CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Having discussed an overview of the study and a summary of the research methodology followed in this study, the researcher now presents theoretical frameworks underpinning Youth work. Each theory/ ideology/ approach/ paradigm/ perspective (broadly referred to as ideology and specifically as theory) is a system of ideas, beliefs and values which are a perspective of looking at and explaining a phenomenon or predicting something (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:5; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001a:8; Delport, Fouché & Schurink, 2011:301-302).

It is essential that the researcher discusses these theories, because they are of utmost importance, particularly to members of the applied research community since they provide organised, interconnected explanations and predictions by placing the purpose and content of the phenomenon being studied in context; presenting the current state of knowledge regarding the research problem; and playing an invaluable role in unearthing the unexpected (Bergman, 2008:48; May & Powell, 2008:1). According to these authors, this is achieved through determining the policy environment; highlighting how the phenomenon is perceived; what is known about it; what aspects should be emphasised; and what actions or decisions ought to be taken.

It is in the light of preceding discussion, that theories/ ideologies are also seen to be analysing experiences and issues from different levels of analysis. They reveal the connection, provide a better understanding of what influenced development of interventions, and indicate what we are trying to achieve (Bergman, 2008:48; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001a:4; May & Powell, 2008:1; Neuman, 2006:110). They will, therefore, offer better insight into the phenomenon under study.

Furthermore, the significance of studying theories is also due to the fact that various authors (Ricks & Garfat, 1989 as cited in Garfat, 2003:24; Turner, 1986:11, 12) support the view that theories/ ideologies provide frameworks for understanding the process of intervention and assist professional workers to be effective in their work. On that basis, some of the reasons for undertaking research include devising new theories and/or adapting existing ones to allow for changing circumstances and testing the continued applicability of particular theories to specific situations (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:2). These make theory presentation and analysis an important feature for this study.

In unpacking theories in this study, Youth workers and other service providers utilising a youth development approach would know what guides Youth work practice, anticipate future outcomes of their interventions, decide what to do next in each stage of the process, and explain why they acted the way they did when working with youth. These arrays of theories/ ideologies that arise out of, or are constructed by the attempts of others to describe practice, could assist workers to organise their interventions in a clear manner (Coulshed & Orme, 2006:18).

This chapter familiarises the researcher and the readers with important relevant selected theories/ ideologies that reveal how youth, youth development, and Youth work are seen. It recognises Youth work as a distinct practice underpinned by theory (Braodbent, 2006:54). The theories/ ideologies provide insight into dimensions and complexities of the problem, provide linkages to the current research, benefit from what others have done, integrate and summarise what is known, and stimulate ideas about the research subject (Neuman, 2006:111; Turner, 1986:3). In short, they allow the researcher and the readers to understand what is being studied and to see that in a different new light (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xxvii; May & Powell, 2008:1). It is, however, important to note that, the examination of these theories will not result in a recipe book or a manual for Youth workers. They will in fact serve as a foundation that would enable Youth workers and other service providers responsible for youth development to understand and relate better.

Before the researcher considers in detail different theories/ ideologies that serve as frameworks for this study, it is worth commenting that by conducting this study, the

researcher seeks to contribute to theory development in this area. This is crucial given that there is a need for Youth workers to develop their own core models to justify why they do what they do and distinctly differentiate professionalism from non-professionalism through acquisition of skills that require prior or simultaneous mastery of the theory underlying that skill (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:4; Gilbert & Specht, 1981:243). Taking a cue from May and Powell (2008:2) that, "*theories vary according to their cultural and intellectual traditions under which they are conceived and from which they draw their inspiration.*"

On that basis the theories from the following three broad categories of ideologies relevant in studying society were selected (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:8):

- **The Functionalist or Structural Functionalist ideology** by Emile Durkeim (1858-1917) saw society like an organism and that it is structured into many parts, each with its own function. In this category, the researcher selected the *Humanistic* and *Community Youth Development theories*.

- **The Interactionist ideology views** individuals and groups as actors in society and attaches social meaning and significance to their actions. Thus, through interaction with others we develop awareness and build concept of ourselves. In this category, the researcher selected the *Positive Youth Development* and *Social Systems theories*. These theories focus on the way individuals and groups interact with each other in everyday life (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:17; Gilbert & Specht, 1981:228; May & Powell; 2008:3).

- **The Conflict** or **Marxist ideology** by Karl Marx (1818-1853) argues that there is inevitable change and conflict in society as individuals and groups struggle over scarce economic resources. Here, the researcher selected the *Psychosocial* and *Advocacy theories*, both of which aim to create social change in the individual, evolving to and influencing groups in community and/or society. The intention is to bring about institutional reform through policy, social relations, and political action changes (Broadbent, 2006:53; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001a:3; Gilbert & Specht, 1981:228; Krauss & Suandi, 2008:7).

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Although these theories were originally developed to focus on different aspects of development, they have particular relevance for interventions in youth development settings, particularly in view of the fact that all professions are built on existing sciences (Chess & Norlin, 1991:49; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011:508).

Each of the above-selected theory is briefly discussed below.

2.2.1 Humanistic theory

In using this theory to gain an understanding of Youth work, the researcher focuses on Abraham Maslow's work that sees the capable intervention of individuals in the course of their life's events as shaping and influencing their own beings. This theory is premised from the point of view that, individuals have the capacity of taking action that will direct the course of their lives and enable them to cope with challenges. The assumption when applying this theory is to focus on the extent to which individuals utilised their abilities to respond to life's challenges in meeting their own needs (Chess & Norlin, 1991:49; Vander Zanden, 1993:45).

According to Burger (2009:182); Vander Zanden (1993:45); as well as Chess and Norlin (1991:48), this theory perceives people as having within them an ability to take charge of their lives and foster their own development, thus being responsible for their actions. It also emphasises the individual's uniqueness and ability to foster healthy and positive ways through distinctively human qualities of choice, creativity, valuation and the ultimate development point: self-actualisation/ realisation.

Abraham Maslow (1968, 1970), as one of the leaders in humanistic psychology, identified a hierarchy of needs, which motivate people to attain the needs in the high level of the hierarchy symbolising full development (Chess & Norlin, 1991:49; Vander Zanden, 1993:45). On the other hand Pittman, O'briel and Kimball (1993:8) as cited in Benson and Pittman (2001:94) as well as Hahn and Raley (1998:388) defined youth development as "*an on-going growth process in which all youth actively seek and are assisted to meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, be spiritually grounded and to be build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute to their daily lives*."

Abraham Maslow postulated that needs are arranged and ranked from lowest (bottom) to the highest level (top) in a hierarchical order (Burger, 2009:193-194; Chess & Norlin, 1991:49). He further maintained that it is essential for the needs at the bottom of the pyramid are satisfactorily met before going on to meet the needs at the next level.

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the hierarchy of needs, with the most survival and basic needs (physiological needs) appearing at the bottom of the pyramid and the growth needs at the top of the pyramid:
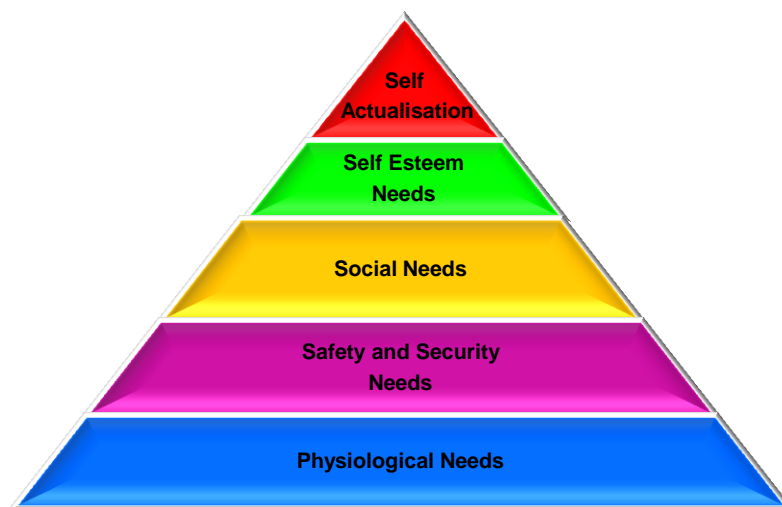

Figure 2.1: Pyramid depicting the hierarchy of needs

Each level of identified needs is discussed hereunder:

▪ **Physiological needs** – the need to satisfy physical needs such as hunger, thirst and sex drive. These needs have to do with the survival of an individual and are the most basic needs.

▪ **Safety and security needs** – the need to feel safe, secure and out of danger. Attainment of needs make an individual to have a sense of predictability including the measure of order in their world.

▪ **Social needs** – the need to belong, affiliate with others, to love, to be loved and accepted. If these needs are met, an individual will be able to form intimate relations in future.

▪ **Self-esteem needs** – the need to achieve, to be competent, gain approval and recognition, to respect others and self. When fulfilled, the self-esteem needs make people to feel confident, strong, useful and needed.

- **Self-actualisation needs** – It includes the need for beauty, order, simplicity and perfection, truth, justice and meaningfulness. At this level, an individual is encouraged to discover and realise his or her highest unique potential, and, in doing so, he or she becomes a fully functioning and goal oriented being or become everything he or she is more capable of becoming.

According to this theory, the needs at the bottom of the pyramid (first two levels) are the most basic and fundamental needs, whereas the ones on the third and fourth levels are the psychological needs, and finally at the top of the pyramid is the self-actualisation need (Burger, 2009:193; Vander Zanden, 1993:46). Of importance is that, even though Maslow said the needs at each level can be partially satisfied at any given moment, how well lower needs are satisfied determines how much those needs influence behaviour (Burger, 2009:196). Attainment of basic human needs at the top of the pyramid is consistent with "*positive youth development*". This has been defined as, "*a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognately competent*" (Chess & Norlin; 1991:49; Damon, 2004:12).

This perspective is a turnaround for the practice since Abraham Maslow did not relate the need to satisfy survival needs to any age level. It therefore means that the Youth worker's role would be to involve, motivate and enable young people to participate in the process of meeting their needs as this could be of utmost importance to their individual development (Chess & Norlin, 1991:50). As the change agent, the Youth worker should strive to unleash young people's yet to be tapped potential through meeting their basic human needs (Krauss & Strauss, 2008:8).

Against the above background, the researcher aligns herself with Du Toit (1986) in Meyer, Moore & Viljoen (1997:456) and concludes that the environment ought to provide opportunities and space in which self-actualisation can take place. Similarly, an enabling environment must be created for the youth to meet their needs in all these different levels, including attaining the ultimate development.

2.2.2 Community youth development theory

This theory highlights the importance of strengthening communities, so that they can be functional in nurturing and supporting young people, thus ensuring sustainable development (Benson & Pittman, 2001:9; Villaruel, Perkins, Borden & Keith, 2003:2; Wheeler, 2000:11). In this context, the emphasis is on empowering and developing youth, so that they will in turn contribute positively to the development of the communities that have built them (Lerner, Brentano, Dowling & Anderson, 2002:28). This will contribute to cohesive communities.

Various authors indicated that the way to improve the lives of individual young people is to improve communities in which they live and to make them better places (Jarvis, Sheer & Hughes, 1997:722; Villaruel et al., 2003:2). Therefore, this theory attempts to involve young people in improvement of their lives and their own development as well as that of their communities. In that regard, the asset-rich communities are seen to be giving young people the resources needed to build and pursue healthy lives that make a productive contribution to self, family, and community (Lerner et al., 2002:28).

Therefore, the assumption that "*healthy communities will nurture and support healthy families and individuals*" holds some truth (Villaruel et al., 2003:2). It is for these reasons that this study sees young people as underutilised resources in their communities (Wheeler, 2000:11). The community youth developmental theory attempts to highlight the importance of changing the environment (community) within which young people live. This could be achieved by significantly involving them to participate in the development process for their own good as well as that of their communities (Benson & Pittman, 2001:9; Hahn & Raley, 1998:389; Wheeler, 2000:11). The utilisation of the strengths of an individual and the community will lead to a direct process of change (Benson, 2002:124).

In addition, the community youth development theory views Youth work as part of community development and reform (Broadbent, 2006:52). Converging youth and community development is necessary, taking into account factors that have weakened the African value of interdependence once available to young people by

substituting them with the western value of individualism (Arnett, 2001 in African Union Commission, 2010:17). This change is attributed to factors such as changed community structures (e.g., nuclear versus extended family); changed cultural practices (e.g., collectivism versus individualism); changed family circumstances (e.g., working parents, disorganisation in families). According to Van Kampen, Beker and Wilbrink-Griffioen (1996:54), these changes have an impact on the nature and content of young people's development, how they react to available opportunities and services, and their position in society. Futher again, the function of the community of reinforcing the socialization role of the family, could also be affected (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:15). The implication is that young people would no longer have the same support from their communities as they used to have in the past.

Evidently with these changes, the role of Youth worker could be that of ensuring that both changed structures and practices, respond to the needs of young people (South African Youth Workers Association, 2001:12). In this case, the Youth workers' role could be that of creating an enabling environment within which young people could thrive by ensuring that they acquire personal and social assets to strengthen themselves, their community support structures, and to consequently assisting the them to adapt to the changing environment (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002:10). The additional Youth workers' role would also be that of inculcating a sense of historical continuity by assisting youth to remain connected to their communities through understanding how they came to be who, what, and where they are now (Krauss & Suandi, 2008:12).

This emphasis of working with youth and communities as partners in effecting changes within the systems will empower both parties whilst fostering continuous engagements and connections which are supposed to be of mutual benefit (Broadbent, 2006:53; South African Youth Workers Association, 2001:12; Krauss & Strauss, 2008:12). Therefore, communities must commit to making youth development a priority for their time, resources, and policy initiatives (Villaruel et al., 2003:389). Similarly, young people in communities must also have a moral orientation to sustain future generations as well as a society marked by social justice, equity, democracy and a world wherein all young people may thrive (Lerner et al., 2002:22).

As a result, the emphasis of this theory is on assisting young people to see value in a caring society; and for society to see value of investing in youth (Peteru, 2008:33).

2.2.3 Positive youth development theory

This theory contrasts those that have focused on problems experienced by youth as they grow up. It looks at the capabilities, developmental potentials, and in increasing thriving behaviours of youth rather than on their deficiencies (Damon, 2004:14; Peterson, 2004:14; Peteru, 2008:28). By enforcing these traits, an individual's assets are built thus protecting him or her from health compromising behaviours, enhancing the opportunity for positive developmental outcomes, and building his or her resiliency in an effort to counter problems that may affect them (Benson, 2002:125; Peteru, 2008:28).

In essence, this theory addresses young people from a balanced and positive perspective, as it views them as resources rather than problems. According to Lerner et al. (2002:11), it stresses that positive youth development emerges when the potential plasticity of human development is aligned with developmental assets. It conceives young people from a strength-based point by recognising that their unending potential is consistent with their strengths (Benson, 2002:125; Damon, 2004:14; Peterson, 2004:14; Villaruel et al., 2003:1).

Of importance is that, even though the positive youth development theory applauds involvement and participation of young people in development processes, it acknowledges this effort as being insufficient and that more effort should be made for youth to channel their energies to "*positive directions*" as this would make them to do things "*responsibly*" whilst encouraging institutional support (Peteru, 2008:28). This theory therefore motivates young people (regardless of their problems) to use their potential to the fullest and also encourages them to seek and receive support from the human environment (e.g., family, peer group, the school, community). The role of the Youth workers would be to create an enabling environment in order to produce positive youth who can contribute to their families, communities, and society (Borden, Craig & Villaruel, 2004:77).

The positive youth development theory is based on the five P's identified by Villaruel et al. (2003:353) and highlighted below as follows:

- **Possibilities and preparations** - what opportunities are available for youths in communities? This refers to creation of opportunities that will develop young people in every aspect of their lives e.g. physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally (Merton & Payne, 2000:9). Pittman (1993:22) asserts that programs should provide opportunities for youth to develop in variety of ways and help them to avoid risk factors that interfere with good outcomes.

- **Participation** - do we know how youth are spending their out of school time? This approach aims to understand, educate and engage youth (Damon, 2004:15). It is essential that young people not only identify, but that they should accept their responsibilities as individuals, citizens, and group members. Youth participation gives a voice to young people by shaping the course of their development through encouraging them to take part in influencing processes, involved in collective decisions and outcomes in order to achieve justice, influencing outcomes, exposing abuses of power and realising their rights (South African Youth Workers Association, 2001:12; United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, 1989 as cited in Peteru, 2008:25).

  By participating in decision making at local, national, and global level, young people are offered an opportunity to be part of the solutions rather than problems (Merton & Payne, 2000:9; Peterson, 2004:64-68). A situational analysis report of young people in the Netherlands revealed sensibility to young people's contribution as the starting point for coherent integrated approach of responding to their needs (Van Kampen, Beker & Wilbrink-Griffioen, 1996:1).

  Merton and Payne (2000:6) further identified education for sustainable development as a vehicle to be used to equip the youth with knowledge, values and skills to participate in decision making that will improve the quality of their lives. Brown (2004:11) argues that decision making is part of an

individual's human capital and therefore engaging young people in decision making process will empower them and promote their livelihoods. In this context, the Youth workers and those responsible for development of youth, have a critical role to play when it comes to empowering and developing young people.

▪ **People** - who are the people interacting with youth daily? Who is in charge of youth programmes? Merton and Payne (2000:8) identified Youth workers to be in charge of youth programmes. On the other hand, Benson and Pittman (2001:4) highlighted investment and involvement of public and private sectors and the wider community as crucial for youth development (Benson, 2002:139). By defining youth development as what parents do for their children in a good day, the President of the National Urban League highlighted the importance of family in daily interaction with young people and the need to sustain these relationships (Benson & Pittman, 2001:94).

▪ **Places and pluralism** - what resources are available for young people? How can they be accessed? This involves evaluating the resources which young people can use to meet their needs and maximise their potential (Merton & Payne, 2000:10). This will entail, checking availability of opportunities, resources and support systems necessary for the development of young people (Benson & Pittman, 2001:94). The service providers in the youth development sector have a role to play in mobilising resources for the youth.

▪ **Partnership** - are youth included as partners in the planning and implementation processes of programmes that affect them? This view argues for involvement of young people in decision making structures which affect their own and other young people's lives. A sense of ownership could be fostered by engaging youth to become proactive in their development and also to involve them in decision-making processes (Benson, 2002:140).

From the above, it is evident that this theory is consistent with the definition of youth development, because it considers the underlying causes of problem behaviours and stresses positive outcomes for the youth. These outcomes are known as the five C's

and include competence, confidence, character, connection and contribution or caring (Lerner et al., 2002:24-23; Villaruel et al., 2003:7; Wheeler, 2000:11). The positive youth development theory is also compatible with both the right based approach and sustainable livelihood approaches. It focuses on knowledge and decision making as part of the capital base, personal and social development of young people, building the capacity of individuals and groups to develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging, putting young people and their concerns at the centre by recognising their current livelihood strategies, social environment and their adaptability as well as ensuring that young people contribute to the development of the community or society in which they live (Brown, 2004:11-12; Krauss & Suandi, 2008:6; Merton & Payne, 2000:10).

Of particular importance is the fact that this theory directly contributes towards achievement of the identified purposes of Youth work (Merton & Payne, 2000:9), namely:

▪ identification and development of young people's capacities – physical, moral, spiritual, social and emotional;

▪ identification and acceptance of young people's responsibilities as individuals, citizens and group members; and

▪ evaluation of the context within which young people live and act.

By implementing positive youth development theory, young people will see themselves and be perceived by others from a strength and positive perspective. They would be seen as resources, experts of their own development with capacities and potential, and as having abilities to make meaningful contributions rather than being perceived as problematic and having deficits or behaviours that need to be eliminated (Hahn & Raley, 1998:388; Krauss & Suandi, 2008:6). If interventions are strength-based, they will help young people to further develop an orientation to contribute to their communities and society (Lerner et al., 2002:23; Wheeler, 2000:13). The Youth workers' role in this regard would be to "*help the youth to attach positive social meaning and significance to their actions*" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:17).

2.2.4 Social systems theory

The social systems theory is a holistic theory which is based on the basic assumption that "*the whole is more than the sum of its parts*" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:96). It was developed largely in response to the need for different disciplines to analyse the complex interactive situations in which various system consists of smaller elements or subsystems and larger suprasystems, impinge upon the life of an individual (Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:430). How these systems interact must be understood.

In this context, development is seen as a product of interaction between the individual and various other systems of which an individual may be or may not be an active participant. The role played by these systems in shaping an individual's behaviour must be scrutinised and analysed as a means towards ensuring adaptive process of reorganisation and growth. Importantly, the role played by the environment in the development process should equally be given attention (Benson, 2002:127; Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:430; Garfat, 2003:71; Lerner et al., 2002:13).

This theory further views an individual as an organism and a member of society, because it immediately sees interaction between the individual and his or her situation or environment (Coulshed & Orme, 2006:55; Lerner et al., 2002:7). When the systems theory is applied to the field of Youth work, interaction between youth and their situations and the way the youth are affected by these interactions influence whether or not the individual youth will develop positively or negatively (Benson, 2002:138; Lerner et al., 2002:7). The effort to change outcomes will consequently not only be directed at young people themselves, but would also be better directed at the system in which young people are caught up.

In support of this view, Garfat (2003:71) stated that, "*when working with youth on particular behaviour, Youth workers can often get lost inside the immediate dynamics and ignore the much more powerful and pervasive influences that are really within their sphere of ability.*" It means that when Youth workers analyse the causal factors that hinder or advance young people, they should avoid the greater likelihood of focusing on influences that are on the surface as those could probably be symptoms. They must instead focus on the root causes of the conditions that take into consideration the full context of young people's lives (Wheeler, 2000:11).

The social systems theory also takes into consideration the fact that young people are part of various systems that are dynamically connected to the environment of which they are part (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:96). They impact these systems and they are also impacted by them (Davies, 2004:380). Each of these systems is also interacting with others and being influenced by them and vice versa (Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:431). Therefore, effort to change should be better directed towards the systems in which young people are caught and also at young people themselves (Davies, 2004:380; Lerner et al., 2002:13). It means that, in as much as it is important to understand young people, the various types of systems that may have influence on them should equally be studied and clearly understood.

Various authors identified the following types of systems (Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:431-433; Garfat, 2003:71; Lerner et al., 2002:13):

▪ **Intrapersonal system** - refers to a system within the individual. It involves factors within a person that have an influence on them, e.g., attitude, perception, emotion, cognitive, competencies and skills. These factors develop gradually over time as a result of socialization and experience and have an influence on the individual person. At this level, changing the self to support the systems and/or altering the systems to support the self, requires skills on the part of the individual to regulate the relations in order for development to occur.

▪ **Interpersonal or micro or socio cultural systems** - refer to system/s between an individual and small other systems, e.g., dyads, family, friendship group, peer group, work group and church. It involves patterns of activities, roles, interpersonal relations which an individual, has with these systems. They emerge through constant exposure to informal interactions; are reinforced by a larger network of community institutions and have an impact on the individual's behaviour. Accordingly, developmental systems stresses the need to strengthen linkages between developing individuals and their changing family and community settings, hence Lerner et al., (2002:15) mentioned the significance of involving a young person in healthy, positive relations with these systems in order to lead to positive development.

- **Mesosystems** - refer to interrelations between two or more systems such as neighbourhood, educational and career opportunities, local political environments, public policy and economic systems. These factors encourage an individual to become an actor within the community and consequently being of value and useful within it. The presence or lack of these factors in the environment within which an individual lives, affect the way they turn out to be.

- **Socio-economic or macrosystems** - entail more broad systems that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, e.g., economic conditions, social conditions, political changes, national issues, and environmental concerns that have impact on the well-being of young people. Although these are external factors in the environment and are usually beyond the control of an individual, they have adverse effect on their development. For example, the socio-economic background of an individual youth may influence the availability of opportunities for education and in turn affect the employability of that individual.

From the beginning of existence, humans have been linked to these systems for survival and the state of these systems affects and influences the development of an individual (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:15). It is, therefore, critical that positive relations are fostered through ensuring that the systems in the social environment respond to the individual's needs whilst promoting their productive functioning and healthy development. According to Lerner et al. (2002:22) such development enables young people to become adults who would ideally, contribute to self and context in a way that maintains and perpetuates the social order and advances social justice.

From the above analysis, it is clear that all systems, from small to broader ones, have an influence on a person's behaviour or state. Change in one part of the system is likely to have an effect on the other parts (Jones & Pritchard, 1980:63), hence these systems, use feedback mechanisms to identify and respond to environmental changes and to maintain organisation of their parts when they constantly change to ensure adaptation (Chess & Norlin, 1991:40; Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:432). The challenge for Youth workers would be to support the systems and settings that directly influence young people's lives and to ensure that the environment provides

necessary resources (input) for the survival of the system whenever possible by involving these systems in the treatment process (Benson & Pittman, 2001:187; Chess & Norlin, 1991:40).

Most importantly, systemic thinking assists the Youth worker to resist the urge to blame other people, especially parents for the past. It encourages various role players to interact, relate, and work together when participating in interventions (Jarvis, Sheer & Hughes, 1997:725). This theory goes even broader to include the contribution of various sectors as cited by Benson and Pittman (2001:120, 144) that youth development should be viewed as an investment whereby precedence is given to the interrelated role of different sectors in the wider community (e.g., private and public sectors). Additionally programmes, organisations, systems and communities should be mobilised to build development strengths in order to promote the health and well-being of young people since the onus for change is not on the client system alone (Turner, 1986:519).

This theory seems to be embracing the definition of youth development. It takes into consideration the full context of young people's lives, recognises that people grow up in several interconnecting and overlapping systems, and that they are integral parts of their social networks (Wheeler, 2000:11). In view of this, Turner (1986:486) highlighted the need for development and maintenance of healthy and fulfilling human living being a result of an influence of biological, psychological, interpersonal, significant environment and systems. This theory is thus relevant to this study as it gives an understanding of utilising young people in various settings whereby a multitude of factors that have a bearing influence on their development are examined to better help them achieve their potential in a satisfying and fulfilling way.

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that this approach can be effectively utilised in Youth work in order to identify and engage various systems in the process of development and allow each of them to play their role thus contributing maximally to development of the youth. The relevance of using this theory when dealing with young people cannot be ignored, especially since there is a need for collaboration across various systems that have common purpose of building the developmental strengths of young people (Benson as cited in Lerner et al., 2002:139).

2.2.5 Psychosocial theory

The Psychosocial theory asserts that, human life is produced by unique interaction and modification of the three major systems: the biological system, the psychological system, and the societal system (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:17; Coulshed & Orme, 2006:109; Erikson, 1963 as cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:412). According to these authors, **biological system** includes all processes necessary for physical functioning of an organism (e.g. sensory capacities, motor responses and circulatory processes), **psychological system** includes mental processes central to the person's ability to make meaning of experiences and take action (perception and memory, emotion, problem solving ability and cognitive maturity), and **societal system** includes processes through which a person becomes integrated into society (shift in social roles of adolescence, rituals, social expectations and family organisation).

This theory further highlights the continuation of interaction between these systems and the fact that the meaning of a given behaviour pattern or change ought to be understood in the context of significant physical, psychological, cultural and social environment within which it occurs (Davies, 2004:161; Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:413). The researcher selected this theory, because it focuses on the importance of early experience in personality growth. The psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson (1950) in Commonwealth Secretariat (2001d:15) provides a helpful frame of reference as it identifies and analyses the eight psychosocial stages of development determined by the human genes across the life span. It is built on the idea that emotional social growth progresses through different stages, each with its own unique ego accomplishments (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:16; Erikson, 1964 as cited in Osei-Hwedi, Mwanza & Mufune, 1990:12).

This theory discovered that the process of living from birth to death consists of an individual working her way from one stage of development to the next (Erickson, 1964 in Osei-Hwedi, Mwanza & Mufune, 1990:12). It argues that social problems are a result of unsuccessful negotiation of what happens in each stage. For example, South African Youth Workers Association (2001:30) asserted that young people negotiate a series of transitions including from primary to secondary education,

school to work and family home to independent living. The psychosocial theory provides an opportunity to explore the potential conflict that may arise in each developmental stage and determines the way in which that would significantly affect the manner in which an individual negotiates the crises (Davies, 2004:161; Erikson, 1963 as cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:413). Of more relevance to this study is the effect of young people's early experiences on their current and future experiences.

The following psychosocial stages with specified approximate ages are applicable to this theory:

- Stage 1 - **Trust versus Mistrust** (Birth - 18 months): This stage is characterised by the need for regular, reliable, and loving care that may lead to the development of trust. Failure to provide such care may result in a sense of mistrust.

- Stage 2 - **Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt** (18 months - 3 years): This is where children develop a sense of separate identity and independence that may also lead to anxiety about separation, a sense of inadequacy, and/or feelings of shame and doubt.

- Stage 3 - **Initiative versus Guilt** (3 - 6 years): At this stage, children plan and act independently. If they are not allowed to initiate, experiment and implement their plans, they may feel guilty. This stage is critical for the development of the conscience.

- Stage 4 - **Industry versus Inferiority** (6 - 12 years): Interaction with peers and significant others is important in development of self-esteem, but the lack thereof may lead to inferiority.

- Stage 5 - **Identity versus Role confusion** (12 - 20 years): Identity formation is a critical task of youth development or the youth will remain confused about the role they ought to play as adults.

- Stage 6 - **Intimacy versus Isolation** (20 - 35 years): The emphasis is on achieving balance by forming close and intimate relations. The difficulty of engaging in such relationships may lead to isolation.

- Stage 7 - **Generativity versus Self-absorption or Stagnation** (35 years - retirement): This involves commitment to help and to provide for the next generation, care for other people, and the need to pass knowledge and traditions. If this need is not met, a feeling of stagnation or being obsessed with oneself could develop.

- Stage 8 - **Integrity versus Despair** (retirement): Integrity refers to realistic acceptance of one's life as it is (accepting successes/ strengths as well as failures/ weaknesses). In contrast, despair implies bitter regret and lack of acceptance of one's life. This stage involves looking back at one's life and then taking stock of one's failures and successes.

Of relevance to this study is that what happens in stages 5, 6, and 7. These stages were identified, because they cover the youth period which ranges between 14 - 35 years. In stage 5 (14 - 20 years), the youth experience identity versus identity confusion when they strive to establish their own separate identity through work, peer relationships and separation from parents by beginning to have their own views of themselves (Benson, 2002:13; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:18). In stage 6 (20 - 35 years), young people experience the need for intimacy and failure to attain that could lead to isolation. Finally, in stage 7 (35 years), older youth yearn to provide for the next generation and failure to do so could lead to obsession with oneself.

Since each stage, according to Hamacheck (1988:354) and Vander Zanden (1993:39, 40), is a critical building block for the next or subsequent stage, the manner in which it is negotiated can either enhance or hamper the ultimate personality development. The successful negotiation of each stage leads to development of new social capabilities and societal approval; whereas unsuccessful negotiation leads to a psychosocial crisis that may produces tension (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:16).

Whatever the outcome, the person's general orientation to the next succeeding stages could be influenced. Therefore, when working within this model, it would be important to help the youth to negotiate their current stages in preparation for the future, and to also help them deal with the barriers that developed as a result of their

early experiences (Hamacheck, 1988:354; Vander Zanden, 1993:39). This is unavoidable since, traditionally, families (to be more specific, adults) as the primary socialization agents, have the responsibility of supporting and assisting the younger members (Krauss & Suandi, 2008:4). However, with the increase in family breakdown, changes in community structures, and erosion of traditions, these traditional methods have become less effective in facilitating young people's successful transition to adult life (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:10; Krauss & Suandi, 2008:4). This is because the elders have now lost their once powerful influence on socialization.

In view of the above stated argument, the report by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002:47), mentioned that progress from one stage to the other does not only depend on physical and cognitive assets of an individual, but also on the social support available for that individual. As a result, from the point of view of this theory, there is an undisputed need for young people to be supported throughout their developmental stages.

The Youth workers and other service providers, in undertaking their roles, would be supplementing the families by providing the much needed services to the youth such as developing and providing programmes, assisting them to negotiate the tasks applicable to their stage at a given point in time, and ensuring that they successfully pass through each stage and/or deal with the difficulties experienced in handling the tasks designated to them by previous stages of their development (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:10).

The above view is supported by Meyer, Moore & Viljoen (1997:203) as they confirmed that "*at each stage, people can rectify whatever problems that have arisen in the course of their development.*" It is, therefore, in the course of relating to significant others in their immediate communities, that they will receive feedback that assists them in making corrections whenever necessary. On that basis, all sectors of society most central to the young people and their families, productive and collaborative partners, must be active in promoting thriving behaviours of young people (Lerner et al., 2002:4).

2.2.6 Advocacy theory

This theory is cited as one of those underpinning Youth work. It is based on a pluralist view that sees society's social problems as emanating from inequitable distribution of power and resources (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:12). It is argued that the struggle for social resources is caused by groups that are more powerful than others. This theory sees young people as being involved in a struggle for and against equalising power relations and control exerted over young people by adults (Peteru, 2008:26). This struggle between generations manifests itself in problems such as lack of respect for young peoples' rights and society's failure in protecting young people's rights (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:12; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001d:13).

It is on this basis that Youth workers and other service providers in the youth development space, have to play the role of advocates who act on behalf of and with these youth to "*create conditions for them to discover themselves and give meaning to their lives*" (South African Youth Workers Association, 2001:12; Krauss & Suandi, 2008:7). In South Africa, there is now emphasis placed on educating young people, thus preparing them for the workplace. However, it has been revealed that whereas schools play a crucial role in providing young people with general educational abilities on which everything else is built, services to young people, alongside schools, will help those youth to develop life, social, and workplace skills and attitudes (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b:9).

2.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above theories and perspectives seem to play an important role in the development of young people. They are useful in guiding Youth work practice. The researcher agrees with various authors that no single theory can be used to explain a specific phenomenon (Chauhan, 2001:49; Shaffer & Kipp, 2009:408, 435; Park, 2004:50). It will, therefore, be essential that, even in this study, an "*eclectic*" approach that combines all these theories be used to develop intervention strategies that will respond to broad and varied needs of young people.

This chapter has therefore explored theoretical frameworks underpinning Youth work; an important step in the direction of building the theoretical body of knowledge as a foundation for Youth work practice. After describing ideologies/ theories of Youth work practice, the researcher now turns to look at how this practice evolved. The assessment of the history of Youth work would show how the various theories helped shape the current status of Youth work, thus further advancing two of the objectives of this research of (i) highlighting the factors that contributed to emergence of Youth work, and (ii) exploring the current scope and nature of Youth work services in South Africa.