of community empowerment for without it the process would not be effectively achieved.

\* *ADOLESCENCE*:- This stage is called an “Era of Incorporation” (Schwerin, 1995:86). It is the stage that is characterised by members having active leadership skills and being able to resolve their new role conflicts and have developed “mastery and competence” (Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984:23). Members become adept in both the technical and problem-solving skills.

Members are expected to regularly attend to activities of the group and a shift from “transitory and passive” is replaced by “sustained and active participation” in the group (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:65). The leaders and organizers are active during this stage that Mondros and Wilson (1994:64) call “initial engagement”. The leader has little to say but makes a close check if the veteran members are inducting new members into the skills and activities of the group. The term “plugging-in” is used by these authors to denote a process of issuing tasks and roles to members so that they become more attracted to the group. During this stage of group development, “people become acquainted personally, enhancing in-group ties” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:20). The organizer, although the group is achieving a strong cohesion, continues to encourage members in any activities of the group. Plugging-in is similar to involvement which was discussed in the previous section.



The group formed during this stage is called organisation-development group and is characterised by mass-based activities. The group has increased its cohesion. But cohesion does not imply that there is a total absence of conflicts during this stage. Conflicts are eminent and necessary in the group development. Conflicts and their adjacent resolutions are the important building blocks of the community empowerment programme. This is summarised by the statement that states that conflict is “an inevitable part of organisational life which improves the effectiveness of programmes and ensures growth in members’ capabilities of decision-making” (Robbins, 1990:411).

\***ADULTHOOD**:- This final stage is called an “Era of Commitment” and is characterised by members being able to deal more effectively and efficiently with their problem-solving strategies (Schwerin, 1995:86). People have developed their skills in each and every task that they perform. They develop concern, a source of responsibility and have increased power. They are able to control their environment and they have the knowledge to do it.

Mondros and Wilson (1994:75) call this phase “sustaining and deepening member involvement.” The type of group that has developed is an institutional-relations organisation and is characterised by the members’ activities that are directed specially at improving fellow members’ conditions or problems. The phase is also summarised by the statement which maintains that it is featured by activities that are geared to transacting business for their members (Brager & Specht, 1973:78). This stage is characterised by a specialisation in the part of participants who are now well structured, have basic rules and procedures.

Members have developed and can perform different tasks of the group. They are able to occupy a number of roles at a given time and some have developed leadership skills.



Leaders are those in authoritative positions and who are the role models for other new members of the group. Every member makes a great contribution to the whole and as such everyone should have equal access to leadership roles (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:87). A leader is “someone who helps show us the direction we want to go and who helps us go, he/she inspires people not to follow him/ her but follow themselves i.e. he/she helps them to become leaders themselves” (Kahn, 1991:21). When practitioners work towards empowering the people, they are also on the other hand working towards reducing their presence in the community, as leadership would have emerged in the community organisation (Russell-Erich & Rivera, 1987:8). This is the socio-economic restructuring which refers to the structural changes wherein the old are replaced by the new and members become transformed from authority dependant to authority independent (Tykkylainen & Neil, 1995:32). Empowerment shall prevail when members of the community are afforded an opportunity to run their own community development projects and programmes.

The community developmental process has reached its termination phase. Members are able to evaluate the impacts of a community empowerment programme associated with their project by comparing “where they were” with “where they are” now. If they are able to identify some flaws, it supports the statement that the community empowerment process has led to an increase into their capabilities.

### **2.5.1.2. ETHCLASS PERSPECTIVE**

The second theoretical perspective of community empowerment to be discussed is the ethclass perspective which is concerned with the classes within communities or societies.

Lee (1994:99) maintains that “ethclass” was coined by Gordon and she defines it as “the social participation and identity of persons who are confined in their own class and ethnic groups due to oppression.” This entails stigmatising people to those statuses that are discriminatory such as poor, gay, drug-addicts, etc. Stigmatisation is always associated with the “rejection and discrimination which the rejected and

discriminated should stand up and fight against" ( Lee, 1994:100). The poor are those who lack an adequate income and do not work, who are according to our institutions stigmatised as violent and lazy (Henry, 1992:70). The radical approach to stigmas should not be discredited because "empowerment may need to mean the struggle of the disadvantaged to gain respect and dignity (Reid, 1995:178). Thus the lower classes or minorities become aware of the yoke that inspanned them by the social stratification and begin to organise themselves to address it without even considering the concern of the authorities who imposed it to them.

In this context community organising is the process that is powerful in changing the community and is defined as "bringing people together to combat shared problems and to increase their say about decisions that affect their lives" (Rubin & Rubin 1992: 3). Helpless people are those with serious problems, are in isolation and do nothing to combat their circumstances. Community organisation inspire people with consciousness- raising, enable them to gather, discuss the problem and question the unequal distribution of resources in their environment. Power for community organisations is derived from large membership (Rubin & Rubin, 1992:5; Mondros & Wilson, 1994:36.)

Rubin and Rubin (1992:6) list the following five goals of community organising that need a brief explanation:

\* *Solution of problems:* Community organisations have the tasks of solving what Brager and Specht (1973:48) term environmental-change goals. These goals are mostly important for the users of the services. Community organisations therefore link communities with the relevant institutions that are to provide them with the services.

\* *Eliminating inequities in the distribution of resources:-* Where there are problems related to uneven distribution of resources, usually the poor are disadvantaged because of their racial, sexual, age, etc. backgrounds. Community organisations should strive to end racial,

ethnic and gender orientations, and that people should be afforded equal opportunities towards social, economic and political resources.

\* *Exercising and preserving the democratic values:-* This goal is to improve democracy through increasing the shared involvement of people in controlling their own lives (Rubin & Rubin, 1992:12).

\* *Achieving the potential of individuals:-* To empower people so that they feel confident about themselves.

\* *Creating communities:-* People raise their consciousness, work together and solve the problems that face them. Communities are people's sense of belonging.

The ethclass perspective explains the classification of countries under categories such as the First, Second and Third worlds. We know little about the Second world, because the communist countries did not share their developmental strategies with countries in the western block. The Third world is comprised of poor countries which are called peripheries, backward and non-western. The First world is made up of rich, developed and advanced countries. More wealth in the shape of raw cheap materials is suctioned from the Third to the First world. The product made of these materials are returned back to the Third world, this time with highly increased prices. This practice is exploitative to the Third world and fosters dependency in it. The First world continues to get richer and richer while the Third world becomes poorer and poorer.

The ethclass perspective highlights capitalism which causes underdevelopment and alienation that erects barriers between the workers in the Third world and the products they produce and that "it even divides the individual himself or herself" (Ritzer, 1988:22). The labour that an individual brought about to produce a product is viewed as a cheap commodity and as such he/she is subjected to lower incomes that exposes him/her to poverty.



Community empowerment enlightens communities with concepts of social stratification. The disadvantaged become aware of the exploitative nature of the class hierarchies within their environments. This will enable them to organise and participate in demanding the restoration of equilibrium within their communities.

The ethclass perspective poses the higher classes as made of greedy individuals who enrich themselves by expropriating resources from the disadvantaged classes. The powerful classes control decisions and the lives of those in the lower classes. Community empowerment shall be said to have been successful when power is lastly transferred from the higher classes to the lower classes, when equality among classes prevails, when everybody is free to express his/her own culture and when women are afforded equal opportunities to participate in the socio-economic and political matters of their communities, and when the transfer of power from those in authority to the disadvantaged is achieved (Reid, 1995:173). It would be when "government by the majority with recognition of the rights of minorities is achieved" (Nels, 1996:160). Community empowerment shall be said to have taken place when the local people control projects intended for them. The socio-economic and cultural differences among the communities need to be minimised so that the underdeveloped communities should not regard the community empowerment programmes as imposed upon them by the elite or the funding institutions.

Self-help is embedded in the heritage of the people because it is critically important for their social and economic development (Jenning, 1992:2). Every sector of the community should be afforded an opportunity to represent itself in the organisation which will be administering community empowerment programmes to that community.

The majority of people need to be empowered so that they can be able to identify their felt needs. But in South Africa today, 68% of practitioners are whites, this means that whites possess more skills than blacks whilst on the other hand, more service users are blacks. Users should articulate views of their issues, causes and

solutions. The class barriers should be broken down so that “the transformation of services also involves the transformation of service providers” (Klitgaard, 1994:146). Many social work practitioners should join hands and consider community empowerment as an effective community development component. They should actively participate in empowering the rural communities; this would ensure development and the sustainability of the capacities of the rural people. The Constitution calls for the removal of all forms of discrimination in the South African society by stating that “the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” Constitution, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996).

A special intervention, “affirmative action” provided by the State, is to redress the imbalances of the past within the country (*The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 1995:9). Affirmative action was first coined by President Kennedy in 1961 and was later legislated by President Johnson in 1965 in the United States of America (Wingrove,1993:3). Wingrove defines affirmative action as “an anti-discrimination measure that is reinforced by legislation and judicial intervention to identify those positions in the workplace which were occupied by certain categories of people due to their socio-economic, political, cultural, and religious affiliation” (Wingrove, 1993:5). Affirmative action closely resembles community empowerment for it also calls for the creation of opportunities, structures and means that will enable the disenfranchised groups to have free access to their own development.

Affirmative action is about equalisation, equality of opportunities, socio-economic and political parity amongst groups, and the restoration of equilibrium, which in order to achieve, we have to change the behaviour of South Africans whose minds and hearts are still engraved with racism (Nkuhlu, 1993:12).



Horton (1992:12), sees cohesiveness as resulting from what he terms “socially inclusive leaderships” in which people at grassroots level are afforded equal opportunities towards leadership positions. The variety of skills and experience brought about by the indigenous groups are more powerful ingredients of the community empowerment process.

Mondros and Wilson (1994) contributed the grassroots empowerment model. According to them the aim of the grassroots model is to change the institution i.e. redistribution of resources. The targets of this model usually are the government and public or private figures that hold more authority and are blocks towards the achievement or well-being of the majority of the disadvantaged. Grassroots people are usually poor and/or from the oppressed people of colour. They require skills and decision-making mechanisms in order to run their processes adequately. The organiser’s participation is passive and allows every member to acquire the leadership role. The authors state that people from grassroots organisations should regard their targets as enemies “in order to enhance members’ sense of victimisation and oppression” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:231).

The ethclass perspective indicates that community empowerment is possible when cohesion is achieved. Strong cohesion calls for the inclusivity of all the stakeholders within a given community’s developmental project.

The ethclass perspective stressed the importance of removing the barriers of social, economic and political inequality among racial groups in order to be successful in the community empowerment processes. The perspective still lacks the important characteristic of affording the rural communities an opportunity to run their own development and/or do their own impact analysis. It lastly says nothing about the transfer of knowledge and skills (training) from the professionals to the disadvantaged communities.

### 2.5.1.3. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE



The critical perspective is an in-depth inquiry into the global socio-economic and political conditions of people in the society or community (Lee, 1994:117). The most important feature of this approach is that, whichever condition is found to be retarding to the well-being of individuals, it is immediately attended to. There are concepts of utmost importance such as liberation and radicalism. Those who are powerful and empathise with the oppressed, assist the oppressed in becoming powerful, are referred to as liberators. Lee (1994:116), defines radicals as those "who are passionately and act with those who are oppressed" in changing the *status quo*.

The critical perspective has a powerful element of the partnership between the community empowerment practitioner and the community members. Both are on equal positions in a research endeavour and could be referred to as co-researchers, co-investigators or co-workers which Lee (1994:117), reiterates the approach is not of "jug and mug" nature wherein only the worker is expected to bring skills and knowledge to the relationship. The co-ship between the outsider and the community members, suggests a factor of willingness to take part in the empowerment programmes and tasks in the part of the members themselves. The outsider has a task "to train local leadership and to enhance local decision-making ability" (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:31). Gibson and Worden (1984:30), reported the possibility of training community members on the general procedures of doing their own community analysis.

Community based projects' budgets usually contain a proportion of funds especially appropriated for training. Community based organisations send their members to the training institutions for a particular period. During the implementation of the project, those who received training share their knowledge and skills with other members of the community who are on the employ of the project. In this fashion, skills and knowledge flow from the trainees to the broader community.

The co-ordinator's role is reduced from decision maker to that of "a decision enhancer" (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:29). Thus, he is not active but passive during the community empowerment process. He causes dialogues among members who will identify their problem areas and resources to overcome them, and thereafter the worker will build on their strengths. The role of a facilitator enables clients to "identify and enumerate their own internal and external resources" (Simon, 1994:14).

Community members are trained in instances such as meeting management, communication, reporting, conflict resolution, technical, evaluation and research skills. It is evident in the community based projects that after attending several meetings, community members become empowered, can control their large budgets, participate in the implementation of their projects and are responsible and accountable throughout the process. There is a need for new and valid information with regard to community survival which can only be brought by members themselves. It is through shared experience and interactions that community members are enabled to explain their real world in their own terms. In the community empowerment process the disadvantaged or oppressed "must become thinkers as well as doers to achieve transformation and freedom from oppression" (Lee, 1994:118).

The critical perspective concerns itself much with the power equality. The government is having more social, economic and political coercive power over the people. It is the power abuse that makes people feel dissatisfied and challenge the *status quo*. The economic power in South Africa, for instance, is unevenly distributed along the racial lines, and this backdrop results in poverty among other classes. The South African government is attempting to redress the unequal distribution of resources problem through its legislation of improving the lives of all people disregarding their social, economic, political, religious, gender or age backgrounds.

The oppressive socio-economic and political conditions within a community were cited in both the ethclass and critical perspectives. These perspectives prove to



share similarities with a slight difference in that the critical perspective puts more emphasis on the co-ship of community members and the professionals.

The critical perspective is hereby identified as an approach which respects the integrity, competency and mastery of poor rural communities by involving them with the sophistication of evaluation, conflict resolution, communication and research. According to the perspective, research is no longer a concern of only the academics, people at grassroots can do it if they are adequately trained to do so. The social work profession should not doubt the capabilities and integrity of the rural communities, as Gibson and Worden (1984:33) plead, "our purpose was not to create amateur Ph.D.'s." If social workers train community members into means of identifying their problem areas and skills of addressing them, this would not mean that they will totally be replaced and their services no longer wanted in the communities. It will lead to a minimised workload whereby professionals will be required only for more sophisticated tasks that community members are incapable of performing. Professionals should transfer the knowledge power from themselves to the rural communities in the same manner that was describe when knowledge and skills flew from the trainees to the unskilled labourers of the community based projects.

#### **2.5.1.4. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

The fourth theoretical perspective of community empowerment to be discussed is the feminist perspective which questions the imbalances imposed upon individuals by their gender orientations.

Feminists have their worst enemy, the patriarchal system, in which men and their institutions are oppressive towards women. Meehan (1995:1) states that "feminist theory is devoted to clarifying the structure of the social and political world and the way in which gender functions to produce and reproduce male domination and female subordination." There is inequality between the two gender classes, in which women are discriminated against and rejected in the same manner that social



stratification does to the disadvantaged groups. Feminists want to break the shackles of the patriarchal system. Women do not mean they want to challenge the system of discriminating against them alone, nor do they mean they are “man-haters” or “separatists” (Lee, 1994:108). Men must also join hands in the community empowerment process from which the products shall benefit the whole society.

Women were found to be more powerful in community development projects. Horton (1992:12) stated that the existence of the black church in the USA would not had occurred if the women participation in the leadership roles did not take place. Women should have equal opportunities to leadership roles as men in the community development projects. While this is the case for successful community development, in the unsuccessful ones, it is found that other parts of the community were not considered or were totally left out.

From the researcher’s point of view, women are successful in community programmes mostly because they regard their communities as their own families. The women, the youth, the poor, disabled, etc. are the sectors of the social system that are usually ignored in community development projects.

When South African women, for instance, campaign for their status and fight violence against women (VAW), they also campaign for the rights of children. This is so because it is often women who struggle alone to provide a home, food and proper schooling for children and as such children should claim their rights through them (*Legal Resources Centre*, 1998:21).

South African women from all groupings joined other women from all over the world in Beijing in 1995 for The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and together they resolved “to promoted equality between women and men” (*The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 1995:3).

Discrimination against women in South Africa is caused by our customary, cultural and religious beliefs which are stereotypical and restrictive towards women. Any of these beliefs, laws and regulations should be respected, only if it does not come into conflict with the Constitution, as stipulated by the phrase "this constitution is the supreme law in the Republic, law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid; and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled" Constitution, 1996 ( Act No.108 of 1996).

The practice of excluding women from the development do not only rob women of their status but also lead to the failure of the community development programmes (Licuanan, Panjaitan & Es, 1996:135). Programmes which are highly technological were mainly concentrated on employing men, that is, they were tools geared at eliminating women from the workforce suggesting their statuses as being inferior to those of men. Higher positions in politics and communities were occupied by men and there was "the absence of women in public offices" (Licuanan *et al*, 1996:138). Women were disadvantaged in those hierarchies due to the reason that they were restricted to the household roles of wife and mother (Licuanan *et al*, 1996:139). These roles reduced women's time for participating in the occupational market, leaving them earning low wages.

Women are deprived of the opportunities to participate in community developmental projects because they almost work "double shifts", i.e. at workplace and at home. It is mostly so with a woman who is heading a family on her own, because within the nuclear families nowadays, men are starting to assist their spouses with household tasks. Women in their largest numbers continue to perform most of household tasks and that if they are employed elsewhere, they are more likely to be subjected to these "double shifts". It is never too late to free women by changing or removing "All laws, regulation, customs and practices which discriminate against women in South Africa" (*The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 1995:7).

For the feminist approach, community empowerment means that women should redefine their roles in the community and that all the societal stigmas attached to them by our religion and culture be phased out.

Ackerman and Joyner (1996:121), write that "South African history has been characterised by patterns of domination - white over black, rich over poor, men over women and human beings over nature." Those with a serious poverty problem are in the rural areas, are blacks and women. Poverty is the greatest social reality in South Africa, and to address it, the researcher is of the opinion that the government should refrain itself from making empty promises and only deliver the necessary resources to the people, especially to women. Black women suffer more from poverty because of their racial class. Malveaux (1992:33) terms the condition "doubly disadvantaged."

The majority of those who are unemployed and poor in the current South African history are women who will remain the poorest of the poor unless something could be urgently done to redress their socio-economic and political conditions. The statements are supported by the *White Paper on Public Works (1997:2)*, which states "African women are most likely to be unemployed (47 percent), followed by African male (28 percent)." Another factor is that many households in the rural areas are headed by women. The female headed families are much poorer than the average household (*Beijing Conference Plan of Action, 1995:1*).

There is insufficient supply of water, electricity and transportation resources in the rural areas which compels women to spend most of their times physically collecting wood and water for their daily family existence. It is true women and children will continue to experience poverty, but the researcher thinks that as long as a South African woman survives, she will see to it that her children, family, community and society are protected from the social problems.



Poverty is a threat to community empowerment and as such financial resources should be expended to communities for a successful community empowerment process.

Although male domination over women was identified as retarding to community empowerment and hence development programmes, most women have started to free themselves from the patriarchal system. This is evidenced by the steering committees of projects in the rural areas which have now a higher representation of women than it was previously the case. Women have a strong say in the matters of their communities than it was before.

The Minister of Housing, Mtembu-Mahanyele indicated that poverty in South Africa affects, “women first because our society, which is patriarchal in nature, has rendered them vulnerable” (Cleobury, 1995:18). Women to her understanding, are affected by “simultaneous operation of different oppression.” She also revealed the Development Bank of Southern Africa’s statistics that indicated that women comprise more than half of the population, that 60% of the households are headed by women, are in rural areas and that tragically the whole 56,4% of them earn less than a Rand monthly. Black women have experienced unemployment more than their white counterparts. Most of them occupy what Malveaux (1992:41) calls “Typical Black Female” occupations, with low incomes and are dehumanising.

Mkhabele of the National Housing Forum urged women to learn to manipulate the levers of power and politics, urged them to make sufficient noise so that they could be heard, acknowledged and attended to and finally urged them to organise themselves (Cleobury, 1995:18).

Dominelli (1995:135) writes of the successful campaigns organised by women around the globe, namely; women’s campaign against men’s violence against women, woman’s reproductive rights, shelters for the women battered by men, social security and environmental purification. The feminists put women in the centre of social change but are reluctant to “endorse placing one woman in a

leadership position over others” (Dominelli, 1995:136). They prefer to put each and every individual with skills and knowledge in a position that would enable her to share with others.

Dominelli (1995:137-145) explained the success of the Greenham Peace Movement which was organised by women in the early 1980's in Britain. Men were requested to leave every process up to women themselves, although they played a supportive role of taking over household tasks when their women were demonstrating against nuclear armament outside the Base. Women learnt the skills of non-violent action and demonstrated “that the powerless also held power” (Dominelli, 1995:138). These women utilised very limited resources to force the Minister of Defence Michael Heseltine and his cabinet to consider their demands. People from the entire society supported the demonstrators by providing them with amenities such as food, water and places to baths. The Greenham Peace Movement strategy was replicated by Iceland's Feminist Women's Party in 1984. Organisation movements are empowering in nature because they “enable the voice of the people come to the fore” (Dominelli,1995:140). Improving the status of women not only means providing them with materially needs but also the immaterial which means a share in the socio-economic and political system of the country.

This study has stated under the ethclass perspective that community empowerment shall be said to have ripened when women are afforded equal opportunities as men to fully participate in the socio-economic and political matters of their communities.

The feminist approach exactly delineates the imbalances, oppression and discrimination among the two genders. The women status should be revisited in the new South African history. Although the perspective stresses the importance of the inclusion of women in the leadership positions of community empowerment programmes, it unfortunately does not share light as to how community empowerment is to be achieved.

This study puts emphasis on the inclusion of the feminist perspective to community empowerment due to the reason that it raises serious issues that should be addressed in order to succeed in empowering communities, namely, the inclusion of women and those at the grassroots level in the leadership roles of community projects and programmes. The rural communities in South Africa are highly represented by black women because the majority workforce of strong males has been eroded to the cities leaving behind women in the decision-taking position of both the family and their community.

#### 2.5.1.5. ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The fifth and final theoretical perspective of community empowerment to be discussed is the ecological perspective which is selectively concerned with the relationship between individuals and their immediate socio-economic and political environments.

The relationship between man and the environment is reciprocal in nature, that is, people shape the environment when they are in turn shaped by it. The conditions in the environment are sometimes oppressive to the individuals and as a consequence people manifest their coping skills in order to adapt to their environments. This notion explains that people develop their community empowerment strategies mostly when their socio-economic and political rights are violated.

People have potentialities which enable them to adapt to any environmental condition. When faced with the oppressive conditions, they are able to mobilise and challenge the environment. They raise consciousness when they are exploited and oppressed by their institutions which control them rather than *visa versa*. When they become dissatisfied, they become actively involved in problem-solving in a bid to reduce or ameliorate the life stresses. Community empowerment entails the productive defensive mechanism skills for challenging the problem at hand.



The ecological perspective, discusses concepts of power, oppression and pollution (Germain in Lee, 1994:116). The environment is said to be more powerful than people individually. Its monopolistic withholding and abusing of power impedes the biopsychosocial well-being of individuals. Indeed when individuals come together and form organisations, they in turn become more powerful than their immediate environments.

Sherraden and Ninacs (1998:1) term community organisation the community economic development, abbreviated as (CED's). The CED's link the social and economic capital of the communities. Community economic development "is indigenous, it is born in the community and residents take the lead in articulating goals, policies, and operations" (Sherraden & Ninacs, 1998:2). The CED's are primarily aimed at the poor minorities, women, oppressed, etc. Social work practitioners should bring together a variety of different individuals from different economic, social, political, religious and cultural backgrounds to the formation of the CED's with the aim of improving the well-being of individuals, families, and/or communities. CED's are non-profit and are community based. They are home-grown. In order to germinate, they require financial support from either the central, provincial, regional or local government. Social work practitioners "must ensure that the interests and well-being of the poor are at the centre of CED efforts (Sherraden & Ninacs, 1998:5). The authors see CED as "a community empowerment process" (Sherraden & Ninacs, 1998:7).

Simon (1994:15), writes about the dual focus on community members and their social worlds. Individuals should be actively involved in changing their worlds in order to benefit a better healthy life. The environment is composed of social, economic, physical, cultural and political elements. The ways these elements affect people result in the urge that motivate most people, "to become powerful enough to effect certain changes in the larger environment" (Mondros & Wilson, 1994:6). People mobilise themselves and develop their own leadership and decision-making structures. Mobilization means bringing many people together because the "power

of a lot of people working together is enough to make changes where one person can do very little” (Kahn, 1991:5). People unlike their environments are social beings. They are more active in coming together, more so especially, with the assistance of a social work practitioner who facilitates their interaction in facing their problem. The component of mobilization or bringing people together for an action meant to alleviate their problems is of utmost importance in community empowerment tradition.

#### oriented

Midgley and Livermore (1998:29) referred to the contribution made by individuals, families or communities to their community organisations as “social capital”, and defined the concept as it “is widely used to connote the importance of local community networks and associations in society.” The authors maintain that projects which successfully mobilise civic engagement have a high probability of improving the well-being of communities. Where communities have disintegrated, social problems become multiplied and are difficult to resolve. Social capital also means the interactional relationship between community workers, community members, consultant and funding agencies. A collaborative relationship is the one that ensures the community development. It is the social capital that enhances the social well-being and promotes economic capital of the community. Social capital may be defined as a “social infrastructure in which individuals develop a relationship that are aimed at common goals and objectives” (Midgley & Livermore, 1998:32). Social capital formation is a process supported by the community worker that aims at bringing different members of the community with common interest together to identify and define their problem, plan strategic intervention, take action to redress the problem and evaluate their intervention. Social capital influences and is in turn influenced by the economic capital, e.g.. there would be poor investments in areas where there is social disintegration and high incidence of crime.

#### 2.6.3. IN

The ecological perspective concentrates on the relationship between an individual and his/her own environment. The type of a relationship is a reciprocal one, that is, individuals influence and are also influenced by their environment. The type of a relationship is that which is termed “ecosystem”, wherein individuals influence their



communities (environments) by say, developing human resources through training of other members, building infrastructures like roads, railway or telecommunication lines, whilst on the other hand, their community ensures their well-being by having all the necessary amenities available, e.g.. health care services, educational facilities, recreational facilities and equity environments.

Man and the environment should be seen as a whole ecosystem. Ecological oriented social work practitioners prefer to use an integrated method of practice which is “based on a more extended knowledge base” and is able to study, analyse, explain and clarify man on their psychological level, group and community level (Lombard, 1991: 17-18). This perspective enables practitioners to intervene on the wholeness between man and environment.

The ecological approach has similarities with the ethclass perspective of community empowerment . It is detailed in its interpretation of the concept environmental stress. It is that socio-eco-political obstruction that induce people to question their environment which could lead to the demand for power by the people. Another important component that was contributed by the perspective is that of mobilization. Although the ecological perspective shares a variety of similarities with the critical perspective, it does not commit itself with empowering the rural communities into doing their own in depth inquiries (research).

The third section of this chapter will discuss the community empowerment process and the roles that social work practitioners play during that process.

## **2.6. THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

### **2.6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this part of the section, a detailed discussion of the phases of the community empowerment process will be presented.



Community empowerment has a poorly ordered process which Schwerin (1995:85) stated as “there is not one optimal path to empowerment”. The Independent Development Trust (IDT), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) make use of the Developmental Bank of Southern Africa’s process of community development ( *Developmental Bank of Southern Africa*, 1992:3). It has already been explained that community empowerment takes place simultaneously with the community development process. The Developmental Bank of Southern Africa’s six phases of the project life cycle are as follows: identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiations, implementation and evaluation. These phases are not necessarily sequential and as a result some may overlap (*United Nations*, 1971:73).

Lombard (1991:233) is of the opinion that in order for a social work practitioner to successfully improve the physical, social, economic and political development of the community, he/she should arrange his/her tasks in sequential order, i.e. from the initial phase to the end phase. According to Lombard (1991), the community development process (empowerment) has six phases, namely; situation analysis, identification and definition of needs and problems, representation by the community, planning, implementation of the community project and evaluation. Lombard (1991:240) maintains that there is a possibility of moving forward and backwards and that some phases might occur simultaneously.

## **2.6.2. PHASES IN THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

Six phases in the community empowerment process, namely, identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiations, implementation and evaluation, will be discussed in this section.

As it has already been mentioned in the introduction, these phases are not necessarily sequential and do overlap one another. Their sequence in this study will be as follows:

- \* First phase:- Identification
- \* Second phase:- Preparation
- \* Third phase:- Appraisal
- \* Fourth phase:- Negotiation
- \* Fifth phase:- Implementation
- \* Sixth phase:- Evaluation

Terminology differ in this study as different authors name the phases with different words (compare *Development Bank of Southern Africa*, 1992; Chambers & McBeth, 1992; Lombard, 1991.)

Lombard (1991:241) has reported that different authors identify different number of phases, usually rating between the lowest four and the highest twelve.

Chambers and McBeth (1992:20) referred to community empowerment as community encouragement. During their explanation of the Rural Community Revitalization Project (RCRP), they identified four phases which need to be summarised in this section (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:25-38). Interestingly in their explanation of their community encouragement process is their omission of an "implementation phase" which most authors would not dare miss. Implementation phase could be regarded as the heart of every process as it concerns putting what has been written on paper in the actual action. Another importance of this process is its division of the planning stage into the pre-planning activity and the strategic planning retreat. This will highlight some light to some readers who wish to do their own community empowerment their own way. Chambers and McBeth's stages are not necessarily named the way we are used to, that is why the researcher chose to reflect their work in this section. Lastly a mention about evaluation is that

"community encouragement is a process of continual evaluation" (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:36). An important point made here is that evaluation could be conducted by a different individual, group, community, research team, or university department after months or years of completion of the project. The Chambers and McBeth's (1992) model has the following phases:

- \* *Selection/Organisation:-* identification of community representation, training of local leadership with the conflict resolution skills, and in other fields such as meeting management, communication, media, etc.
- \* *Communication/Assessment:-* is a data collection phase wherein community members are involved with gathering necessary information, problems and goals, and their prioritisation.
- \* *Participation/Planning:-* generation of alternatives, goals, objectives and strategies for growth and prosperity.
- \* *Pre-planning activity:-* identification of all the strategic issues that are found to be a threat to the community.
- \* *Strategic Planing Retreat:-* The devising of a goal statement and its subsequent issues. Strategic issues could be reduced to a small and manageable number. This is where the implementation phase is left out. It is during this phase that the team began to focus on the real mechanics of implementation "By putting their knowledge to work" (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:36).
- \* *Evaluation:-* to find out whether there has been progress in the revitalization effort of the programme.

The six phases of the community empowerment process will be discussed in the proceeding section.



### 2.6.2.1. PHASE I: IDENTIFICATION:

Identification was identified as the first phase of the community empowerment process. This phase is associated much with the identification of needs and their corresponding resources. Identification phase is therefore concerned with information gathering.

At this moment, it is an idea that a project for the development of a certain community is necessary. A consideration is made as to whether that project will indeed address the needs of the community and achieve the community empowerment question. Another important contribution during this stage is the establishment of a framework within which the programme is to be implemented. The social work practitioners research around for the relevant literature regarding community development and empowerment. They advertise the community empowerment programme to communities through different forms of media. During community gatherings, members are able to prioritise their projects.

Lombard (1991:243-244) terms this first phase "situation analysis" and explains that it is during this that the social work practitioners gather relevant information regarding community's physical, economical, social and political standing what she termed "community profile". A community profile includes the evolution and development, the natural, economic, social and political environment of the community and its organisations. Social work practitioners utilise different strategies for obtaining information about a community such as simple observation, interviews with community members, communication with informants, newspapers and attending community gatherings. They try to gather as much about the community needs or problems as possible.

It is during the identification phase that application forms are sent to those communities who applied for community empowerment programmes.

### 2.6.2.2. PHASE II: PREPARATION

The second phase of the community empowerment process is called preparation, and it is during it that community needs are compared with the resources to meet them.

This phase is termed “formulation” and it is during it that the programme is defined in detail in order for the decision making bodies of the funding institution to evaluate its usefulness and relevance to the community (*United Nation, 1971:76*). According to Lombard (1991:256), it is the “identification and definition of needs and problems,” phase with which information gathered during the previous stage, the social worker practitioners are able to involve the community stakeholders to determine the process of addressing the problem/need. They both understand the problem and its immediate solutions more clearly. It is during this process that social work practitioners need to refrain from fostering “their own evaluations of community needs onto the community” (Lombard, 1991:256). The practitioners should encourage the communities to actively participate in the processes of their community empowerment programmes.

All sectors of the community who have interest in its community empowerment programme should be afforded an opportunity to be represented in the decision making of the community-based organisation that is formed in the area.

### 2.6.2.3. PHASE III: APPRAISAL

The third phase of the community empowerment process is called appraisal and is concerned with the physical contact between the outsider experts and those who applied for the programme. Community members are during this phase, expected to assist the social work practitioners in gaining insight about their environments.

The social work practitioners conduct a feasibility study of the community. They gain entry into the community through the respected leaders in the community as own

referees to other members, what Biegel (1984:127) terms "snowballing". They interview the key informants in order to develop a report about the demographic nature of the community, its existing facilities, infrastructure, its organisations, the level of competency and whether the applied project falls within the guidelines and criteria of their agency. With satisfactory information on hand they can then make recommendations to the funding institution to approve the programme.

Practitioners should be careful and involve people who proportionally represent the community, otherwise conflict might arise and jeopardise the whole process. It is also necessary for them to consider sending a clear message that separates the project from the internal tribal politics of the community. Social work practitioners should have clear goals and objectives of the programme when entering communities. Those individuals who are respected and influential to other community members should clearly understand these goals and objectives too, before they can go further to inform others about the programme.

During the community mass meetings the social work practitioners plan to steer members in generating information adequate enough to influence the funding institution to consider their application for the programme. A proposal is drawn during this phase. A proposal is a document which includes information related to what the identified problem was, goals and objectives of the programme, the cost-benefit question, who will work in the project, membership of the organisation, whether there was any human and economical resources obtained from the community itself, whether the community has previously tried to alleviate the problem by themselves, and if so, what happened. A proposal has much to do with planning of the programme (Rubin & Rubin, 1992:398 - 400). Communities become empowered when collecting this type of information, and in the process, their skills and knowledge are enhanced.



#### 2.6.2.4. PHASE IV: NEGOTIATIONS

During this phase communities gain skills and knowledge through their interaction with the social work practitioners. Communities will utilise these knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience in their future community empowerment programmes, thereby refraining their reliance on the outside assistance.

Funding can also be obtained during this phase. Lombard (1991:259) calls this stage representation from the community and explains that it is during it that steering committee members are selected. The community is expected to take an active part in its problem - solving process, but unfortunately not everybody within a community should or can participate. As a result, representatives selected by community members will be the mouthpiece of the community and under no circumstance "should make decisions on its own, but should always keep in touch with the community" (Lombard, 1991:259-262).

The steering committee should develop its own constitution which legitimises it as the representation of the community. Recent community empowerment programmes are aimed at training steering committee members in "new behaviours to increase the effectiveness of community group leaders" (Fawcett, Seekins, Whang, Muiu & Suarez de Balcazar, 1984:147). This type of training facilitates the community empowerment process. The steering committee members gain among others conflict resolution skills (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:32).

This is the planning phase during which the elements should be brought together and be rearranged in a new pattern. The community representatives try to "shape the future" and draw methods and tasks necessary for the achievement of goals (Lombard, 1991:262). A good plan, according to her, should include the following components:

- \* formulation of goals and objectives

- \* the determination of resources
- \* alternative plans
- \* evaluation

An important contribution on programme planning according to Rubin and Rubin (1992:389), is knowing that planning “means working out what to do before action is taken.” Planning will require social work practitioners to encourage community members to brainstorm and generate as many alternatives as possible.

#### **2.6.2.5. PHASE V: IMPLEMENTATION**

The fifth phase of the community empowerment process is called implementation, and it is concerned with the actual construction of the project.

During this stage the allocation of funds for the programme is done. The steering committee sends its trainees for training, recruits and selects the working team, consultants and the contractors.

The project's construction starts. Lombard (1991:267) calls this stage the “implementation of planning” and maintains it is “the transformation of the plan into action.” She maintains that the plan should firstly be approved by the community before it is implemented otherwise it (the programme) would not receive the support and consent of the community. Here the importance is not placed upon the specific goals of the project, but on the process, that is, members learn how they will resolve similar problems in future.

The social work practitioner should monitor the implementation of the programme to determine whether it is in line with its goals. The monitor facilitates interaction between the governing body, the construction team, contractors, consultants and shares the policy of his/her institution with them. He/she should ensure the speedy

and effective implementation of a programme. This is possible when the structural variables are not violated, that is, when every member of the community has access to information about the processes of the programme (Fawcett, *et al.*, 1984:146).

At the end of the implementation phase, all the stakeholders should be able to assess whether the goals have been met. The following are possible gains:

- \* *Social gain*:- Community members should have developed knowledge, skills and attitudes they formally did not possess.
- \* *Economic gains*:- The community should economically improved through the creation of employment opportunities for its members and/or through an access to the economic resources brought by the construction, of say, a road.
- \* *Political gain*:- Communities should have matured politically and be able to make important community decisions independently.
- \* *Cultural gains*:- The culture of sustainable self-help and self improvement have developed.
- \* *Infrastructure*:- Formally non-existent infrastructure should have been constructed in the community.

#### 2.6.2.6. PHASE VI: EVALUATION

The sixth and final phase of the community empowerment process is called evaluation. Evaluation means measuring if an intervention has actually resolved the problem it was intended for.

Evaluation takes place during or after the construction of the asset as supported by the statement which states “this phase does not take place only at the end of a



project, but it takes place on a continuous basis" (Lombard, 1991:268). Evaluation saves money, time and energy, it improves the programme, it encourages the community to support the programme, it determines change in the physical, social, economic and political attitudes of the community, and lastly, it ascertains communities that their efforts were effective and efficient towards their problem-solving endeavour (Lombard, 1991:268-269).

Community leader's should be involved in the evaluation of their own community impacts.

Evaluation can also be done through reports which advise the community, the social work practitioners and the funding institution whether goals have been achieved or not.

In any phase of the community empowerment process, the social work practitioner plays a number of roles that often switch from one to another. These roles are an important component of any discussion of the community empowerment process.

Roles are discussed in the next section.

## **2.7. ROLES OF THE SOCIAL WORKER DURING THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

This part discusses the roles that social work practitioners play during the community empowerment process. The factors that influence the choices of the social workers' roles and the types of roles, namely, the directive and the non-directive roles, will be discussed too.

According to Lombard (1991:168), roles are grouped into two categories, namely, the directive and the non-directive roles.

### 2.7.1. DIRECTIVE ROLES

Directive roles entail “a more active or direct involvement on the part of the community worker” (Lombard, 1991:169). Social work practitioners in directive roles become more active, and they strongly identify themselves with those they are assisting.

Directive roles include the following:

- \* Organizers who identify with the oppressed and the disadvantaged
- \* Mobilizers who bring people together and involve them towards solving their own problems
- \* Social and organisational reformers who pave the environmental obstacles which make it difficult for the client to cope with their problems
- \* Power balancers who assist the powerless to influence those who are powerful
- \* Experts who bring the programme to the community from their funding institutions, and are knowledgeable in facilitating brainstorming sessions with the community leaders ( Biegel, 1984:131).
- \* Monitors who facilitate interactions between the stakeholders within the community empowerment programme.

### 2.7.2. NON-DIRECTIVE ROLES

Non-directive roles of social workers during the community empowerment process become evident when the practitioners become “ objective, neutral or democratic to *laissez faire*” (Lombard, 1991:169). Social work practitioners playing non-directive roles within the communities become neutral, inactive and do not strongly identify with those they are assisting.

The following are non-directive roles:

- \* Interpreter who assists the individual-environment relationship to adapt to each other's changing needs
- \* Educators of democrats who equip individuals and the environments with their democratic rights
- \* Settlers who become part of the system which they intend to change
- \* Releasers of clients' potentials who support the clients with both the material and immaterial resources to enable them (clients) to become active in resolving their own problems
- \* Nurtures of the helping and problem-solving relationship who provide clients with the necessary skills and knowledge of resolving their own predicaments
- \* Reframers who rephrase hostile statements into neutral, friendly and constructive expressions
- \* Ventilators who encourage catharsis on the part of clients
- \* Guardians of the process who direct the problem-solving process to those they are assisting
- \* Agents of empowerment who ensures that self-esteem, self-efficacy, skills, knowledge, and resources are meaningfully utilised for the achievement of goals
- \* Enablers who facilitate the problem-solving process
- \* Researchers who train community members with skills to assess their effectiveness in order to identify solutions relevant to their problems

In the South African social work profession, as reflected in Lombard (1991:169) and Swanepoel (1993:19-20), the above roles are known with names such as: stimulator, organizer, negotiator, advocate, expert, activist, communicator, enabler, guide, facilitator, encourager, catalyst and mediator.

It should be realised that the few roles listed above are not the only ones that a social work practitioner could play in his/her daily routines. To Lombard (1991:166-172) the choice of the social worker's roles are determined by the following factors, namely;



\* *The directive or non-directive approach:-* that is, whether the programme is meant for the community or individuals or groups, the degree of liaison involved between the community and their community based organisations, and whether the community's problem is to be resolved by its own members or by outsiders.

\* *The type of work done:-* that is for example, when doing community empowerment, roles such as enabler, educator, etc surface and while doing social action, roles like activist, advocate, agitator, etc. surface.

\* *The preference of the community worker* in playing a certain role of choice.

\* *Stages of the empowerment process,* that is, a social work practitioner obtains different roles depending on the stage of the community empowerment process.

\* *the organisational impediments and opportunities,* meaning that the social work practitioner is obliged to accordingly play certain roles that are sanctioned and supported by his/her employer.

## 2.8. SUMMARY

This chapter defined and discussed the concept of community empowerment. It outlined the elements of the concept, namely; community empowerment as part of community development, entitlement, large membership, power, facilitation, social action, coscientization, inclusivity, redistribution, behavioural change, financial resources and self-reliance.

The community empowerment approach was discussed through its three stages of historical development, namely; the early period, the wartime and interwar period and the recent years.

### CHAPTER 3

The chapter discussed the theoretical perspectives of community empowerment, namely; the developmental perspective; ethclass perspective, critical perspective, feminist perspective and the ecological perspective.

Lastly the chapter discussed the process of community empowerment and its six phases, namely; identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiation, implementation and evaluation.

It was discussed that during the community empowerment process, social work practitioners play a variety of roles that are categorised into the directive and the non-directive.

Community empowerment is designed and developed by social work practitioners from within South Africa and abroad, and is an effective tool in developing communities because it addresses both their internal and external problems (Horton 1992:).

The forthcoming chapter will discuss four examples of community empowerment programmes, namely; two from the American and two from the South African orientations.

Comparisons of these orientations will be made through discussion of their characteristics.