



OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this first chapter of the research study, the researcher provides a broad overview of what this study is about. This chapter gives the context and background within which the phenomenon under study takes place. It outlines the reasons, research questions, a research goal and the objectives that inspired the researcher to conduct the investigation (Babbie, 2010:121). It then highlights the summary of the research methodology followed, ethics considered, and the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes by defining the key concepts used and outlines the content of this research report.

For the benefit of the readers, the central assumption of this study is that youth development is crucial to young people themselves and the society of which they are part. For this reason, the researcher is studying the emergence of Youth work - a practice that focuses on service provision to the youth. The focus is on investigating factors that led to the emergence of Youth work in South Africa, and also looking at the current and future status of this practice. This is crucial, given that there is an ensuing debate on the future of Youth work practice, particularly in relation to its professional status. At national, regional, and international levels, the debate is on whether Youth work should remain an occupation/ recognised as an area of specialisation/ recognised as a profession.

Significant to this study is that, in South Africa, Youth work is still an occupation, like in many other countries across the world. This occupation is practised by traditional helping professionals such as Social workers, Teachers and Nurses, but also by dedicated service providers (Maunder, 2006:24). In the context of Youth work being practised by other traditional helping professionals, it has become an area of specialisation within a specific professional field where it is subservient to the expertise and authority of the profession that serves the youth as part of their target group (Ream & Witt in Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004:51; Villaruel, Perkins, Borden &

Keith 2003:389). As a distinct field of practice, Youth work is practised by service providers who focus on only serving young people as their main client through promoting and creating more supportive, youth-focused workplaces and rendering holistic services to them (Borden, Craig & Villaruel, 2004:75; Broadbent & Corney, 2008:15).

Of importance is that, Youth workers as well as other helping professionals, such as Social workers, Teachers and Nurses, use a youth development approach – an approach that focuses on positive outcomes and building the capacities of young people rather than reducing their risk behaviours (Villaruel et al., 2003:2).

The utilisation of this youth development approach replaces the previously used approaches, which were treatment rather than development and strength-based oriented (Beker, 2001b:364; Villaruel et al., 2003:367). It is more proactive and offer long-lasting solutions compared to the reactive-treatment orientation. It is on that basis, that the researcher considers Youth work as a viable intervention, because of its focus on total/ holistic development of young people which considers every sphere of development (The Presidency, 2009b:31; Osei-Hwedi, Mwanza & Mufune, 1990:7). This study explores and describes answers to questions that arise out of the emergence of this practice.

1.2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

“Between 1996 and 2008, the South African population has grown from 40.6 to 48.7 million and is projected to increase to 51.5 million by 2014” (Department of Social Development, 2010:10). The recent statistics estimate the total population to be at 50.5 million, with young people constituting 41.2% of the total population. Like other developing countries, especially in the African continent, young people in South Africa are the largest segment of the population (Department of Social Development, 2010:10, 22; The Presidency, 2009b:11; Statistics South Africa, 2011a; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2009:14). They continue forming an increasing population share despite the decline in fertility levels. The 2010 mid-year population estimates report specifically indicated that, there is an estimated 29% of children aged 0-13 years; 41% of youth aged 14-35 years; and 30% of adults aged 36 years and above in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2010a), thus showing an

increase of 0.2% compared to the recent statistics – a positive trend of year on year growing youth population. The following Figure 1.1 illustrates a breakdown of the South Africa’s population groups by age:

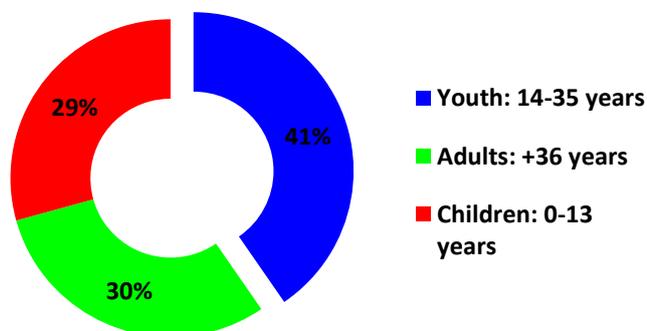


Figure 1.1: South Africa’s population groups by age (Statistics South Africa, 2010a)

The above situation is termed as “*youth bulge*” and can be an opportunity or threat (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011:8). It is an opportunity if appropriate human capital investments are taken to ensure that the youth become positive contributors to the social and economic landscape. On the other hand, it is a threat that would offset the benefits of a development agenda since their lack of development could reduce their contribution to the society and increase their future dependency on the State since resources would be devoted to address the problems they experience (The Presidency, 2009b:6; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2009:14).

Therefore, it is clear that if the future of the generation to come is to be secured, the current generation of youth whether rich or poor; Black or White - must become the main target for development efforts. It is on this basis, that rapid enormous changes and advocacy efforts that prioritises and target all young people ought to be evidenced by the way in which services are rendered by government, non-governmental and private sectors. With the legacy of disadvantage and inequity in South Africa, continuing weigh heavily on different youth groupings, this is a challenge that would require policy shifts in favour of youth.

This study acknowledges the challenges that require service delivery for the youth to be turned around. A moment of thought suggests that, indeed, there is a need for an

effective youth service delivery channel that uses a *youth development approach* - a process that has an outcome of providing for all youth, troubled or not, with support, opportunities and services they need to empower themselves and promote the development of competence in multiple domains, thus enhancing their overall quality of life (Benson & Pittman, 2001:94; National Research and Technology Project, 1999:127; Villaruel et al., 2003:353).

1.3 BACKGROUND

Although the concept of youth development is relatively new in South Africa, it has existed for many years in areas such as the United States of America (USA) and Europe. For example, in England, Youth work has a forty-year history as a registered and regulated profession. In this regard, a professional body called Community and Youth Work Union, which traces its origin back to over sixty years, was established (Beker, 2001b:364; Maunders, 2006:24; Villaruel et al., 2003:2).

In South Africa, the plight of young people became the focus of much attention when the youth fought against the Apartheid system between the 1960s and 1990s (Ntsabane & Tau, 2006 in African Union Commission & United Nations Population Fund Agency, 2011:39). This was, in part, recognition of the key role played by the youth in liberating the country from the Apartheid regime, and a deliberate strategy of involving them in the reconstruction and development process as key players (National Youth Commission, 1997:4; Richter et al., 2005 in African Union Commission & United Nations Population Fund Agency, 2011:39). Consequently, those responsible for rendering services to the youth intensified service provision with the support of donors sympathetic to the Apartheid cause.

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Singh (2007:64) emphasised that there is a need for “*social research to be in place to design, plan, implement, and improve any development change process.*” For this to occur successfully, Bergman (2008:5) and Creswell (2007:5) assert that a researcher must have reasons and interest to conduct the inquiry. Fouché and De Vos (2005a:91) further specified that the interest should come from day-to-day activities and interactions in the work situation, thus leading to basic knowledge and

experience of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, Blaike (2000) as cited in Fouché and De Vos (2011:80) mentioned that the research should produce knowledge for understanding and action.

At the time of choosing the research topic, the researcher was a lecturer charged with the responsibility of placing students in organisations for experiential learning purposes. The researcher secured placements for students in government and non-government agencies. Most of those students were placed within the social service agencies under the supervision of Social workers. Although the placement experience afforded the students studying towards a degree in Youth Development an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the world of work, the researcher learnt through students' evaluation reports that there were problems faced by students, such as the negative attitude of some of the agencies' employees (predominantly Social workers); lack of capacity in utilisation of a youth development approach; and poor focus on serving the youth as the targeted client/s.

The researcher's interest was further shaped when she was employed by the national Department of Social Development and then given the responsibility of facilitating professionalisation of other social service occupations through the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) - a professional statutory body reporting to the national Department of Social Development. The priority list of occupations to be professionalised included: Child and youth care work, Youth work, Probation work, and Community development work. In that position, the researcher observed reluctance on the part of some Social workers in welcoming other emerging practitioners to the family of social service professionals. This was despite the fact that a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social workers (Department of Social Development, 2006a:2) that revealed that there was a shortage of Social workers in the country and the demand to address the persisting challenges within the social service sector. This trend is however not foreign, because Gilbert and Specht (1981:266) observed that, "*when a non-professional occupation strives to obtain exclusive control over a service market by achieving professional status, it invariably encounters strong opposition to its aspiration from other interest groups.*"

It was mainly the support, cooperation, and in some instances, the lack thereof from the placement agencies that made the researcher to undertake this study. The aim is to understand the underlying attitudes, perceptions and opinions of social service professionals towards Youth work. By conducting this study, the researcher equally sought to expand knowledge and find answers to the concerns around the issue under investigation (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:254; Neuman, 2006:12). The researcher's present position as a senior manager responsible for overseeing youth development in the Presidency further propelled her to contribute to evidence-based decision making. It is envisaged that the information generated from this study could be used to advise policy makers and political principals on the future direction of Youth work within the borders of the South African community and probably beyond. This is essential as it would help indicate South Africa's position on Youth work, particularly in multilateral fora.

The recommendations of this study have the potential to contribute to good practice within government and non-government social service sectors, and institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the need and significance of conducting this social research cannot be ignored as it would satisfy the researcher's personal interest and curiosity. The study may also contribute towards making informed and rational, fact-based decisions by devising methods for resolution of problems and increasing knowledge as well as understanding of the research phenomenon (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:2; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:84).

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement conveys a specific problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:417); hence a research starts with the problem definition and ends with the problem resolution (Fouché & De Vos, 2005a:89; Singh, 2007:63). These authors further argued that the researcher must define the problem and solve it in the best possible way.

In this study, the researcher identified the emergence of Youth work in South Africa and its future status as a possible social service profession as a problem because:

- although social service professionals are providers of youth development services (Department of Social Development, 2007:56-57), they seem not to be prioritising young people as their target group, despite an increasing youth population (Statistics South Africa, 2011a), mounting and new challenges faced by the youth (The Presidency, 2009b:12-17; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2009:14), and global calls for nations to invest in youth (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008:1; The Presidency, 2009b:6);
- there is a delay in finalising the professionalisation process despite international evidence showing that this field is worthy to be designated as a profession (Hahn & Raley; 1998:393; Maunders, 2006:24). The researcher conducted this investigation, because, as alluded by Gilbert and Specht (1981:433), sanctioning by the public and other professionals is an important requirement for establishment of a new profession;
- as part of service providers delivering services to the youth (Department of Social Development, 2007:56-57), the views of social service professionals on the emergence of Youth work are not known. The researcher deemed it crucial to close this research gap, particularly in view of youth development being a shared mandate;
- although, Sercombe (2010:7) believes that Youth work is a profession, regardless of whether it is recognised or not, or whether it organises itself that way, the researcher felt that there is a need to explore other different policy options alongside the option of professionalisation in order to weigh them and to inform policy decision taking with evidence base rationale.

Based on the specific problems enumerated above, the researcher identified a research gap that requires to be closed and of which this study seeks to fill.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In order to ensure that this problem is researchable, its meaning should have clear significance and utility for practice through building a convincing argument that demonstrates the usefulness of research in contributing to knowledge, relevant practice and the intended target population (Fouché & De Vos, 2005a:98; Fouché & Delport, 2011:107). Similarly, with this study, answering the research questions

would contribute to increased knowledge base in the field of Youth work and improve the practice for those involved.

Knowledge generated through this study would contribute to the growth and development of Youth work as a field of practice and could also be of practical value. It may assist policy makers in determining the future direction of Youth work, enable social service professionals and the general public to understand the practice better, and probably improve service delivery to the youth as service beneficiaries/recipients. This is crucial since there is a need to ensure that policy direction is guided by empirical evidence, and South Africa being one of the key players in the continent, should have a clear understanding of various issues, if she is to play a leading and exemplary role within and outside of the continent.

1.7 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The following are the goal and objectives for this study:

1.7.1 Goal

The goal of this study is to explore and describe the perspectives of social service professionals in South Africa regarding the emergence of Youth work practice and its future status.

1.7.2 Objectives

The researcher identified the following objectives as a means towards attainment of the goal for this study:

- To identify, explore and analyse factors that contributed to the emergence of Youth work in South Africa;
- To explore the current scope and nature of Youth work services in South Africa;
- To determine whether Youth work should remain as an occupation, or recognised as an area of specialisation or an autonomous professional field of practice; and
- To analyse the benefits of having Youth work as an area of specialisation and/or an autonomous profession.

1.8 UNDERLYING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Through this study, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the factors that contributed to the emergence of Youth work in South Africa?
- What is the current status of Youth work in South Africa?
- What is the extent of involvement of South Africa's social service professionals in Youth work?
- What are the perspectives of South Africa's social service professionals regarding the future status of Youth work?
- What are the benefits of having Youth work as an area of specialisation and/or an autonomous profession?

The above questions fit the description of empirical questions, because they answer and address real life problems (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:4; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:105). This could lead to improved situation or solution of identified problems. The findings of this study could therefore add value to the current debate on the future of Youth work by contributing to and possibly guiding policy direction.

1.9 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an applied research study that increases or expands the boundaries of knowledge in an endeavour to address and solve specific practical issues in a systematic manner with the support of verifiable facts (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:3; Fouché & De Vos, 2005a:105; Neuman, 2006:28).

The researcher followed a two-phased sequential mixed method research approach that mixes qualitative and quantitative methods (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:114; Bergman, 2008:53; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:6, 32; Flick, 2008:42). The qualitative approach was less-dominant whilst the quantitative one was dominant (Bergman, 2008:57). Data obtained from the primary qualitative method was used to inform secondary quantitative method in designing the measuring instrument used to collect quantitative data. The adopted exploratory mixed methods sequential research design, allowed for an exploration of the research topic by identifying qualitative themes, generating theories, and then using that exploration to guide the

subsequent quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:411; Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:265).

Firstly, the researcher collected qualitative data that provided greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of the research situation from the point of view of the focus group participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2010:168, 292; Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:37; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:76). The researcher selected a sample using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques (Babbie & Mouton, 2010:166; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:112; Maree & Pietersen, 2007:177-178). The focus group members were selected from a population of recognised (i.e., Social workers, Child and youth care workers) and unrecognised social service professionals (i.e., Youth workers, and Community development workers). The total number of the population could not be determined due to practicalities of not having the contact details of individuals within that population.

In choosing the focus group members, the researcher employed “*maximum variation strategy*” that entailed selecting group members with similar, but different training backgrounds from different research sites (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:112; Greeff, 2005:299; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:90). One focus group was conducted in each of the four purposively selected South African provinces, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Gauteng, and North West. Thus there were, in total, four (4) focus groups with members who were based in the specified research sites. There were eleven (11) focus group participants in Gauteng, nine (9) in Northern Cape, eight (8) in KwaZulu-Natal, and seven (7) in the North West province. On average, there were nine (9) focus group participants in each group and a total of thirty-five (35) focus group participants for all the groups combined. There was representation from all categories of social service professionals in the focus groups, viz., fourteen (14) Social workers, ten (10) Child and youth care workers, seven (7) Community development workers and four (4) Youth workers. A detailed breakdown of how the qualitative sample was selected is contained in *Annexure C*.

Data obtained from the focus group participants was then analysed, validated, interpreted, and its trustworthiness was determined. The qualitative results were presented and then used mainly to design a quantitative measuring instrument and to

also elaborate on or explain the quantitative results (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:358; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 6; Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007: 15, 261; Rubin & Rubin as cited in Mouton, 2003: 196).

Secondly, the researcher selected a representative sample for the quantitative part of the study by using stratified random sampling technique, a probability form of sampling (Babbie, 2010:199, 215; Maree & Pietersen, 2007: 175). The research population of sixteen thousand eight hundred and eighty-six (16 886) recognised social service professionals was divided into three strata of one hundred and fifty-four (154) Educators, nine thousand and seventy-one (9 071) Social workers, and seven thousand six hundred and sixty-one (7661) Child and youth care workers.

Each stratum was then sampled separately as follows:

- (i) **Educators:** There was no sampling used in this stratum, because the population was small and the respondents were considered experts with demonstrable knowledge and experience on the research subject (Greeff, 2005:287-288; Singh, 2007:108; Strydom, 2005b:202). All 154 Educators (100% of the total population) were targeted as the research sample for this stratum, because they were few and their expertise would add value to the study.
- (ii) **Social workers:** To select a proportionally representative sample and to give each individual an equal and independent chance of being selected to participate in the study, the researcher used stratified random sampling technique, a probability form of sampling (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:57; Maree & Pietersen, 2007:172-175; Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:30). The stratified random sampling technique was used to divide the Social workers' population into nine sub-strata aligned to the nine South Africa's provinces. This was done in order to make comparison between different areas possible and to ensure sufficient proportional representation in the sample (Strydom, 2005b:200). The desired number of respondents was then selected proportionally in each stratum (province) using a simple random technique. Overall, of the nine thousand and seventy-one (9071) Social workers, one

thousand and eighty-five (1085) respondents (i.e., a proportional sample of 12% of the total population) were randomly selected to participate in the study.

- (iii) **Child and youth care workers:** Like Social workers, the same research procedure of using stratified random sampling technique was followed to select a sample from a population of Child and youth care workers. Of the seven thousand six hundred and sixty-one (7661) Child and youth care workers, nine hundred and fifteen (915) respondents (i.e., a proportional sample of 12% of the total population) were randomly selected to participate in the study.

In total, the quantitative sample breakdown consisted of two thousand one hundred and fifty-four (2154) respondents selected from a total population of sixteen thousand eight hundred and eighty-six (16 886) recognised social service professionals (i.e., 154 Educators, 9071 Social workers and 7661 Child and youth care workers). A breakdown of the composition of a quantitative sample is illustrated in *Annexure D*.

The researcher then collected quantitative data through administering a measuring instrument, attached as *Annexure H*. The measuring instrument was mailed by post or electronically or hand delivered (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:37; Delpont, 2005:167-168). Of the 2154 measuring instruments sent, only one hundred and fifty-one (151) completed ones were returned. There was a response rate of 7%.

As a result of that poor response rate, the researcher used convenience sampling method as an alternative method to further recruit the respondents to participate in the study (Babbie, 2010:192; De Vos, 2005:198-199; Singh, 2007:103, 107). The researcher posted or emailed or faxed or physically hand delivered or used personal and professional contacts in different research sites to deliver the measuring instrument (Delpont, 2005:168-169). In the end, a total of five hundred and ninety-three (593) respondents completed the measuring instrument. Quantitative data gathered was then captured, verified, analysed, and interpreted in order to keep it intact, complete, organised and accessible (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:51; Singh, 2007:82). The quantitative findings are presented in Chapter 6 of this research report.

A comprehensive description of the research methodology followed, is given in Chapter 5.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Extensive review of literature shows the way in which ethical considerations in research help to protect the interests of research subjects and serve as a basis for evaluating the researcher's conduct by dealing with what is good and bad or right and wrong through adhering to certain rules and conventions (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:85; Mouton, 2003:245-246; Strydom, 2011c:126-127).

The key ethics complied with include the following:

- **Ethics Committee:** The researcher duly considered that this study adheres to research ethics by ensuring general compliance, including submitting the research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:87; Strydom, 2011c:126-127). In this case, the researcher submitted the proposal to the Faculty of Humanities' Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria to see if it meets the set ethical requirements. The committee gave ethical clearance and granted the researcher permission to conduct the study – see *Annexure A*.
- **Permission:** The researcher obtained permission from authorities in various research sites to collect data from the focus group participants and respondents. Those authorities included the Director-General of the national Department of Social Development, the provincial Heads of Departments, the Heads of Departments in Universities, and managers in government departments and non-government organisations. The letter from the Director-General of the national Department of Social Development granting permission to conduct the study, and the one addressed to the provincial Heads of Departments seeking their support, are attached to this research report as *Annexure B*. These letters serve as examples of permission letters sent to authorities in various organisations. All these authorities granted the researcher permission to conduct the study in various targeted research sites

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:113; Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:35). The use of this strategy enabled the researcher to build and keep relationship with the gatekeepers, thus making accessibility to organisations and consequently the ability to conduct research easier (De Vos, 2005:28; Glesne, 2006:44).

- **Consequences for human beings:** This refers to the protection of research subjects (i.e., focus group participants and respondents) against physical or emotional harm through provision of information on the potential impact of the investigation (Strydom, 2011c:113). In this regard, the researcher evaluated the research topic to ensure that it is not detrimental to the research subjects.

The anticipated consequences of the study were explained to the focus group participants prior to commencement of each session. The letter of consent that was distributed to focus group participants is attached as *Annexure E*. With regard to research respondents who completed the measuring instrument, a covering letter was attached to each measuring instrument. It was intended to debrief the research respondents on the purpose of the study, and to explain that there were no possible risks or harm that were physical, psychological or emotional that could emanate from participating in the study (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:36, 38; Mouton, 2003:244; Strydom, 2011c:115).

The researcher also explained fully every aspect of the study, including the goal and objectives and instructions on how to complete the measuring instrument. The explanation was done in advance, so that the choice they make would be an informed one (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:99; Strydom, 2011c:117). A sample of the covering letter and consent form are included as part of the measuring instrument on pages 1 and 2 of *Annexure H* respectively.

The potential benefits of the study were also highlighted and maximised (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:37). Over and above acting ethically by explaining the benefits of the study, the researcher even tried to “*convince the participants to participate*” in the study (Creswell, 2007:38). It was also emphasised that they may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

- **Voluntary and informed consent:** The researcher requested voluntary participation of focus group participants and respondents (Creswell, 2007:123; De Vos, 2005:25; Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:38; Strydom, 2011c:116). The consent forms were administered to the focus group members for the qualitative part of the study, and attached to each measuring instrument for the quantitative part of the study. This was done to allow the research subjects in both groups to give a written consent, and to offer them the choice of participating voluntarily, withdrawing or refusing to participate in the study, by explaining the possible risks involved in the study, as well as providing information as to who to contact in case of enquiries (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:99; Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:85; Creswell, 2007:123; Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:36). An example of the consent letter that was given to individual focus group participants is attached hereto as *Annexure E*.
- **Confidentiality:** The researcher guaranteed and assured the focus group participants protection of their privacy, which includes keeping their responses confidentially as a basic right (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:36; Strydom, 2011c:119). The respondents were also assured through the covering letter that the use of a unique number allocated to each measuring instrument will only be for the purpose of capturing data and will in no way compromise confidentiality or expose their views. The above authors linked confidentiality to the right to self-determination as well as violation of privacy. All these imply that individuals have the right and competence to evaluate available information, weigh alternatives against one another, and make their own decisions.

The researcher further requested the focus group participants to complete their biographical profile in order to determine their demographics. A sample of the profile form is attached hereto as *Annexure F*. The respondents who completed the measuring instrument were equally asked to complete the first part of the measuring instrument, which asked standard demographic information (refer to pages 5-6 of *Annexure H*). Of importance is that the focus group participants and respondents were all assured that the information provided and their identity will remain anonymous and that their privacy will be

safeguarded. For example, in the quantitative part, the research team in their interaction quoted the number rather than the name of the focus group participant (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:333; Strydom, 2011b:120).

The researcher then explained that, when disseminating the research findings, the information will be distributed in such a manner that it will not be linked to the identity of any focus group participant; and that the findings would be disseminated for professional purposes (De Vos, 2005:28; Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:36). In adhering to the policy of the University of Pretoria, data will be stored for fifteen (15) years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology. By providing this information, the researcher was explaining the extent and limitation of confidentiality (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:99).

- **Credit for research endeavours:** The contribution made by each person in the study was acknowledged. This, according to Strydom (2005:65), refers to involvement either on a part-time or full-scale basis. In this case, the researcher compiled at the beginning of this research report a section on acknowledgements, specifying the roles of various contributors and contacted them before they were listed to ensure the correct spelling of their names, credentials and institutional affiliations (Grinnell, 1993:88). The researcher also acknowledges throughout this report, all data and information sources, and had accordingly compiled a list of references at the end (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:85). The aim was to recognise the contribution made by each contributor to this study (Strydom, 2011c:125).

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Even though this study looked at the emergence of Youth work by investigating the perspectives of social service professionals in South Africa, the following limitations have been identified:

- The un-updated data base that lacked authentic addresses of individuals within the study population for quantitative part of the study led to elimination of some social service professionals prior to sampling. This narrowed the population to only those with authentic addresses. Further again, lack of

alignment between the demarcated provinces and postal area codes complicated the targeting process, because the provincial boundaries did not fully correspond with the areas of demarcation (Lombaard, 2004:1).

- For the qualitative part of the study, all categories of social service professionals were represented as focus group participants except the Educators. This is identified as a limitation for this study, because the qualitative findings cannot be generalised to this group and their expertise could not be tapped into. Nevertheless, the researcher compensated by targeting all Educators as respondents for the quantitative part of the study.
- The researcher excluded the unrecognised social service providers (viz., Youth workers and Community development workers) from participating in the quantitative part of this study, because there was no data base containing their contact details and it would have been difficult to track them. Although they were only included in the qualitative part of the study, their non-involvement in the quantitative part of the study presents a limitation, because they might have had different perspectives on the research topic and these could have probably led to different research findings and conclusions.
- When piloting the measuring instrument, the researcher hand delivered and emailed it to the respondents, mainly posted the measuring instruments to the respondents for the main study. The omission of using post when contacting the respondents in the pilot phase was a limitation to this study, because the pilot study was not fully executed in the same manner that the main study was planned to be executed. The researcher could possibly have been alerted earlier of the potential problems such as poor response rate, and then made necessary modifications, if the same methods that were used in the main study were also employed in the pilot phase.
- Collecting data from a Social work dominated sample resulted in occurrence of biasness towards this target group. This occurrence was despite the utilisation of random methods used to select quantitative sample with a view of offering the respondents equal chance of being selected. The sample bias emanated

from the domination of the overall research population by Social workers as well as the use of proportional sampling technique in an attempt to ensure representation. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised across different sample groups.

Additionally, a review of literature showed that the development of youth is the responsibility of various other professionals, including those not necessarily considered “*social service professionals*” as identified in this study, such as Teachers, Nurses and Religious leaders. Because the focus group participants and respondents in this study were recognised social service professionals, the findings cannot be generalised to unrecognised social service professionals as well as other categories of professionals in the youth development space. The findings of this study can therefore only be applicable to the targeted population, thus providing policy direction to their sector alone.

- The other omission in the measuring instrument was that of not combining different options as possible answer/s for the question on classification of Youth work. This would have provided the respondents with an opportunity to select two policy options if they preferred so. This limitation can therefore be redressed by future researchers.
- There was an increased number of missing values in the completed measuring instrument (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007:225). This was due to the non-provision of neutral options (e.g., unsure/ uncertain/ do not know) and the unavailability of the researcher during the actual completion of the measuring instruments to provide clarity when complications were encountered (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:320). In this regard, the researcher only reported on observed cases.
- The use of a four-point rating scale in measuring some of the dimensions of the research variables became complex in the analysis and interpretation of the data, thus resulting in the researcher combining the ratings into binary scales for easy interpretation. This process presented a challenge as the

frequencies could not be used to obtain the average scores. The researcher had to use the mean to rank and weigh the magnitude of the responses.

- Furthermore, the scales within the measuring instrument were not tested for internal validity prior to them being administered as the tests. Internal validity was only conducted after collection of data and it was by default that on average, the sub-scales had high internal consistency. However, the results of the tests showed instances where few items were identified within particular factors, e.g., Factor 2 of the first Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), labelled Human resources and diversion factor in a scale measuring contributory factors to the emergence of Youth work as well as Factor 2 of the third EFA, labelled: Capacity creation and cohesion building. In both instances, four items were identified within each of this factors and these items, even though they constituted sub-scales, they did not adequately cover the content of the construct being measured (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:147).
- Further again, the results of Capacity creation and cohesion building showed moderate Chronbach's alpha, thus indicating moderate reliability of this sub-scale for the target population.
- Finally, lack of adequate information on Youth work as an area of specialisation limited the researcher's ability to analyse this policy option extensively as compared to the other two options of "*occupation*" and a "*profession*".

1.12 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section describes the key concepts/words assigned to events in this study, thus allowing us to distinguish one event from the other (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xv). According to Singh (2007:70), "*when the word is not in popular usage it must be preceded by a brief explanation.*" Similarly, the following key concepts are defined to clarify their meaning and to provide common understanding on how they have been used in the context of this study (Babbie, 2010:131; Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:5; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011:509). The following is a description of the key concepts, some of which are related:

1.12.1 Youth or Young person:

Mufune (1999:358) defines *youth* as phase of life necessary for personal development and social placement.

Osei-Hwedie and Ndulo (1989:354) define *youth* as a person between 15-25 years. These authors further describe youth as a period between childhood and adulthood.

In South Africa, different cultures describe a *young person* differently. For example, in some cultures, there are rites-of-passage that mark transition from childhood into adulthood. So, whatever the age, it means that if you have not gone through the initiation school for circumcision, you are considered a minor (i.e., regardless of age), whereas if you have gone through that process, even if you are still a young person, you are considered an adult.

The National Youth Policy (NYP) of South Africa refers to *young people* as those falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years (National Youth Commission, 1997:3; The Presidency, 2009b:11). The age of majority in South Africa is eighteen (18) years, meaning that children are those between the ages of 0-18 years, and those above eighteen are considered adults (Children's Act No. 38 of 2005; *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996:14; Correctional Services Act No. 111 of 1998).

The African Youth Charter (AYC) defines *youth* as those aged 15 to 35 and minors as young people aged 15-17 years (African Union Commission, 2006:3).

The United Nations (UN) and the World Bank define youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (African Union Commission & United Nations Population Fund Agency, 2011:2).

For the purpose of this study the researcher bracketed the terms **youth** and **young person** together, because these terms are used interchangeably and are also synonymous with terms like adolescent and teenager. The age definition in the NYP was adopted, because this study is conducted in South Africa. It made sense to adopt the age bracket of 14-35, because it is broad and more inclusive compared to

the age ranges specified by both the AYC and the UN. The South African age definition also resonates well with the definition of youth as the period from puberty till attainment of full growth, with the age of 14 years marking the onset of puberty and the age 35 years marking attainment of full growth (*Random House Webster Dictionary*, 1992:1548).

1.12.2 Development:

Development is defined as a creative and/or purposive comprehensive and gradual growth, unfolding or maturation of a young person or a phenomenon (Osei-Hwedi & Ndulo, 1989:355).

According to the *Random House Webster Dictionary* (1992:370), *development* is defined as the act or process of developing through expansion of activities or opportunities.

Based on the above-stated definitions, **development** is herein defined as a process geared towards changing people by bringing opportunities that can change them, so that they reach the state of realising their maximum potential and consequently utilise that potential to function effectively within their social environment.

1.12.3 Youth development:

According to Charles (2006:45), *youth development*:

encompasses dynamic and sustainable patterns of programme development and delivery that reflects the needs and aspirations of young people. It is about providing young people with knowledge, skills and tools to help them to contribute to a politically stable, economically viable, and legally supportive environment that ensures their full participation as active citizens in their countries.

The National Youth Development Strategy for Australia (in Peteru, 2008:28) defines *youth development* as:

a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive, series of activities and experiences which help them to become morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent.

Youth development is an on-going growth process that prepares all young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood, such as meeting their basic personal and social needs through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences, which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent by promoting their assets such as improvement of skills, talents and abilities to enable them to function and contribute to their daily lives (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002:328; Villaruel et al., 2003:7).

Benson and Pittman (2001:94) define *youth development* as a process that mobilises programmes, organisation systems and communities to build developmental strengths in order to promote the health and well-being, thus addressing and advancing the positive development of children and youth.

The NYP (The Presidency, 2009b:10) defines *youth development* as:

an intentional comprehensive approach that provides space, opportunities, and support for young people to maximise their individual and collective creative energies for personal development as well as development of the broader society of which they are an integral part.

In the context of this study, **youth development** refers to a process whereby young people, regardless of their situation, are equipped with necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for their overall development to enable them to attain responsibility towards adulthood and to function effectively within their environment. This is a well-orchestrated approach whereby service providers design and implement interventions, and/or create opportunities aimed at bringing sustained development as well as improvement in the quality of young people's lives, so that they can make positive contributions to their communities and society.

1.12.4 Youth work:

Youth work is a professional service concerned with interaction between the youth and the social environment which affects their circumstances of living, and it is intended to assist youth to achieve their social development through encouragement of social, political and economic change involving them and their environment (Obbo, 1989 as cited in Osei-Hwedie, Mwansa & Mufune, 1990:7).

Merton and Payne (2000:8-9) define *Youth work* as a practice that is informal in approach and committed to: (i) supporting young people's personal, social and political development; (ii) making links between the local and global; and (iii) empowering young people to engage in critical analysis and taking action to bring about change.

Professional *Youth work* is a vocational practice undertaken by other professionals and groups who work with youth as well as specifically trained Youth workers (Broadbent & Corney, 2008:17).

The South African National Youth Policy (2009-2018), defines *Youth work* as a field of practice that focuses on the holistic development of young people (The Presidency, 2009b:31).

In this study, **Youth work** means an occupation or a field of practice, acknowledged as a potential social service profession by the SACSSP; is being practiced by Youth workers and service providers in other disciplines; and has the purpose of building skills and competencies of young people to enable them to positively address their physical, social, psychological, economic, cultural, spiritual and political conditions in order to improve the quality of their lives as well as that of their communities and society.

1.12.5 Occupation:

The Oxford English Minidictionary (1999:351) defines an *occupation* as a job or profession, a way of spending time.

Random House Webster College Dictionary (1992:936) refers to *occupation* as a person's usual or principal work, especially in earning a living. Any activity in which a person is engaged.

Occupation is a meaningful, purposeful principal activity (e.g., job or employment) that earns money (Department of Social Development, 2007:3).

Even though the above authors appear to use the term occupation and profession interchangeably, for the purpose of this study and in order to differentiate the terms occupation and profession, the researcher concluded that an **occupation** is the employment/ job/ work not registered by any statutory regulating body and for which a person is earning a living.

1.12.6 Profession:

The term *profession* refers to an occupation that involves liberal education or its equivalent, and is mental rather than manual labour (*Webster Comprehensive Dictionary*, 1998:1006 as cited in De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011:14).

According to *Oxford English Minidictionary* (1999:407), a *profession* is an occupation requiring advanced learning.

A *profession* involves complex tasks, which are performed by skilful application of major principles and concepts rather than by routine operation of skills (Ralph Tyler, 1952 as cited in De Vos & Schulze, 2002:8).

However, in the context of this study, a **profession** refers to an occupation or a field of practice that requires advanced learning, involves complex mental application of scientific knowledge, skills, techniques, competencies, values and principles of that specific field and is recognised by a regulatory body as such.

1.12.7 Professional:

A *professional* is a person who requires extensive training to study and master specialised knowledge (Barker, 2003:341-342; Corney, 2004:7; *Webster Comprehensive Dictionary* in De Vos, Schulze & Patel, 2005:8) so that they can eventually be qualified and regarded as members in a specific profession.

A *professional* is a person belonging to a profession and therefore associated with control of entry to a particular profession (Leathard, 1994:6; *Oxford English Minidictionary*, 1999:407).

Contextualising these definitions to this study, the concept **professional** provides a description of personnel who are formally trained, qualified as experts, and whose practice is recognised by a regulatory body. In this study, professionals refer to Social workers and Child and youth care workers. This term even extends to other professionals such as Teachers, Nurses, Doctors and Lawyers.

1.12.8 Professional practice:

The term *professional practice* denotes the practice situation or the performance of a professional practitioner which is based on a scientific knowledge base (Delpont & De Vos, 2005:45).

When defining the term *professional practice*, reference is made to practitioners such as doctors or lawyers, whose performance of professional work is regarded as professional practice (*Oxford English Minidictionary*, 1999:399).

In this study, reference to **professional practice** is in relation to practices of recognised professionals such as Social workers, Child and youth care workers, Teachers, Nurses, Doctors and Lawyers.

1.12.9 Professionalisation:

The following are definitions of *professionalisation*:

“Professionalisation is a positive and progressive force which promotes general health of the social body that fosters social change in ways that minimise social conflict and disintegration” (Durkheim, 1933 as cited in Department of Social Development, 2007:6).

“The process of professionalisation implies the extent to which an occupation has developed towards the ideal model of the fully fledged profession” (De Vos, Schulze & Patel, 2005:8).

In this study, the process of **professionalisation** is the extent to which Youth work has advanced towards meeting the criteria of professionalisation and seeking to be recognised as a profession.

1.12.10 Specialisation:

Specialisation is the ability to adapt to a particular purpose and a *specialist* is an expert in a particular branch of a subject (*Oxford English Minidictionary*, 1999:496). *Random House Webster College Dictionary* (1992:1284) refers to *specialisation* as pursuit or devotion of a particular branch of study or line of work.

In this study, **specialisation** is pursuit of Youth work as a branch or component of the existing recognised social service professions, i.e., Social work and/or Child and youth care.

1.12.11 Social service:

The concept “*social service*” is defined broadly as well as narrowly as follows:

The *New Dictionary for Social Work* (1995:59) defines *social services* as “*programmes designed to help people to solve social problems and promote their social functioning.*”

According to Barker (2003:407), *social services* are the activities of human service personnel that seek to promote the health and well-being of people in order to help them become more self-sufficient by preventing dependency, strengthening family relationships and enhancing the social functioning of communities.

The Integrated Service Delivery Model defines *social services* as broader and comprehensive range of services relating to social welfare services and community development provided on a continuum to ensure the integration and sustainability of intervention efforts (Department of Social Development, 2005:13). In essence, social service professionals refer to the personnel rendering such services, i.e., Social workers, Child and youth care workers, Community development workers, Probation officers and Youth workers.

The Children’s Act No. 38 (2005:26) identifies *social service professionals* as Social workers, Probation officers, Community development workers, Child and youth care workers, Youth workers, Social auxiliary workers and Social security workers who are registered in terms of the Social Service Professions Act No. 110 of 1978.

In terms of the Social Service Professions Act No. 110 of 1978 and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2006:3):

“social service professionals refer to categories of personnel registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions and in terms of which professional boards have been established.”

In the context of this study, **social service professionals** refer to professional practitioners acknowledged or recognised by the SACSSP and these are Social workers and Child and youth care workers.

1.12.12 Child and youth care work:

According to the Department of Social Development (2007:48):

Child and youth care work is the professional practice which focuses on the holistic development of the infant, child and adolescent, capturing their root of caring as an underlying factor and force vital to their psychological, social, emotional, spiritual and physical well-being.

De Kock (1991) in Department of Social Development (2007:49), defines Child and youth care as:

Care that includes the physical, emotional and educational care of the child within the life space of the child, in various situations, whether in school, community or institution relationship. This care must contribute to the sound development of the child as a balanced adult.

The definition adopted by the Academy for Child and Youth Care Professionals, Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, International Leadership, Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care and the South African Chapter of the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers cited in the study by the Department of Social Development (2007:48) mentions that:

Child and youth care practice includes assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental preventative and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation and advocacy.

In this study, **Child and youth care work** refers to a field of practice which is recognised as a social service profession by the SACSSP and has a purpose of developing children and youth holistically in variety of settings through direct care and supervision that responds to their physical, emotional, educational and spiritual needs.

1.12.13 Social work:

Social work is an art, a science, a profession with activities that can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity; provision of individual, family, group and community resources; and prevention of social dysfunction (Department of Social Development, 2007:23).

Pincus and Minahan (1973) cited in the Department of Social Development (2007:23) state that:

Social Work is concerned with the interactions between people and their social environment which affects the ability of people to accomplish their life tasks, alleviate distress and realise their aspirations and values. The purpose of Social work, therefore, is to (1) enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people, (2) link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities, (3) promote the effective and humane operation of these systems, and (4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy.

The International Federation of Social Workers as cited in the Department of Social Development (2007:24) mentions that “*Social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance their well-being.*”

In the context of this study, **Social work** means a professional practice recognised and regulated by the SACSSP and has the purpose of promoting social change, problem solving and enhancing the well-being of individuals, groups and communities to ensure better adjustment.

1.12.14 Educator:

An Educator refers to a person who imparts information/ knowledge/ skills to another person or group (*Random House Webster College Dictionary*, 1992:425).

In this study, an **Educator** means a person who teaches Social work and/or Child and youth care work.

1.13 OUTLINE OF THE CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This research report is structured and organised into seven (7) chapters. In Chapters 1 to 4, the researcher conducted a review of literature in order to place the phenomenon under investigation in the context of the general body of scientific knowledge (Strydom & Delport, 2011:288; Mouton, 2003:48). Chapter 5 on the research methodology follows, Chapter 6 presents the empirical findings and Chapter 7 highlights the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

The Chapters are unpacked below as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Overview of the study** - This is an introductory chapter that forms the basis of discussion for all other chapters (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xxviii; Strydom & Delport, 2011:287). It introduces the study; analyses the situation; outlines the background; describes the motivation or significance of the study; mentions statement of the problem, specifies research goal and objectives, indicates underlying research questions that the study seeks to answer; provides a brief summary of the research methodology followed; stipulates ethical considerations; and concludes by defining the key concepts used in the study.
- **Chapters 2: Theoretical frameworks**- This chapter provides information concerning theoretical frameworks used in the study and the discipline from which they originated (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xxviii; Mouton, 2003:48). The researcher discusses the various key theories underpinning Youth work to provide a better understanding of the context through explaining the reasons behind the origin of the selected theories and highlighting the manner in which they are connected to Youth work and/or youth development. This review is important as it constitutes the theoretical framework within which this study is situated.
- **Chapter 3: The current status of Youth work**- The researcher analyses the current situation of Youth work by looking at what is happening across the

world (international level), in the continent (regional level), and within the country (national level). The focus is on how the field of Youth work emerged as well as the current status, thus pointing to Youth work as an occupation. The national discussion further focuses on prioritised target groups, institutional arrangements, Youth workers' roles, and intervention strategies.

- **Chapter 4: The future status of Youth work-** This chapter is forward looking, because it looks at the future of Youth work. The researcher presents and analyses different scenarios or options. These options are, namely: maintaining the current status quo of leaving Youth work as an occupation; having Youth work as an autonomous professional field of practice; or having it as an area of specialisation within Social work and/or Child and youth care. The discussion goes further to look at the background of professionalising Youth work in the country, the status in meeting the required criteria, and the challenges that are experienced. The analysis of each of the scenarios concludes by specifying the pros and cons of following each course of action.
- **Chapter 5: Research methodology** – In line with what is proposed by Strydom and Delport (2011:289), in this chapter the researcher presents, in detail, the research methods and procedures followed (i.e., approach, design, sampling and sampling methods, data collection process, measurement issues, statistical procedures, data analysis). It is through this chapter that the researcher reveals the plan on how the research is conducted.
- **Chapter 6: Empirical findings** – This is where the researcher presents the findings, including analysed and interpreted data (Strydom & Delport, 2011:289).
- **Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations** – In light of the preceding discussion, in this final chapter the researcher summarises the conclusions reached based on a review of literature and empirical findings; highlights the consistencies and inconsistencies of the findings with the literature; indicates the implications for the study; and then finalises with recommendations (Strydom & Delport, 2011:289-290).

1.14 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter provided an overview of the study by looking at various aspects such as the background, motivation, goals and objectives, summary of research methodology and the outline of the research report. The information on these aspects provided the basis for the researcher's decision on the research topic and also specified its relevance and importance through preliminary review of literature on the subject matter (Mouton, 2003:122). The key concepts referred to in this study were also defined and a conclusion was reached on the definition of each within the context of this study.

Relevance of the situation of youth in South Africa, is the effect of *youth bulge*". The implication is to reposition youth development service delivery channel to respond to this demographic trend. By approving the policy that has Youth work as one of its policy imperatives (the Presidency, 2009b:31), the South African government has moved an inch towards the right direction. Implementation of this practice, which has a two-pronged to youth development is important since, because (i) service providers in the youth development space will be equipped with skills; (ii) mainstreaming efforts could improve; and (iii) service delivery for the youth will be enhanced. In the next chapter, the researcher lays out a vision by identifying, selecting and discussing the more relevant ideologies and theories that underpin Youth work practice. This requires acceleration of implementation.