# CHAPTER SEVEN

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The conclusions and recommendations made in this chapter are based on the literature study done for the purposes of this study and the results of the empirical research. The recommendations are presented in guideline format in order to provide guidelines for the application of the support systems available to social work supervisors. The conclusions on the research statements being true or false are also included in this chapter.

## 2. CONCLUSIONS

### 2.1 General information on respondents

2.1.1   Most supervisors do have more than 7 years experience as social workers – the minimum years of experience necessary as social worker in order to become a social work supervisor is 6 years.

2.1.2   The post level of the majority of supervisors is that of chief social worker.

2.1.3   The number of years experience as supervisor is not taken into account when supervisors (chief social workers) are promoted to the post level of assistant director.

2.1.4   The effective span of management is not taken into consideration with the allocation of supervisees to social work supervisors. Although the effective span of management was not specifically identified as an available support system, the empirical research proved that supervisors are "overloaded" resulting in the quality and quantity of supervisory services to be ineffective. The determined effective span of management can thus be an available support system to provide support to supervisors.

### 2.2 Supervision

2.2.1   The five most important personal qualities for supervisors are responsibility, emotional maturity, self-confidence, integrity and self-knowledge.

2.2.2   Supervisors are aware of the professional qualities they need as social work supervisors.

2.2.3   The practical and theoretical knowledge of supervisors concerning all the functions of social work supervision are not sufficient for the rendering of effective supervisory services to social workers.

2.2.4   Social work supervisors are not informed of what is expected of them in terms of good supervisory practice.

2.2.5   Most supervisors are of the opinion that they do not receive support to meet the expectations of good supervisory practice.

2.2.6 The attitude of the individual supervisor towards support efforts and the relationship of the supervisor with the person(s) providing the support have an important influence on the acceptance of the efforts as support.

## 2.3 Management

2.3.1 The identified qualities of a successful manager seem to fit all managers (in this case social work supervisors) regardless of their age and sex and the size of the organisation.

2.3.2 Supervisors grade the importance of the managerial skills in terms of their knowledge and expertise in the specific skills.

2.3.3 Social work supervisors do have a responsibility to ensure that transformation does take place in terms of the accessibility and the availability of the services rendered to the public. The improvement of the quality of the services rendered is also a priority in which supervisors do have a responsibility as they have to ensure that their subordinates are competent in their service delivery skills and knowledge.

2.3.4 Supervisors as managers of social workers are not informed on what is expected of them in terms of good management practice.

## 2.4 Support systems

2.4.1 Most supervisors are aware of the time-off benefits and the available additional employee benefits such as government transport within the Public Service.

2.4.2 In terms of benefits related to financial security and assistance, such as relocation expenses and travel and subsistence allowances, supervisors are not informed of the benefits that are available and thus do not utilise them or lay claim on them.

2.4.3 The majority of supervisors are of the opinion that employee benefits can be available as a support system if adequately applied.

2.4.4 Employee incentives are not utilised to their full extent and the main reason is the lack of knowledge on the regulations, conditions and procedures for accessing the incentives.

2.4.5 The majority of supervisors are of the opinion that employee incentives can be available as a support system if they are informed on the incentives and it is adequately utilised.

2.4.6 Only a small majority of supervisors do have a job description.

2.4.7 The majority of supervisors are of the opinion that a job description can be available as a support system in the execution of their responsibilities.

2.4.8 Social work supervisors have an average or below average knowledge of the budget which is not sufficient for providing valuable input in terms of any aspect concerning the budget.

2.4.9 It is accepted that active participation in the budgeting process as a result of knowledge of the budget ensures that the budget can be an available support system to provide support to social work supervisors.

2.4.10 The majority of supervisors will make use of the services of an Employee Assistance Program for personal support in the handling of their supervisory and managerial problems and frustrations as social work supervisors.

2.4.11 It is accepted that an Employee Assistance Program can be available as a support system to provide support to social work supervisors.

2.4.12 The majority of supervisors do discuss their supervisory and managerial problems and frustrations with their colleagues.

2.4.13 It is accepted that a supervisors' peer support group can be available as a support system to provide support to social work supervisors.

2.4.14 The majority of supervisors do not have a positive vision of career advancement for themselves in their sections due to the negative influence experienced from the transformation process and resulting affirmative action.

2.4.15 The majority of supervisors are of the opinion that specific career planning will provide them with support in the execution of their responsibilities.

2.4.16 The prevailing organisational culture within the Department of Welfare has little concern for employees and is either very demanding or indifferent towards the performance of employees.

2.4.17 The majority of supervisors are of the opinion that a positive organisational culture can be a support system to provide support in the execution of their duties.

2.4.18 A predominantly negative organisational climate is present in the Department of Welfare.

2.4.19 It is accepted that a positive organisational climate can be an available support system to provide support to social work supervisors.

2.4.20 The lack of support from immediate superiors is due to superiors acting (not permanently appointed) in their positions and the fact that superiors are not competent in terms of their level of knowledge to be able to support social work supervisors.

2.4.21 It can be accepted that an available and accessible immediate superior can be a support system to social work supervisors.

2.4.22 Management strategies are not consciously implemented by supervisors in their management of social workers and can be related to immediate superiors not applying management strategies.

2.4.23 Supervisors value performance management as management strategy in terms of the appraisal of performance that is applicable. Supervisors want their performance to be appraised on a more regular basis i.e. 3 to 6 monthly.

2.4.24 The value of strategic human resource development as management strategy is linked to the need of supervisors for regular supervisory and managerial training.

2.4.25 All supervisors are of the opinion that having access to a computer allocated to them personally and being computer literate can be an available support system. The implication is that management information systems as management strategy can provide supervisors with support in the execution of their duties.

2.4.26 Management by objectives as a participative management strategy results in improved communication between immediate superiors and supervisors and between supervisors and social workers. The implication is that this management strategy can be available as a support system to provide support to supervisors.

2.4.27 The strategy formulation process of strategic management characteristically taking place in the group meeting format, leads to clarification of role differentiation. It results in supervisors being provided with clarity on expectations in terms of the process of strategic management.

2.4.28 It can be accepted that knowledge of the management strategies can provide support to supervisors in terms of their management of social workers as well as the manner in which they are or should be managed by their superiors. The identified management strategies can thus be available as support systems to provide support to supervisors.

## 3. RESEARCH STATEMENTS FOR THE STUDY

The research statements were "tested" through the literature study and the empirical research. The conclusions in terms of the statements being proved to be true or false are as follows:

3.1 Insufficient support systems are available to supervisors in the social work profession. No referral to specific support systems for social work supervisors was found during the literature study. The empirical research proved that supervisors are in need of support and that it is not available to them. This statement has thus proved to be true.

3.2 The available support systems for social work supervisors are inadequately administered and utilised. This statement has proved to be true as it was found that supervisors are not informed of some support systems and that others cannot be accessed without the support from their immediate superiors. The fact that supervisors do not receive sufficient support from their immediate superiors, contributes to the available support systems not being adequately utilised.

3.3 Due to the inadequate utilisation of support systems, supervisors experience lack of support resulting in neglected supervisory and managerial practice. This statement has proved to be true as without support such as adequate training and a job description, supervisors are not prepared for their responsibilities and they neglect their responsibilities.

## 4. GUIDELINES FOR THE APPLICATION OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR SUPERVISORS IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

### 4.1 Guidelines for determining the effective span of management

4.1.1 Level of training and experience of social workers – well trained and experienced social workers require less time of and fewer contacts with supervisors.

4.1.2 Nature and importance of the work activities performed by social workers – concentrated work activities require concentrated supervisory services.

4.1.3 Level of competency of the supervisors themselves – training and experience of supervisors influence the number of social workers they are able to supervise and the intensity of supervisory services they can provide.

4.1.4 Management level of the position of the supervisor – quantity of management activities expected from and allocated to the supervisor, influence the intensity of supervisory services that can be provided.

4.1.5 Number of offices where social workers are stationed – less social workers should be allocated if they are stationed at more than one office.

4.1.6 Distances to travel to meet social workers at these offices – less social workers should be allocated if supervisors are to travel to meet them as time available for effective supervisory services is limited through travelling.

## 4.2 Guidelines on communication in terms of employee benefits and employee incentives

4.2.1 Distributing summary descriptions of the available employee benefits and employee incentives are not sufficient. Information sessions at least once in six months must be arranged to remind employees of the available benefits and incentives. Specific attention to procedures and conditions for effective utilisation thereof is essential.

4.2.2 Ensure that employees are able to understand the information provided to be able to gain full advantage.

4.2.3 Answer the questions of employees without delay and ensure that they receive correct information.

4.2.4 Periodically provide individual employees with a detailed financial statement and/or financial counselling in terms of the value of the applicable employee benefits and employee incentives.

## 4.3 Guidelines for conducting a job analysis and compiling a job description

4.3.1 Step 1: Employee to analyse his present job and role

The employee can do this on his own but it is recommended that two or three colleagues, peers, subordinates or superiors be requested to participate. The analysis involves the identification of the employee's complete role network and the key dimensions of his position. The role network includes all the persons who have some expectations of the employee whose position is being analysed. The key stakeholders are those members of the role network whose own work will be affected negatively if the employee does not meet their expectations.

4.3.2 Step 2: Analyse changes in the work environment

The transformation process and other changes in the work environment such as technological and interpersonal changes and their impact on the specific position are to be

analysed. This will reveal some probable changes in the key activities of the position being analysed that will have an impact on the role network and their expectations of the employee in the specific position. Changes in expectations will impact on the position being analysed.

4.3.3   Step 3: Analyse the impact of the changes on the position and the role network

Describe the impact or results of the changes on the position and the role network in detail.

4.3.4   Step 4: Redefine the position and the role

The content, requirements and context of the work activities of the position are redefined according to the impacts of the changes on the position and role. This step in the job and role analysis process provides the data for the job description in terms of the key activities and critical tasks essential for the position being analysed.

4.3.5   Step 5: Redefine the requirements for the position and the role

This refers to the requirements in terms of the skills, abilities, education, attitude and motivation that will be needed for employees in this position to be effective. This step in the job and role analysis provides the data for the job description in terms of the personal requirements essential for the position being analysed.

4.3.6   Step 6: Compile the job description

This step entails the formalisation of the job and role analysis according to the specified contents of a formal job description.

**4.4 Guidelines on training in financial management and budgeting**

4.4.1   Negotiate contract agreements with the Financing Section of the Department of Welfare to provide applicable training in financial management and budgeting to supervisors and social workers on a regular basis e.g. once in six months.

4.4.2   Training should include all applicable financial policies and legislation.

4.4.3   Link the training to the financial year and the conditions applicable during the budgeting process.

**4.5 Guidelines in terms of the availability of an Employee Assistance Program**

4.5.1   Investigate the provision for psychological and related professional services in respect of vocational adjustment of employees in the Public Service to establish the practical implementation of the service as described in the Public Service Staff Code (revised edition 10 June 1994), Chapter B.XIII.

4.5.2   Revise and correct the conditions, instructions and procedures in terms of this service to accommodate the supervisors' need for support in the handling of their supervisory and managerial problems and frustrations.

4.5.3   Apply partnerships through contracting-out services to design, implement and maintain an Employee Assistance Program within the Department of Welfare.

**4.6 Guidelines for the establishment of a supervisors' peer support group**

4.6.1   Stage 1: Forming and mutual acceptance

The initiative for forming the group can come from any supervisor who will initially fulfil the leader role. In later stages this leader role should be rotated among group members. Group members are initially concerned with becoming socially comfortable with each other. Members test each other and draw up rules of conduct. The aim and objectives of the group as a support system are identified and formulated. Functional arrangements such as regularity of meetings, venue, time and duration of meetings are determined.

4.6.2   Stage 2: Storming and decision making

Members are getting to know each other better and are prepared to put forward their views and opinions. This can lead to conflict between individuals but can result in problem solving and decision making in terms of issues related to power and responsibility within the group. Members get to trust each other's viewpoints and opinions. They support and help one another perform more effectively.

4.6.3   Stage 3: Norming and motivation

Conflicts begin to be controlled as the members realise the need to cooperate in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the group. They develop strategies to achieve the objectives of the group and establish and set norms for appropriate group behaviour.

4.6.4   Stage 4: Performing and control

The group has now developed the required degree of understanding to work as a team and to concentrate on the problems it has to overcome to achieve its aim. The group has organised itself successfully and its members are contributing according to their abilities and interests. The group has entered its most productive stage in regard to attending to work related tasks. The group exercises sanctions when control is needed to bring members in line with the group norms.

4.6.5   Stage 5: Team building

The group enters this stage when there is a decrease in group performance and the group experiences difficulty to continue and to focus on the task at hand. Team building as a maintenance process should then be followed. The purposes of the team building process should be to clarify the mission, vision, goals and priorities of the group; to facilitate the effective distribution of work among group members; to analyse and improve interpersonal relationships among group members; and to analyse and improve the group process. The

team building process ensures that equilibrium is maintained in the group and that it can continue effectively as a support system for the members.

## 4.7 Guidelines for effective career planning

4.7.1 Establish manpower needs for the organisation to enable individual employees to identify career opportunities available within the organisation.

4.7.2 Inform and involve individual employees in the career planning process implemented in the organisation.

4.7.3 Ensure that employee needs are addressed in career planning.

4.7.4 Apply equity in the promotion system in terms of career advancement opportunities.

4.7.5 Discussion of career aspirations in the early stages of the relationship between an employee and his immediate superior is essential.

4.7.6 Superiors must be familiar with the qualifications, both academic and personal, needed for each career opportunity within the overall personnel plan of the organisation. This information must be made known to employees.

4.7.7 Superiors must help and support individual employees to clearly set a route for career advancement that will enable them to be successful in the achievement of their ambitions.

4.7.8 Superiors must not make promises that cannot be kept.

4.7.9 Ensure that quarterly and annual performance appraisals are executed as part of the overall career development plan. The appraised employees must be able to recognise that they are on route to achieving a long term goal.

4.7.10 Motivate individual employees to accept co-responsibility for their career development.

## 4.8 Guidelines to contribute to a positive organisational culture

4.8.1 Apply tangible mechanisms reflecting the physical evidence and products of cultural activity such as the annual report, an organisational newsletter, logos and badges.

4.8.2 Ensure that structures such as mechanisms for decision making, coordination and communication, reflecting the patterns of activity within the organisation that contribute to solving basic organisational problems, are effective.

4.8.3 Promote behavioural norms referring to employee beliefs or basic assumptions regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Inform individual employees about the consequences associated with certain behaviours.

4.8.4 As the social work profession is a value-driven profession, the preservation of professional values and moral principles is essential.

4.8.5 Be aware that unconscious assumptions not even directly known to employees, have an influence on their behaviour.

## 4.9 Guidelines for a positive organisational climate

4.9.1 The management style should convey warmth, friendliness and security to the employees.

4.9.2 Tasks, duties and responsibilities should be clear and not be changed continuously.

4.9.3 Responsible employees have to be informed directly if there are any changes in responsibilities. It should also be specified which responsibilities are not to be met anymore.

4.9.4 Formal tasks must be communicated from top management through the correct channels in order to prevent confusion.

4.9.5 An effective and efficient system for performance appraisal and evaluation should be developed and should be implemented consistently.

4.9.6 A system providing formal and informal recognition is essential for the continued motivation of employees towards effective work performance. Recognition for effectiveness and efficiency is important for all employees.

4.9.7 Management must be genuine in their support and concern for the employees. This genuineness can contribute to job satisfaction and job security supported by a positive organisational climate.

4.9.8 All employees must be treated equal in terms of all aspects available in the work environment. Employees must not experience that they are marginalised.
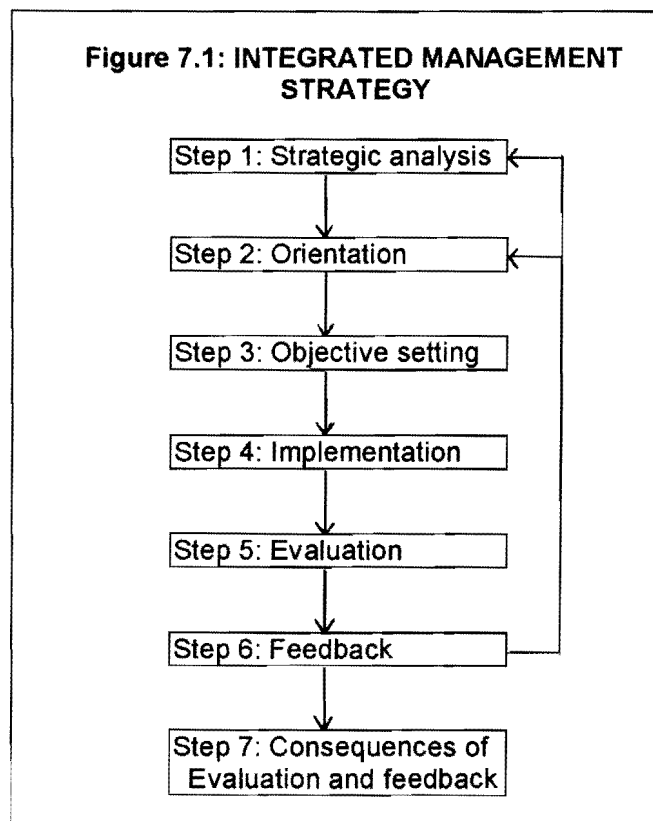
## 4.10 Guidelines for immediate superiors in supporting social work supervisors

4.10.1 Be professional in the management of supervisors in terms of implementing specific management strategies providing supervisors with certainty and clarity on what they can expect from their immediate superior.

4.10.2 Create regular opportunities and encourage general discussions on the supervisor's workload. Job related issues should be discussed and supervisors given the opportunity to identify problem situations. Opportunity is thus provided for discussing problems in an objective manner and for supervisors to identify solutions in the effective handling thereof within a supportive atmosphere.

4.10.3 Attend to the needs of supervisors related to their work environment. Reasonable requests for additional office equipment and other resources necessary for effectively executing management responsibilities have to be attended to with respect.

4.10.4 Acknowledge the importance of education and training opportunities. Encourage supervisors to discuss their career goals as well as the education and training that will be needed to achieve these goals. The immediate superior has a direct responsibility to ensure that the supervisor has the opportunities to attend to education and training needs.

4.10.5 Accept responsibility and act as an effective role model. Through positive attitudes and behaviours and the demonstration of effective work habits, the superior can motivate supervisors toward effective and efficient functioning as middle managers.

4.10.6 Ensure that evaluation and appraisal systems are compatible with task requirements and the individual supervisor's expectations and abilities.

4.10.7 Ensure that reward systems are effective and that rewards are directly linked to work performance and outcomes.

## 4.11 Guidelines for implementing an integrated management strategy

Due to the value awarded to the identified management strategies and the fact that supervisors indicate that knowledge of the strategies can provide them with support, it is recommended that the strategies be integrated. An integrated management strategy provides a holistic approach to the management of social workers. The functions of supervision and management should be amalgamated into the steps of the management strategy. The guidelines are presented according to a process consisting of steps following a logical sequence. When the cycle is completed, it is repeated. The integrated management strategy should be implemented in a pilot study to determine the suitability and value of the strategy for social work supervisors in the management of social workers. The supervisors' peer support group should be used as a support system for regular monitoring of the practical implementation of the suggested integrated management strategy and to identify and discuss problems. The process is presented in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1: INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Step 1: Strategic analysis

Step 2: Orientation

Step 3: Objective setting

Step 4: Implementation

Step 5: Evaluation

Step 6: Feedback

Step 7: Consequences of Evaluation and feedback

### 4.11.1 Step 1: Strategic analysis

During this step the mission and purpose of the organisation are determined. It entails a statement of the image of the organisation as well as the main areas of service delivery and primary client needs that the organisation will attempt to satisfy. A profile of the

organisation is compiled reflecting the internal capabilities and conditions of the organisation. This refers to the financial, human and physical resources available to the organisation. This process of compiling the profile enables the organisation to identify opportunities for achievement of its mission. The result is that a strategic choice is made and long term objectives are established for the organisation to achieve its mission. The main role players in this step are senior and middle management (supervisors). The middle managers provide specific input in terms of the human and physical resources available to the organisation.

### 4.11.2 Step 2: Orientation

This step refers to the orientation of the employees of each section by their manager in terms of the profile of the organisation and the organisational objectives. This entails orientation on the policies, regulations and procedure manuals applicable to the section. An assessment is done to identify trends, issues, problems and events in the environment that can have an influence on the objectives of the section. Assessment of the available and necessary management information systems is done to ensure technological support can be provided to the section. The final task in the orientation is to review the purpose of the section and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the employees. Participative group discussions are the basis of the orientation.

### 4.11.3 Step 3: Objective setting

On grounds of the orientation, the objectives for the section are established. Joint discussions between the manager and employees result in the establishment of individual objectives for a specified period of time and linked to the section's objectives. Performance expectations are set by establishing standards for measuring and evaluating the outcomes of the objectives at the end of the period. An assessment is also done in terms of new knowledge and skills needed by employees to achieve the objectives and to meet the set standards. A training and development program is planned.

### 4.11.4 Step 4: Implementation

The implementation is the main step in the process and entails interrelated activities such as:

• Monitor employee performance by conducting periodic progress reviews.

• Provide opportunities for discussion, consultation and problem solving.

• Implement the training and development program.

• Utilise the management information system by recording and processing the progress according to activities completed.

• Adaptation of objectives when necessary.

• Taking corrective action when necessary.

• Continuous feedback throughout the implementation.

### 4.11.5 Step 5: Evaluation

This step represents the measuring and evaluation of employee performance on data gathered on performance against the set expectations and the achievement of objectives. A formal performance appraisal of each employee in the section is performed and discussed during a formal performance appraisal interview. During this step the effectiveness of the training and development program is measured in terms of the reaction of employees on the training, how much they have learned, have they used what they learned and did the training contribute to the achievement of their own as well as the section's objectives. The support provided by the management information system is determined in terms of the value of the processed data on the section's achievements.

### 4.11.6 Step 6: Feedback

Feedback is a central element in the communication process. It is identified as a step in the process to ensure that specific feedback is provided to individual employees and to the section as a whole on the achievements during the specified period of time. The same feedback is provided to the senior management to be accommodated in the evaluation of the achievement of the organisational objectives.

### 4.11.7 Step 7: Consequences resulting from evaluation and feedback

The purpose and objectives of the specific section determine the type of consequences. Possible consequences are identified:

- Modification of the management information system as support for the individual employee and the section.
- Areas for improvement are identified resulting in training and development opportunities for the individual employee and the section.
- Consequences in terms of human resource management such as salary increases, incentives and promotion opportunities.
- Increased motivation, productivity and job satisfaction among employees.
- Clarification of uncertainties and confusions about policies and procedures applicable to the section.
- Contributions are made to the strategic management process of the organisation through suggestions for improvement in areas such as the appraisal system, delegation of authority and procedures applicable to the section.

## 5. SUMMARY

The research resulted in the conclusions and recommendations that were made in this chapter. The recommendations were presented as guidelines for the application of the available support systems. Guidelines in the format of processes were developed for conducting a job analysis in order to compile a job description and for the establishment of a supervisors' peer support group.

The conclusions pertaining to the management strategies as support systems for social work supervisors culminated in the development of guidelines for an integrated management strategy. This strategy can serve as a basis for further research in the field of social work supervision and management.