

**TRANSFORMATION OF A SERVICE ORGANISATION
THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

by

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation was like a long mountain climb. The summit was always clear and in sight. There were however so many beautiful scenes on the journey to the top needing some time to observe and enjoy. In reaching the summit and looking back each vantage point is visible and astonishing in richness and beauty. It is not only the scenes and the changes in the landscape that can be admired, but also companions along the road. Some could share the joys and others the hardships and trying times, but ultimately each one made the experience so much more fulfilling. In this journey the fullness and wholeness of life contributed to the final step. As on most mountain tops, there is, however, often another higher, bigger summit just behind the one reached.

In these moments of looking back and looking ahead, wondering about the next part of the journey, it is a privilege to remember with gratitude some of the companions:

God Almighty in whose strength I could endure and in whose peace my turbulence could be calmed.

Brian, my lifelong companion whose silent support never withered.

Our children, *Eben and Brian* who were both a diversion and an inspiration.

My mother, family and friends for their interest.

The Directorate Social Work of the SANDF and especially *my colleagues* and co-researchers from Gauteng Medical Command who through their participation provided me with this opportunity.

My research leaders, Dr Kathy Collins and Dr Rinie Schenk for their ongoing motivation.

Finally I want to dedicate this work to *my late father*, memories of whom would never allow me to give up.

SUMMARY

The research aimed to pro-actively embark in an internal transformation process, in order to improve efficiency of the Social Work Department of Gauteng Medical Command of the South African Military Health Service.

Participatory action research as a qualitative research design was used. The intervention identification process was implemented as a problem-solving technique to direct the process of transformation/change.

The research was conducted by a research group of ten social workers from the South African National Defence Force. The results of the research were the implementation of interventions on identified systems, namely the service delivery system and the performance management system of the Social Work Department of Gauteng Medical Command.

The use of participatory action research as a process to address problems in an organisation was confirmed. The contribution of the participatory action process to process outcomes, such as empowerment and learning, was also indicated in the findings.

KEY TERMS

*eco-systemic perspective ecological approach learning organisations
participatory action research intervention identification process transformation
change South African National Defence Force*

I declare that "Transformation of a service organisation through participatory action research" is my own work and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Elaine Sonet Harrison

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ABBREVIATIONS

Directorate Social Work	DSW
Department of Defence	DOD
Gauteng Medical Command	GT Med Comd
Intervention Identification Process	IIP
Social Work Department	SWD
South African Military Health Service	SAMHS
South African National Defence Force	SANDF

PREAMBLE

In Hope for the Flowers (Paulus 1972), the story of Stripe, the caterpillar provides an excellent metaphor for the process on which the Social Work Department of Gauteng Medical Command embarked:

"Until one day he stopped eating and thought, 'There must be more to life than just eating and getting bigger.'.....He was seeking more. But nothing satisfied him. He looked around for their goal. When he joined them he discovered the column was a pile of squirming, pushing, caterpillars - a caterpillar pillar. ... He pushed himself in. Stripe was pushed and kicked and stepped on from every direction..... The pillar made no sense at all.There must be still more to life.....One day a grey-haired caterpillar hanging upside down on a branch surprised her..... I have to do this to become a butterfly..... It's what you are meant to become....How does one become a butterfly?.....You must want to fly so much you are willing to give up being a caterpillar."

Transformation and change became the often used and just as often misused buzz words of our society, especially since the democratic elections in 1994. All South Africans had to question the meaning of transformation and change and the impact on themselves as individuals, but in particular as citizens of our country.

As an employee in the public service in South Africa, I often had to ask myself what would this imply in the working environment, and even more so in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which by its nature has never been viewed as a democratic organisation.

Since 1994 the focus of the newly elected government has implied a major paradigm shift to development and participation. Schenck (1998: 360 - 385), describes this developmental

paradigm in a unique manner which enabled me not only to identify with it, but also facilitate my own paradigm shift to a developmental and participative paradigm, which provided a context for the research. Her description of this paradigm is based on four concepts, namely objectives; assumptions about people; values and attitudes and working methods.

The objectives Schenck identified are:

- To facilitate change, growth, development and self actualisation;
- To place the focus on people, thus people centredness;
- To facilitate human dignity and social justice;
- To create a safe climate in which change, growth and development can take place; and
- To facilitate (differences and diversity to) open opportunities and choices to people.

The assumptions of people which she described, are:

- The reality and meaning of people differ.
- People give meaning.
- People are closed to information from outside. They are autonomous.
- The person is holistic.

- People are always growing, developing and changing.
- People construe and change their idea of the self in interaction with others.
- Behaviour is an effort to grow through creating change and stability according to need.
- Change is self-determined and evolutionary, based on choice.

The following assumptions of the participative process were identified:

- The relationship creates the context within which participative work can take place.
- The participative process is a selfreflecting learning process. It is an unpredictable process based on a collective small group process which is needs-driven. It is an inclusive, transparent and democratic process based on dialogue in multi-directions.

The values underlying the paradigm of participative development are respect for and trust in other people and the ability to make a difference. Acceptance and respect become the prerequisites for the facilitation of change, growth and development. This could provide the courage for a “caterpillar” to become a “butterfly”, be it an individual or a group.

This paradigm was the driving force in the critical re-look of the role, functions and methods whereby social work services in the SANDF were delivered by the Directorate Social Work (D SW), especially in Gauteng Medical Command (GT Med Comd).

So the transformation started, five years, ago with dissatisfaction about what we are and what we achieve. Could this change by just chasing any new idea in the big changing world of Social Work and the SANDF? Chasing, though, is tiring, especially if you don't find what

you want. So maybe seeking and chasing is not the answer. The answer lies inside. If what Maturana (in Dell, 1985) says about being structure-determined is true, then we just need to become what we already are: a team of highly motivated, resilient and effective enablers. So we needed to go into our cocoon and this is when the reflection could take place to ensure transforming action. We did not only change because we needed the stability of being what we are, but we transformed to become what we wanted to be and what we think we should be for the organisation and the people we serve.

CHAPTER 1

**CONTEXT AND METHOD FOR THE RESEARCH - TRANSFORMATION,
WHY AND HOW?****1.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this research the research group embarked on a participatory action research process to determine the demand for the adaptation of social work services in GT Med Comd. This chapter describes the background and context (*choreography*) for this process. It further describes the questions in the minds of the research group and their purpose with the participatory action research process.

Dicker (1996: 1), describes the current changes in the SANDF and the challenge that these changes pose for social work in the SANDF accurately:

"The SANDF finds itself in the midst of transformation in almost every sphere, including the political, economical, social and cultural spheres. The social workers in the SANDF are just one group of professionals in the organisation who are being greatly challenged with the demand for constant adaptation in the working environment, the exploration and development of services in areas previously untouched, with little or no experience of other services as sources of reference, and the need for much innovative and creative thought."

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Transformation in the Department of Defence (DOD)

The thrust for transformation in the organisation is clearly described in the following quote:

"As a result of the political and societal changes being experienced in South Africa, the Department of Defence (DOD) is currently undergoing fundamental transformation. This transformation covers all aspects required to normalise the DOD to society's new requirements with the specific aim to improve process efficiency in order to deliver required outputs within available budget and other policy constraints" (Department of Defence, 1997: 1).

Cilliers, describes the changes impacting on the SANDF as follows:

"The principles and policies of defence, the purpose of armed forces, their structures and the motivation of acquiring armaments are being widely challenged in a changing world, marked by diminished and changing threat scenarios, altered social values and disarmament initiatives. These changes have also had an impact upon how military discipline is exercised, how armed forces are composed, to whom and how they are responsible and how they are run. South Africa is also faced with its own particular challenges regarding the requirement for a changed defence force in accordance with, and in support of, the broader changing social and constitutional system "(Cilliers, 1992:50).

Southall, as quoted in Dicker (1996:50), continues to describe the redefining of security in time of peace and friendship. The internal threats, such as poverty and lack of hope, unemployment and massive economic migration southwards, environmental degradation,

AIDS, drug-running and organized crime, the alarming availability of a massive supply of small arms in the wake of numerous wars, in a developing country such as South Africa are issues within the social welfare arena. Therefore these threats are as much developmental challenges as they are security challenges.

1.2.2 The Directorate Social Work in the DOD

The D SW has rendered all social work services to members of the SANDF and their dependants for about thirty years. These services were initially remedial and preventive in nature and focussed mostly on the individual with a problem. The main focus of services was to keep members of the organisation productive and functioning.

This focus had undergone a radical change with a shift to occupational social work. The focus of social work intervention became both the organisation and the members and/or dependants. The focus of interventions became the individual as a person, and an employee, the workplace and the organisation as a whole. Interventions became much more developmental. An occupational social work service within a military setting implies that social work services are rendered in a host setting where the primary aim is not the welfare/well-being of the members.

In the DOD, military aims and goals are the primary aim. The main purpose of the SANDF is defence of South Africa. The organisation, however, acknowledges the importance of the social well being of their members to achieve these aims and goals and therefore employs social workers. However, as in many workplace settings, the primary social work goals become secondary.

In order to render an effective service, the services must be aligned and in support of the primary purpose of the organisation. Defence in a democracy required a transformation in the DOD. In order to stay needs-driven, the D SW had to determine whether

transformation in the social services and the manner in which the services are rendered were necessary.

The eco-systemic approach is build on the principle of mutual effect that organisations and their environments have on each other. It further builds on the principle that organisations are open to their environments and that appropriate relationships with those environments are needed in order to survive (Banner and Gagnè, 1995: 80). The alignment model is thus a prerequisite for service rendering in a host setting such as in the military.

Since 1994, the DSW has accepted an alignment model (see appendix A for a graphical illustration) of service rendering and this necessitates a process of continuous alignment. In an effort to become a learning organisation that strives for continuous improvement and development, self reflection on effectiveness has become an ongoing process.

The question whether to transform or not was thus no new question, but merely a continuation of a process which started some years ago. The thrust was now not only from within the directorate, but was strongly facilitated by processes, such as integration, transformation and rationalisation in the larger organisation and society which have been taking place since 1994. Many of these processes were initiated by the new democratically elected government in an effort to transform the country and the public service.

1.2.3 The Social Work Department at GT Med Comd

In the eco-systemic perspective the Social Work Department (SWD) of GT Med Comd is seen as part of the larger whole - the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) - as part of the larger whole - the SANDF - as part of the larger whole - the SA Civil Services as part of the larger whole - the South African society - as part of the larger

whole The changes and processes that have evolved within the SANDF and the DSW cannot be seen in isolation from changes and process that evolved in the country over the last few years.

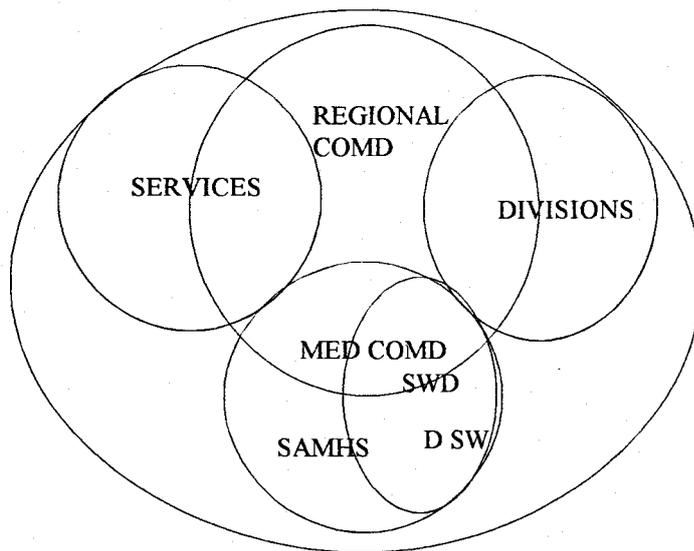


Figure 1.1 The Social Work Department as Subsystem within the Department of Defence

As part of a bigger organisation/system, the SWD must at all times ensure that its strategy, systems and processes are in alignment with those of the bigger system. The questions asked to determine alignment are: what is going on in the environment, what is the organisation going to do with this, can the organisation do it and who will be the leaders of the process?

The SWD of GT Med Comd is an intermediate structure of the D SW of the SAMHS. The SAMHS is one of the four Services of the SANDF, which form part of the eighteen divisions of the Ministry of Defence. (See appendix B for the structure).

The SWD of GT Med Comd consists of a staff officer for social work (the initiator was the staff officer at the time the research took place), four area managers, a social work supervisor and thirty-five social work officers. The SWD renders a decentralised

occupational social work service to all military units in the Gauteng region. The services are comprehensive and referrals to other welfare organisations are very limited and mostly for statutory interventions.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The followings aspects motivated the research group to engage in the research process:

1.3.1 Awareness and agreement of social workers

The awareness that a problem existed started with a growing discomfort and feelings of dissatisfaction expressed by social workers. This coincides with feedback from client systems (the SANDF as an organisation and its members and dependants), to social workers and the social work staff officer, about changing needs, different manifestations of problems in the work place and the families of members due to changes in the structure of the organisation and the members of the SANDF.

Social workers felt out of touch with changing needs and started questioning the type of services rendered by the department as well as the manner in which these services are rendered. It was imperative to ensure an alignment of our services to the needs of the clients if we wanted an effective service which could also provide job satisfaction to the social workers.

In order to adjust to the changing environment and thus the changing whole, the SWD as a part of the whole accepted that it would have to transform/change to find an appropriate role in its external environment (the SANDF). The effectiveness of service delivery would depend on the finding of a fit with the whole (environment). The concept of finding fit or alignment was thus an important element of efficiency for the SWD.

1.3.2 Sources confirming the need for the research

There were three main sources which confirmed the necessity for investigating the theme of dissatisfaction and non-alignment of services:

- The observations of the staff officer regarding expectations and the use of the service by the client system. In conversation with members of the client system, they expressed dissatisfaction with the service because it did not seem to be person-centred and needs-driven. The accessibility and availability of social workers were questioned and the cultural differences, such as race and language, between the client system and the social workers became a stumbling block for both clients and service providers.
- Social workers provide feedback and managers observed lack of work motivation and satisfaction. A large number of social workers expressed formally and informally their feelings of immobilization, failure and burnout. Their own uncertainties regarding the transformation process in the SANDF seemed to block their ability to work effectively. They experienced that the rapid changes in the organisation as placing increasing and changing demands on them. They felt the gains in their work were outweighed by the stressors and losses.
- The management information by means of monthly statistics and evaluation reports indicated a lack of time management and a loss of productivity of social workers. There also seemed to be a discrepancy between the specific requests for the services from the client system, which seemed to decrease, and expressions by the same client system in various forums of a greater need and demand for services.

2.4 REFLECTION ON FORMULATING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM/ QUESTION AND PROCESS

The research group which initially consisted of 29 members of the SWD of GT Med Comd, started out with the sharing of information regarding their own experiences and perceptions. They agreed on the necessity of a participatory action research process to study the research question in order to develop creative answers or interventions to address the question.

The group decided to focus the research on the issues regarding service-rendering by the SWD of GT Med Comd to the SANDF. The current reality of a changing environment and thus a changing SANDF raised the question as to what extent the social work services were in alignment with the organisation's needs. The effectiveness of the services as experienced by social workers as well as the client system was questioned. The main question that emerged was: How can we render an effective service in complementing the purpose of the SANDF?

The research would be grounded in the eco-systemic perspective in which the participants had received in service training in the previous years. This perspective requires an alignment/fit of the subsystem with the whole in order to be effective. It would also include the subjective feelings of social workers about their work satisfaction and personal well being; perceptions of client satisfaction to ensure multiple descriptions and understanding.

The research question that was finally refined by the research group was:

” What are the problems/issues that the Social Work Department are facing which may impact upon the efficiency of service rendering and what are the possible solutions to address these problems?”

1.5 REFLECTION ON THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The research group reflected on the purpose of the research through active group discussion and brainstorming. They formulated the purpose of the research, through facilitation, as:

“To pro-actively embark in an internal transformation process, which will allow participation of representatives of social workers on all levels in the department, in order to improve efficiency of the SWD of GT Med Comd. This improved efficiency will be based on the description by social workers, clients and other stakeholders, such as unit officers commanding.”

Participation by the group was formulated as part of the purpose with the following process outcomes in mind:

- Group learning by all participants, including the following dimensions of learning needs expressed by the participants:
 - As the staff officer of this department, my accountability regarding management is owed to the social work personnel, the clients, the stakeholders and the DSW. In order to be accountable a clear picture of the efficiency of the service rendering by all is needed.
 - To be able to provide an organisational culture that ensures willing, allowed and able personnel, it is essential to have a clear understanding of how the social work personnel perceive their work, workplace and work satisfaction.

- The problems and issues as experienced by both service providers and service receivers needs to be clarified, with possible solutions to address these issues effectively.
- A further learning need and opportunity is to experience the Intervention Identification Process, as well as action research as a participant and thereby not only experience the processes, but also the impact on the self and other participants.
- Empowerment of the social workers by participation in the research as co-researchers by providing the opportunity to define the problem and plan the action.
- Problem solving through a process of action research with the aim of transformation.
- Creation or building of knowledge on alignment and transformation of services in the DSW.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.6.1 Type of research design

The decision on a research design is based on the approach of the researcher concerning the nature of reality and human behaviour (ontology); the relationship between the researcher's description of reality and the manner in which the researcher will seek and punctuate answers (epistemology); and the methodology (approach to measurement) the researcher would want to follow.

In this research a qualitative research design will be followed as the researchers will seek

to understand reality by understanding the different meanings that people attach to their situation. The researchers are part of the systems in the focus of the research and are thus subjective. The methodology will be participatory and interactive with the researchers also being the subjects (De Vos 1998: 241 - 242).

A strategy of qualitative research design based on an ecological paradigm is applied in action research. De Vos describes this design as follows (De Vos 1998: 80 - 81):

“it aims to make qualitative research more humanistic and relevant to the lives of people.....social change is intended. Human beings are seen as capable to co-create their own reality and data is thus collected in cooperation with research participants who are empowered to undertake their own research.”

De Vos (1998: 43 - 45), provides a framework for the qualitative research process with the following phases: choice of a problem/topic/ theme; decision on the qualitative choice; selection of the qualitative design; preparation for data collection; data collection and analysis; data verification and report writing. This framework will be integrated with the phases of participatory action research for application in this research.

The initiator's choice of participatory action research stems from her own involvement in the system in focus, where she will also become a subject of inquiry. The participative management approach in the DSW further encourages an approach which will ensure that social workers who are the subjects of the research will also be involved in defining the problems to be addressed and the data gathering (often as the source of data).

The main aim of social work practice is to solve/address problems of a social nature. An approach is thus needed which is rooted in problem solving and empowerment. The ecosystemic approach provides opportunities to address this need. It seeks on the one hand to understand the interdependent relationships between people and their environment and on

the other hand it seeks the answers as to why and how systems function or develop problems. It could therefore provide the basis for the utilisation of participatory action research (De Vos 1998: 250).

1.6.2 Guidelines for facilitation of the participatory research process

1.6.2.1 Integration

The process of participatory action research is not clearly described in literature. The researcher proposes to integrate the processes described for qualitative research by De Vos (1998), participatory research by Collins (1998) and action research by Selener (1997). This process will be aligned with the Intervention Identification Process (IIP) as a defined method of inquiry. This integration will be illustrated in table 1.1.

1.6.2.2 Intervention Identification Process

Eco-systemic thinking is used as basis to understand problem-solving as a process of group inquiry. The process of solving problems is a process of transformation or change. The IIP provides a method to create shared understanding about factors influencing the problem and their interaction that determine outcome. The method is designed to support a process of participative group learning where problem-solving itself facilitates the group to define its interventions. The researchers used the Intervention Identification Process by Strümpher (1997: II) to guide the investigation. This process is implemented for organisational problem solving using eco-systemic approaches.

The purpose of the Intervention Identification process is stated by Strümpher (1997: II), as:

"To establish which systems (processes) need to be managed, what their respective performance measures need to be, and which actions need to be taken

to improve these systems. "

This process involves the following steps:

- Group formation.
- Problem analysis.
- Identification of system(s) in focus.
- Stakeholder analysis and rating.
- Multiple viewpoint description of system.
- Key performance measures selection.
- System dynamics model of situation.
- Identification of interventions.

1.6.2.3 Action Research Process

This process was followed according to the eight phases of action research:

- Entry. Before starting an action research project, members of the organisation must be committed to working closely with the action researcher and to using research results to promote change.
- Formation and training of the action research team.

- Problem identification by a key person in the organisation or the research team.
- Data collection by the research team. Members of the organisation participate actively in decisions about which data collection methods to use and how to use them.
- Data analysis, data feedback and problem diagnosis.
- Action planning in which members of the organisation must take a leadership role in the designing of actions, whilst the researcher functions as a facilitator.
- Action implementation.
- Evaluation and feedback.

1.6.2.4 Participatory research

Collins (1999: 42 - 43), defines the following phases in the research process in the context of participatory research:

- Problem formulation
- Designing the research.
- Data collection.
- Data processing.
- Writing the research report.

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the integration of the process of participatory action research in a qualitative design and aligns it with the IIP as a defined method of inquiry.

Table 1.1: An integration of research processes

Qualitative research		Participatory research	Action research	IIP
Phases	Steps			
			Entry	
			Formation and training of the action research team	Group formation
Choice of research problem	Choose topic	Problem formulation	Problem identification	Problem analysis
Decision on qualitative choice	Consider underlying assumptions			
Selection of qualitative design	Select specific design	Designing the research		
Preparation of data collection	Plan qualitative sampling			
	Delineate the role of the researcher			
	Establish the protocol for recording of information			
	Write research proposal			

Qualitative research		Participatory research	Action research	IIP
Phases	Steps			
Data collection and analysis	Collect and record information	Data collection.	Data collection	Multiple description of system
	Process data	Data processing.		
	Analyse and interpret data		Data analysis, data feedback and problem diagnosis	Identification of system(s) in focus. Stakeholder analysis and rating Key performance measurement selection System dynamics model of situation.
Data verification	Ensure internal validity			
Report writing	Write the research report	Writing the research report.		
			Action planning	Identification of interventions.
			Action implementation	
			Evaluation and feedback.	

1.6.2.5 Research process applied during the research

The research group applied an integration of the processes described in table 5.1. This allowed them to use a model for problem solving integrated with participatory action research phases. The phases/steps finally adopted were:

- Entry and group formation.
- Problem definition and analysis using data collection through multiple descriptions.
- Data analysis including: identification of the system(s) in focus; stakeholder analysis and key performance measures and a systems dynamics model of the situation.
- Identification and planning of intervention.
- Intervention implementation.
- Evaluation and feedback on interventions.
- Report writing.

1.6.3 The research process

1.6.3.1 Entry and group formation (First action-reflection cycle)



Figure 1.2 First action/ reflection cycle

The process was formally started at a personnel meeting in May 1997, attended by the initiator and about 29 social work personnel members of the SWD of GT Med Comd. The meeting was utilized to reflect on the information gained from the three main sources indicated in the motivation for the research. Based on the reflection the decision to embark on a participatory action research process was made by the whole group.

This group could volunteer and/or nominate other members to be participants to the research group and the process to be followed. This was necessary to ensure that the final group included personnel on all post levels. One of the staff members volunteered to act as facilitator when needed to enable the initiator to be part of the research group. The researcher obtained permission for the process and research from the Officer Commanding GT Med Comd.

The first phases of the process, namely group formation and problem definition and analysis involved the total group of social work personnel of Gauteng Medical Command.

1.6.3.2 Problem definition and analysis (Second action-reflection cycle)

1.6.3.2.1 Problem definition

This group identified the research question and the purpose of the research. They then embarked on an action/reflection cycle to define and analyse the problem. During the action phase of this cycle the group divided into four smaller groups and used the techniques of brainstorming and clustering by means of the affinity technique to identify the problem. In the reflection phase they discussed and reformulated the identified problems.

1.6.3.2.2 Problem analysis

The group was then facilitated in the action phase to use the digraph technique to describe

the interrelationships of the problems. In the reflection phase they then discussed and punctuated the primary or driving problems and the consequential or receiving problems.

Thereafter the research group, consisting of about 12 members, representing all post levels of social work personnel, was compiled to proceed with the process. This group again divided into two workgroups. These groups started with a reflection phase which resulted in the redefining of eight clusters of driving problems. Each small group selected four problems for further analysis. During an action phase the groups used the fishbone technique to identify the “causal” factor for each problem.

1.6.3.3 Data analysis

The research group utilised the social work personnel and feedback from their client systems as their main source of data. This data was organised by means of facilitated group processes. Each exercise had action and reflection phases to obtain data and to consolidate the information.

1.6.3.3.1 Identification of the system/s in focus

The research group, through brainstorming and discussion identified the system/s which mostly contained the clusters of problems. The systems became the systems in focus for the rest of the research. The rationale was that intervention should focus on a system and not a problem, which is a function or a result of the functioning of a system.

The group prioritised these systems in order to determine which two systems would be the focus of intervention. These two systems were identified by the research group as having the potential of creating change in other systems.

1.6.3.3.2 Stakeholder analysis and rating

The two smaller groups were then facilitated to list all stakeholders of the two selected systems in focus through brainstorming. This was followed by a stakeholder rating to determine their relative importance in terms of perceived power, satisfaction, impact and influence. This resulted in the identification of the most “important” stakeholders for each system in focus.

1.6.3.3.3 Selection of key performance measures

The research group was then facilitated to determine the measure of performance (success) which each of the identified stakeholders would utilise to rate the effectiveness of the system in focus. Through a reflective process these measures of performance were discussed and defined. The group concluded that the measures of performance for the stakeholders of each of the two systems in focus were similar. They again prioritised these measures of performance and selected two for further development.

1.6.3.3.4 Systems dynamics modelling

The research group were facilitated to develop a list of co-producers (contributing factors) for each chosen measure of performance. They used brainstorming and clustering techniques. They then arranged the factors in a simple flow model explaining how these factors could influence the outcome of the respective performance measures. This was done by prioritising factors which could have the most direct influence and the most impact on the measure of performance.

“Causal” loops were developed for each set of factors indicating the interaction among these factors to produce the defined result. They then completed loops by identifying tangible and intangible consequences from the improvement of the measure of performance. The

connections between identified consequences and “causal” factors were also identified. The flow models were integrated into one model which indicated the system dynamics which determine the performance of the systems in focus.

1.6.3.4 Identifying and planning Intervention

During this phase the groups were tasked to identify 2 - 3 high leverage interventions that could potentially change the performance of the system in focus. They used the systems dynamics model developed in the previous stage. Using the system dynamics model, each group had to define and motivate how they perceived these interventions could lead to an improvement in the measures of performance they selected.

There was continuous interaction with social work personnel from other Medical Commands and they provided a sounding-board and confirmation for the findings on the problem definition and analysis, the systems in focus, the key performance measure and the planned interventions.

The final implementation plan was introduced in GT Med Comd. These planned interventions were presented to the total group of social work personnel, the Officer Commanding GT Med Comd, the Director of Social Work and other Officers Commanding as recipients of the service.

1.6.3.5 Intervention implementation.

The intervention implementation was planned as a phased approach. However, the process gained momentum and interventions had been implemented concurrently by different groups of social workers. The implementation started in October - November 1997.

1.6.3.6 Evaluation and feedback on interventions.

Evaluation took place per identified intervention on a yearly basis and a group evaluation to be included in the report, was conducted during August 2001.

1.6.3.7 Report writing.

The action-reflection cycle formed the basis of learning, problem-solving and knowledge creation to promote transformation. The reflection was executed jointly by means of group discussions, as well as individually by the researcher and facilitator in the report writing and the linking with theory. The facilitator and researcher reflected after every group session on the process in the group in order to facilitate the next session. The group reflected by means of group discussion and used different methods of data collection and analysis in the action phases.

The research report was the final action-reflection for the initiator who was transferred into a new post shortly after the implementation of the intervention started. However, the process continued as the social work personnel went through the implementation and evaluation phases.

1.6.4 Data collection methods

The following data collection techniques, as indicated at each phase, were used:

- Brainstorming and clustering by means of an Affinity technique. See appendix C for a short description of the process.
- Interrelationship Digraph. See appendix D for a short description of the process.

- Cause and effect Fishbone diagram. See appendix E for a short description of the process.
- Structured questions were used to identify the systems in focus, the stakeholders and the key measures of performance.
- Group discussions and flow tracing provided the identified interventions.

1.6.5 Sampling

The sampling was non-probability sampling based on availability of interested social workers in GT Med Comd. Quota sampling was also utilised as the decision was made by a meeting of all social work personnel that the research group should pro rata represent the different post levels, the gender and race in the personnel.

1.6.6 Data Analysis

Data recording took place after each work session with the research team. Various methods of data collection were utilised and the raw data and a summary were captured. This data was the subject matter of follow-up discussion which culminated in the processed data. This formed the basis of the data analysis by means of group discussion and structured questions.

1.7 DURATION OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher initiated the participatory action research process in 1997 when she was also the staff officer of the SWD at GT Med Comd. The process was at implementation phase when she was transferred at the end of 1997. The report reflects the situation of the SWD at GT Med Comd from May 1997, as well as the evolvement of interventions until August 2001.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations were not identified within the research team but in the reflective cycle of writing this report and further literature research, the following were identified by the initiator:

- The multiple viewpoints could also include the direct client systems of the social workers and not only that of the social work personnel themselves. The viewpoints of the client system were only obtained before the implementation of the interventions.
- Lack of dedicated time for participation by the research team which protracted the time taken and impacted on the momentum of the research.
- South African literature on participatory action research was limited at the start of the process, especially regarding application to organisational change. The global literature was used as well as literature on learning organisations. At the time of finalising the report, more recent sources were available and integrated into the literature review.

1.9 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The research provided the ground and opportunity for the SWD of GT to pro-actively participate in aligning their services with the changing environment in which they function. They could identify the problems as well as develop interventions which provided solutions to their problems. They were empowered to transform their services to be more effective and thereby to experience more work satisfaction.

1.10 PRESENTATION OF THE CONTENT

The findings and recommendations of this research will be disseminated to members of the D SW and the Officers Commanding of Medical Commands where social services are rendered.

1.10 CHAPTER REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter was to orientate the reader to the background and context of the research and in particular to describe the place and role of the SWD of GT Med Comd within the DOD. The motivation for the research team to embark on this process was discussed with a description of the research question, purpose and objectives.

This chapter also described the design and methods applied in this participatory action research. Various appropriate research processes were integrated into a workable process which could provide the research team the opportunity to seek solutions to the problems identified.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature on an eco-systemic perspective on transformation/ change in an organisation, participatory action research and the intervention identification process of problem-solving. It further describes the integrated process to participatory research used as the methodology in the research. Chapter 3 outlines three action-reflection cycles punctuated in the research process and chapter 4 draws the conclusions to the research and gives recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will include a literature study of an eco-systemic perspective on transformation in an organisation and a discussion on learning organisations as the context in which action research can be applied.

It will further provide an overview on participatory action research as the process through which the research team can question their organisation, its purpose and the way in which services are rendered.

The IIP will be described within the context of systems thinking and the learning organisation as a method of problem solving with the purpose of developing possible interventions/solutions to the identified problems. The IIP is a technique to create difference which could allow the system to transform.

2.2 AN ECO-SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

The eco-systemic perspective is a combination of the ecological perspective and general systems theory. This perspective describes the mutual adaptation between individuals (subsystem) and their environments (systems). The central concept is goodness of fit and adaptation over time.

From the systems theory the important aspects for organising this research are that systems are interacting in a circular manner and that changes in one system have consequences for other linked systems and again through feedback have consequences for the first system.

Systems theory emphasizes the concept of equifinality which implies that a given effect can be brought about in different ways or alternatively that change anywhere in the system can have consequences in a linked system. (Wakefield 1996: 3 - 4).

2.2.1 Description of Concepts

Keeney describes an eco-systemic perspective as

"a way of knowing through the epistemological framework or paradigm represented in cybernetics, ecology and systems theory. It emphasizes ecology, relationships and whole systems and attunes itself to interrelations, complexity and context." (Keeney, 1979:118-119)

Senge describes systems thinking as

"a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than "snapshots". Systems thinking is a sensibility for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character." (Banner and Gagnè, 1995: 76)

Both these definitions focus on ecology which is based on the assumption that everything is connected in a complex, but systematic way. When a harmonious connection between all the parts and the parts and the whole exists, it is a "healthy" (effective) system (Keeney and Sprenkle, 1992:9). The relationships and the interconnectedness through complex patterns become the focus of descriptions.

It further emphasises that an eco-systemic perspective is based on a holistic view, which describes circular interactions and interdependence rather than a lineal causality. Social processes are thus described in terms of cyclic patterns and behaviour sequences.

"An ecosystemic perspective attempts a non-dualistic conceptualization of cybernetics that recognizes complete circuits or whole ecosystems rather than isolated parts that act, react, interact, or transact with each other. This perspective attempts to avoid an overemphasis upon dualism that may overshadow the connectedness of whole systems" (Keeney and Sprenkle, 1982:6).

This definition focusses on the next important concept of cybernetics of cybernetics. The key aspect of a cybernetic system is the ability of the system to process information and act accordingly. This process is called feedback and refers to information on the functioning of the system that if fed back into the system enables it to make self corrective steps.

Through their description of a transformational (eco-systemic) perspective, Banner and Gagnè (1995:45-54) confirm that it is embedded in the shift from a reductionistic, mechanical world view based on Newtonian assumptions to an ecological, holistic systems paradigm based on Einsteinian assumptions. In this perspective the whole is seen as organizing the parts rather than being dependent on them. All parts are linked to the whole.

2.2.2 Assumptions of the eco-systemic perspective

The following underlying assumptions of the eco-systemic perspective provide the basis for this research:

- Everything is connected (wholeness). Everything is part of a whole and connected to everything else. The relation between subsystems implies interaction between the subsystems. A change in one subsystem changes the whole system. Organisations need to see themselves as linked to the larger systems of which they are a part. This points to an increasing awareness of the

organisation as an open system, influencing and being influenced by its external environment. Open systems are characterized by information flow between the subsystems (Keeney 1983).

- The whole organizes the parts. The system is structure-determined and therefore the parts align it in order to facilitate the working of the whole according to an inherent design. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. The whole has characteristics and functions that are not necessarily that of any of the subsystems. If the parts align with the inherent design, it should create harmony and integration (Dell 1985).
- Circularity. Circular causality or a transactional focus where transactions are the “continuous reciprocal exchanges between systems and subsystem, through which each shapes the other over time. Transactions are actually circular feedback processes taking place in the interface between systems and subsystems and give rise to reciprocal causality” (Bawden1995: 18 -19).

2.2.3 Transformation and change from an ecosystemic perspective

The concepts of transformation and change are often used interchangeably.

Transformation is, however, seen as radical change on a continuum of change. This is clear from the definition in Banner and Gagnè: (1995: xii), by Amir Levy and Uri Merry who describe the concepts of transformation as:

"powerful and complex. It represents a complete change of consciousness from one level of operation to a higher, more integrated level of operation.

Transformation implies the awakening of new levels of awareness; a fundamental resolution of the internal causes of stress; the discovery and clarification of

essential values in the world; and the redirection of basic energies towards a higher and more fulfilling purpose. "

Miles and Snow in Banner and Gagnè, (1995:316) describe the necessity of change for an organisation to be efficient. They describe an efficient organisation as an organisation which will constantly question and evaluate their purpose and the manner in which they achieve their purpose. These organisations have the ability to adjust themselves to complement their strategy.

Systems are constantly changing. Too much change endangers the system and the system will work against the change to maintain stability in a self regulatory manner. In the same way too little change threatens the system so it will create change in a self-regulatory manner. In organisations this is often experience as "stuckness" or inefficiency.

An eco-systemic perspective requires that the research team as the service providers will take a meta position and as such be able to describe their own interactions, punctuation, and epistemology, which is what is implied in description by Miles and Snow. Self-reference is therefore central to this perspective whereby the impact of the research group, in their role as participants, or the observed, become part of the description. The research team is thus recognized not only as part of the context that is studied, but the subject of the research as well. It is therefore not possible to observe a reality outside the observer. All observations are part of the epistemology of the observer.

Observations thus become merely punctuations made by the observer/researcher. A single punctuation is not sufficient in a circular description and more punctuations are needed. Co-researchers in participative research can provide these multiple punctuations (Keeney, 1983 and Keeney, 1979).

The understanding of change in a system is essential in order to influence the processes of change. A system can be seen as a self-regulating unit with specific rules or norms, boundaries and structure. A cybernetic system encompasses a recursive, complementary relation between processes of change and stability. The quest for stability (morphostatic mechanism) and the quest for change (morphogenetic mechanism) keeps the system in a dynamic (homeostatic) balance.

Homeostasis = stability/change

Cybernetic system :(stability/change + meaningful noise = change)

To generate change a system must not only be described in terms of its existing patterns but also in terms of a new pattern or occurrence that seems unpredictable. This description, phrased as "meaningful noise", must address both the stability and change in the system and creates a difference for the system before change will take place (Keeney & Ross, 1983).

2.2.4 Learning organisations/organisations as learning systems

2.2.4.1 Learning in organisations as systems.

Any organisation can also be described as a system. In an organisation "meaningful noise" is also needed to create change. This "meaningful noise" can also be by means of learning. An important underlying assumption in a learning organisation is that it refers to the organisation as the system itself and not just to a number of individuals grouped together. The organisation has a learning ability.

"The word learning undoubtedly denotes change of some kind." (Bateson)

A learning systems approach to change and transformation supports the view that learning in organisations is a co-evolving process. Korten (1984:185) refers to the learning process of an organisation when he refers to its perceptions and attitude regarding development or change. The learning process implies that people within the organisation learn from each other, learn from their mistakes and learn from their manager or team leader. They create opportunities to share experiences and ideas with each other.

The principle of "embracing error" which is so evident in Korten's work is echoed when Argyris and Schön in Gagnè (1995:361), later define learning as the ability "to detect and correct error." According to Banner and Gagnè (1995:362) a learning organisation is

"able to expand the kind of errors it is able to address, and the processes it uses to address them, until it is able to deal easily and continuously with the fundamental problems it may be facing."

In a earlier work, Argyris and Schön (1978:326) reiterate the self-regulatory manner in which a system changes when they describe that organisational learning from a systems perspective consists of

"the self-regulating process of error-detection and error-correction itself, whether or not maintenance of the organisational steady state is mediated by the self-conscious efforts of individual members of the organisation."

They further identify two types of learning, namely single-loop and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning involves adjustment in the strategies to become more productive, but does not question underlying assumptions, values and norms. Double-loop learning, however could question even the theory-in-use in the organisation, including assumptions

and values underlying operations. These authors require double-loop learning as a prerequisite for a learning organisation.

Argyris and Schön (1978:26-29), emphasize the necessity for organisations to carry out both single-loop and double-loop learning. They refer to what Bateson called deutero learning/second-order learning. This involves also learning about the previous context of learning through reflection on previous learning episodes. In deutero-learning the members of the organisation learn about organisational learning and can provide the results in images and maps.

Senge, in Banner and Gagnè (1995:365), describes the process of creating a learning organisation as developing or initiating a paradigm shift to systems thinking in which every organisational problem is part of a larger system . Problem-solving thus requires consideration of the system dynamics. If this learning in an organisation addresses both the need for stability and the need for change in a manner which creates difference for the learners, it could evolve in transformation/change which could solve organisational problems.

2.2.4.2 Core disciplines of a learning organisation.

Senge then discusses the “core disciplines” of a learning organisation, namely:

- Personal mastery, which implies learning to expand the individual’s personal capacity to create the desired results, and creating an organisational culture which encourages all its members to develop themselves toward the goals and purposes they choose.
- Mental models refer to the reflecting upon, continually clarifying, and improving

the internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape actions and decisions.

- Shared vision is the building of a sense of commitment in the group, by developing shared images of the future they seek to create, and the principles and guiding practice that should help them get there.
- Team learning refers to the transforming of conversational and collective thinking in a co-evolving process, so that groups can develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members.
- Systems thinking is a way of thinking about and a language for describing and understanding the forces and interrelationship that shape the behaviour of systems.

Continual quality improvement, according to Fischer and Torbert (1995:7), is based on a central process, learning. They re-affirm the theme of self-correcting when they describe that a learning organisation

“educates its members towards self- correcting awareness. Engaging in a process of mutual self-correction requires ongoing effort among participants to recognise and correct errors and incongruities in the midst of action, an effort that is found to be the primary requirement for continual quality improvement.”

Fischer and Torbert (1995: 253) described the realization of a learning organisation as “Liberating Disciplines”, which cultivate a spirit of enquiry among the members of the organisation. It provides opportunities to question not only the strategies but also the mission.

“A liberating discipline is by experience a set of challenges for questioning. Hence organizations that cultivate transforming inquiry rarely suffer from the failure to recognize the dilemma character of a situation from a blind persistence in sticking to terms of reference on the basis of which the problem is insoluble.”

This definition implies the following pattern of organisation:

- Leadership will regard every organisational issue, problem or task as an opportunity to challenge the attention of self and others.
- The organisation is inherently dynamic. It will evolve over time as the overall awareness and initiative of members increase. Members can challenge the appropriateness, legitimacy and efficacy of the organisation at any time.

According to Bawden (1995 :8) if an organisation wants to follow the learning approach to change or transformation it needs to be able to develop:

- New ways of experiencing and appreciating the worlds about them.
- New ways of making sense of and valuing these experiences.
- New ways of designing creative and responsible strategies for change.
- New ways of taking action to actually change their relationships with the world about them.
- New ways of subjecting all of these new processes to the critical reflection and review for new learning.

The ideal organisation, as described by Banner and Gagnè (1995: 365), is one in which:

- Each person is empowered to express his/her unique contribution to the whole.
- There is a context where personal growth and organisational excellence are both encouraged.
- Everyone is fully aware of his/her implicit assumptions and belief systems.
- A climate of constant inquiry leads to what is called paradigm flexibility.
- The shared vision is inspiring, it captures the heart of the organisation, cultivates commitment and a results orientation.
- All work together harmoniously, putting aside ego and personality differences in the striving towards that vision.
- Everyone understands the organisational system, its inherent dynamics, and the part these play in the larger whole.

2.2.5 Theoretical framework/paradigm of the research group

The research group approached the process with shared mental models due to team learning that took place over a period of a year. The D SW embarked on transforming the D SW into a learning organisation over the last four years. The whole SWD of GT Med Comd was an active participant in this process. This empowered the group to participate in an organisational learning process which allowed “embracing error” with the focus on continual improvement and a co-evolution of ideas. This learning process,

which was an integral part of the personnel development programme, was focussed on the learning organisation and continual improvement of service rendering.

The eco-systemic theoretical framework, which was included in the learning process above, provides for the punctuation of the interconnectedness of subsystems and systems and the importance of the interrelationships and patterns of interaction that must “fit” in order to function effectively.

2.3 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The concepts participatory research, action research and participatory action research are often used interchangeably. Although the underlying philosophies, values and objectives are the same, there are differences in the outcome and the procedures that are described. These concepts will be compared to distinguish some of the similarities and differences. In the research, however, participatory action research will be conducted, which in many ways is an integration of participatory research and action research.

2.3.1 General descriptions

2.3.1.1 Action research

Schenck (1998: 189) describes action research as a process whereby the researcher wants to improve his/her practice with other people. The problem might not be experienced by all the participants, but they help to plan and execute the research.

It is also described as an inquiry process in organisations, intended to solve practical problems and generate new knowledge through collaborative efforts by researcher(s) and client/co-worker(s) It has been used as a tool for organisational change and development.

It seeks to make social systems and organisations more efficient and effective through a consensus-oriented approach (Selener, 1997: 8).

Action research is a tool that has been used primarily in business and industry to improve organisational efficiency and success in areas of work relationships, authority structures, job satisfaction, and the quality of working life. Action research emphasizes the interdependence between people and organisations. Malfunctions occur because of mismatches between the needs of the organisation and thus of the people working in it.

To be successful, researchers require appropriate information that will aid in identifying and analysing a given problem for the purpose of solving it. Action research has been used as a tool in organisational development to improve management and effectiveness (Selener, 1997:56-57).

Two definitions in Selener (1997:62), are that of Rappoport:

"Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework. Action research is a type of applied social research differing from other varieties in the immediacy of the researcher's involvement in the action process."

Hult and Lennung in Selener (1997:62) provide a more integrated definition:

"Action research simultaneously assists in problem-solving and expands scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the competencies of the respective actors, being performed collaboratively in an immediate situation using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at an increased understanding of a given social situation,

primarily applicable for the understanding of change processes in social systems and undertaken within a mutually acceptable ethical framework."

A basic feature of action research in organisations is the close relationship between the generation of knowledge and actions taken to improve organisational performance. Solutions to problems, the creation of additional knowledge and learning are not just a theoretical exercise, but part of a process intended to change a problematic situation. An action research project is an ongoing, cyclical process of problem definition, data gathering, action planning, action taking, and evaluation.

Action research is also a learning process. Skills are learned in the process of fact finding, working to change the situation and evaluating results. Action research is designed to achieve three goals: problem solving, adding to the body of scientific knowledge, and participant learning. Thus action research is an integrated process of research, action, and education (learning) (Selener, 1997:63-64).

2.3.1.2 Participatory research

Collins (1999: 2), provides the following definition of participatory research:

"Participatory research is the collective generation of knowledge which leads to the planning and achievement of jointly set objectives."

Schenck (1998 :189), described participatory research as an effort to empower people. It implies that a group of people will research an issue/topic which is of importance to them. They decide on the need or problem they want to research and how they want to do the research. The "researcher" is merely the facilitator of the process.

Participatory research involves the active collaboration of members of a group/organisation in the identification of problems, collection of data, and analysis of their own situation in order to improve it. It involves research, education (learning) and action. Although a major goal of participatory research is to solve practical problems, another goal is the shift of power (Selener 1997, 11 - 12).

Selener proceeds to discuss participatory research in a manner which could as well be termed as participatory action research, by referring to participatory research as a process through which members of a group identify a problem, collect and analyse information and act upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote social transformation. In the research setting, knowledge and its generation are crucial as a means and an end for conducting research. An important element in this process is non-formal learning. This learning is participatory in nature.

Participatory research combines three principal activities: research, education (learning) and action. It is a research method in which people are actively involved in conducting systematic assessment of a social phenomenon by identifying a specific problem for the purpose of solving it. It is a learning process because researcher and participant together analyse and learn about the causes of, and possible solutions, to the problem addressed. It is action-oriented since findings are implemented in the form of practical solutions (Selener, 1997: 17). Its distinctive features are:

- The participation of the group in the entire research activity;
- A process in which research is directly related to transforming actions (Selener, 1997: 18).

In her description of participatory research, Collins (1999:2) also focusses on it as a process which includes two aspects, namely the planning of the group of people regarding what they want to research, and secondly, the group discovering the knowledge

which is used in action.

2.3.1.3 Participatory action research

Participatory action research focuses on both research as seeking knowledge and understanding, as well as action in finding and implementing solutions to the problems researched.

Schenck (1998: 189 - 190) very briefly describes this by saying that needs and problems are not only researched, but are followed by action to introduce change, improvement or development. The group determines the need/problem that will be researched by them in order to find solutions to implement.

Schurink in De Vos (1998: 408) gives the following definition of participatory action research:

“It is a research process where people involved in the situation that is being studied are enabled (in partnership with researchers and other role-players) to become actively involved in collective efforts to address and solve their problems. This is done in such a way that their existing knowledge and cognitive, social and behavioural skills are increased, resources are optimally used, social and economic rights are achieved, their quality of life and social functioning are improved and self-reliance is created.”

He further explains that participatory research builds human capacity because it develops the interrelation between understanding and action and enables people to take action after the gained knowledge and come to an understanding of their situation.

3.2.3 Comparison of participatory research, action research and participatory action research

The comparison of components of research, underlying assumptions, the role of the researcher and the intended outcomes will be portrayed by means of tables addressing each of these aspects based on the information in Collins (1999), Schenk (1998), Schurinck in De Vos (1998) and Selener (1997). These tables provide a clear picture of the similarities, as well as the different descriptions, in participatory and action research.

The final column on participatory action research as found in the literature, draws on both participatory and action research and provided the framework for this research. The comparison also provided a clear understanding of all the components of the research.

Table 2.1: A comparison of components of research

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
The problem originates in the group itself and is defined, analysed, and solved by the group. The primary beneficiaries are the members.	Action research focuses on problems in order to solve them and, in the process, leads to the development of practical knowledge.	The subjects of the research are involved in decisions regarding the whole process of research.
The ultimate goal of research is the radical transformation of social reality and improvement in the lives of the people involved.	Action research aims at the development of the whole organisational system and is intended to bring about organisational change.	The goal is to gain understanding in order to take action/ implement solutions to problems.
The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in people of their own resources and can mobilise them for self-reliant development.	Action research is a cyclical, learning process. Action research is a flexible process involving continuous evaluation and change.	The actual research is secondary to the processes of collaboration, mobilisation, empowerment and self realisation. The process moves in cycles of action and reflection.

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
Participatory research involves the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process.	Action research is collaborative and participatory.	
Participative research is a more scientific method in that participation in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality.	Action research follows the scientific method and generates scientific knowledge.	The research is based on a distinctive ontology, epistemology and methodology.
The researcher is a committed participant, facilitator, and learner in the research process. (Selener: 1997: 18 - 21)	The researcher is a change agent who becomes involved in the organisation under study. (Selener 1997: 64 - 71)	The researcher is a part of the world being studied and is actively involved with the subjects as research participants. (Schurinck 1998: 414 - 415)

Table 2.2: A comparison of underlying assumptions

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
The aim of social change is the radical transformation of society by addressing immediate needs and mobilising an ongoing process of social awareness regarding society's structures in order to develop viable alternatives.	Action researchers use strategies to create conditions conducive to the fulfilment of human needs within organisations.	Research is undertaken to initiate a process of collective reflection that mobilises collective action that would lead to social transformation, reconstruction and sustainable development.

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Participatory researchers promote empowerment of the group by encouraging ordinary people to participate in the knowledge generation and to use the knowledge created to improve their situation.</p>	<p>Action researchers work in the context of systems theory in organizations. Working and business organizations are systems composed of subsystems that continually interact with, and are interdependent upon one another.</p>	<p>The starting point for research is the mobilisation of the internal group resources such as values, culture, skills, knowledge and experience.</p>
<p>The goal of participatory research is to create shifts in the balance of power. The principle of shared power and complete control by the people in the research process is central to participatory research. Control over the research process ensures that the knowledge arises from the people's experience, is related to their perceived needs and is used for their own benefit.</p>	<p>Action research is based on humanistic values and designed to further the development of human potential.</p>	<p>Research is value directed and purposive, i.e. aimed at problem solving and improvement of quality of life of the research participants.</p>

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Participatory researchers maintain that thinking, feeling, and acting are three integrated aspects in the process of creating knowledge. It is changing the meaning of human experience through educating from this integration. It is when cognitive knowledge is used to reflect, plan and implement actions that knowledge assumes a fundamental role.</p>	<p>Organisations as systems seek equilibrium, regularity and balance. When the system becomes unbalanced, information and feedback are required for informed actions.</p>	<p>No single methodology of data gathering could provide the full picture.</p> <p>Projects should be inclusive and based on intersectoral and multi disciplinary principles.</p> <p>In their involvement to solve their social problems researcher-practitioners should , be open to new information and ideas that could lead to paradigm shifts and enhance the development of social theory and practice.</p>

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Researchers also believe that knowledge must be generated through a process of social praxis. Praxis of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, that is, between thinking and acting. This involves specific actions that lead to change in fundamental conditions.</p> <p>The process of knowledge does not change reality. Change comes only when actions are informed and guided by reflection. This is a continuous process of reflection and action, in which knowledge and practice form part of the same unit. (Selener 1997: 21-29)</p>	<p>Organisations are open systems, which interact with and are influenced by external forces. Organisations depend upon ongoing feedback concerning their performance. Action research is a tool used to provide that information in order to improve the organisational system. (Selener 1997:69 - 72)</p>	<p>The environment in which the research process takes place should be supportive and encouraging.</p> <p>An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between role-players should be created by the researcher.</p>
<p>Participatory research is legitimate if, in the process of knowledge generation, the members of the group participate in the implementation of reflected actions (Selener 1997: 33-35).</p>		<p>Research participants should have easy access to information, skills and opportunities. People are regarded as equal partners in the research process. Researchers have to act as facilitators. (Schurinck 1998: 415 - 416)</p>

Table 2. 3: A comparison of the role of the researcher

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>The researcher assumes the role of catalyst for social change. In the participatory research process, there must be a balance between the knowledge and experience contributed by the researcher and that provided by members of the group.</p> <p>Participatory research offers a partnership. It requires that both the researcher and participants be open to personal transformation and conscientization.</p>	<p>The action researcher assists a client organisation in problem posing and solving processes.</p> <p>The relationship aspect involves the interaction between members of the organisation and the researcher.</p>	<p>The researcher acts as a facilitator, co-learner and team builder and should constantly interact with research participants to discuss and verify findings, rather than act as an expert in charge of a project.</p>
<p>The participatory researcher performs the following functions: he/she contributes to the formulation of theories that explain social reality. They also participate as a facilitator in setting the research agenda. The researcher further assists in the design and implementation of actions in order to solve the problem identified.</p>	<p>The action researcher is a person who performs many tasks and assumes multiple roles in the course of the research process, namely that of educator. The action researcher contributes theoretical knowledge and practical experience while clients offer practical knowledge and experience of the specific problematic situation.</p>	<p>The researcher has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Knowledgeable about the process. -Co-learner and co-researcher. -Facilitator of dialogue. -Facilitates from a specific value and theoretical framework. -Facilitates an uncertain process.
<p>It assumes that both parties have knowledge and experience to contribute (Selener 1997: 35 - 37).</p>	<p>A successful action researcher shares the values underlying a client's goal and objectives since his/her close involvement will determine part of the project outcomes (Selener 1997: 77 78).</p>	<p>The facilitator believes in the abilities of people and that they can investigate their own situation, find solutions and be able to implement them. (Schenck 1998: 220 - 224) Schurinck 1998: 416)</p>

Table 2.4: A comparison of the research methodology

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Selener describes four major phases in participative research:</p> <p>Organising the research project and gathering knowledge of the working area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It includes establishing relationships and defining the framework of the project. - The other major objective involves gathering basic knowledge of the area of study. <p>Definition of the problem. It involves the joint identification by the researcher and participants of the most significant problems they would like to address.</p>	<p>The eight phases of action research are described in a cyclical process:</p> <p>Entry. Before starting an action research project, members of the organisation must be committed to working closely with the action researcher and to using research results to promote change (Selener 1997:79).</p> <p>Formation and training of the action research team.</p> <p>Problem identification by a key person in the organisation or the research team.</p>	<p>Although the phases of participatory action research are not clearly spelled out in literature, it is clear that group meetings are an important mechanism.</p> <p>Schurink (1998: 417), describes a process by Rahman:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Start an intersectoral process of community mobilisation. -Create opportunity and structure for full participation. -Use workshops and discussion to provide information to sensitise participants to their situation and create their own structures for action taking. This will encourage problem analysis and action planning.

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Critical analysis of the problem. The researcher seeks to facilitate collective interpretation and analysis of the problem in order to describe the problem; explain the problem; and to offer strategies for action.</p> <p>Definition of the plan of action. The plan of action is designed by the researcher and participants, based on problems identified and analysed (Selener 1997: 39-42).</p>	<p>Data collection by the research team. Members of the organisation participate actively in decisions about which data collections methods to use and how to use them. (Selener 1997: 80 - 81).</p> <p>Data analysis, data feedback and problem diagnosis.</p> <p>Action planning in which members of the organisation must take a leadership role in the designing of actions, whilst the researcher functions as a facilitator.</p> <p>Action implementation.</p> <p>Evaluation and feedback (Selener 1997: 82 -84).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilise participants to research their own situation in cooperation with the researcher. - Reflect critically throughout the data gathering process. -Participants must write down their findings -Data analysis will lead to the dissemination of findings and workshops. An action plan will be developed by participants in cooperation with the researcher. -The action plan must be evaluated as it is implemented. Progress must be reviewed. -The participants' dependence on the researcher must be phased out and they must be motivated to share their skills and experience with other groups.

Table 2.5: A comparison of the intended outcomes

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
The overall aim is empowerment.	Action research is undertaken to improve effectiveness and increase productivity in organisations.	<p>The overall goal is developing the processes of collaboration, mobilisation, empowerment, self realisation and solidarity. (Schurinck 1998:414)</p> <p>Participatory action research is a qualitative and alternative research process with the aim of creating knowledge, awareness, interactional learning, transformation and empowerment of the participants.</p>

Participatory research	Action research	Participatory action research
<p>Conchelos in Selener (1997: 42 - 44) identified process and final outcomes.</p> <p>Process outcomes are changes that can take place during the various stages, whilst final outcomes are those results that are more likely to be identified at the end of the research project.</p> <p>Final outcomes can include organisational change and development, social change, global consciousness, changes in technical knowledge and skills, dissemination of the experience, and changes at the personal level.</p> <p>Process outcomes such as shifts in power, learning that takes place, gains in cognitive knowledge and changes in feelings and opinions are possibilities.</p>	<p>Shani in Selener (1997: 85 - 86) notes that action research has the potential to bring about change that will lead to more optimal achievement of the organisation's goal and mission.</p> <p>A second major outcome is the improvement of the quality of work life.</p> <p>The third major outcome is the creation of a learning system due to the increased capacity among members to mobilise existing internal resources.</p> <p>The final outcome, the creation of knowledge, refers to both practical and scientific knowledge generated and applied to bring about change in the organisation.</p>	<p>Schenck (1998:197 - 201), describes the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It presents people as researchers identifying their own problems and generating solutions, rather than as subjects. - The focus is on change and growth through the process. -The process aims at empowerment, democracy and freedom of people within their context. - Learning and the generating of knowledge. -Creating and construing local theory. -Sustainability.

2.4 THE INTERVENTION IDENTIFICATION PROCESS (IIP)

The Intervention Identification Process was developed by Johan Strümpher in 1994 as a systems problem-solving approach. Systems thinking is used as basis for understanding problem solving as a process of group inquiry. He used this process of inquiry in the investigation of the Helderberg aircraft accident in the late 1987.

Action research is an integral part of the learning organisation and provides the vehicle for group learning by means of participative inquiry. The intervention inquiry process is a useful model embedded in systems thinking which thereby creates the opportunity for duerto-learning.

Reflection without action can contribute to knowledge building, but not to testing of knowledge and thus not to problem solving or change. Action without reflection, ignores the importance of feedback and evaluation and cannot provide a basis to measure successful problem-solving/learning.

Paulo Freire as quoted by Hope, Timmel & Hodzi (1984: 11) says:

"True reflection leads to action but that action will only be a genuine praxis if there is critical reflection on its consequences."

For each level of knowledge a different mode/method of inquiry unleashes knowledge on different aspects of a system. The IIP utilizes analysis (taking things apart) to gain information on the structure of the systems under inquiry; flow-tracing (sequencing events or impact) to gain insight about the processes of the systems; synthesis (connecting things to look at the whole) to gain understanding about the function of the systems and systems dynamics modelling to gain wisdom about the regulation of the system.

2.4.1 Theoretical assumptions

This process is an organisational problem solving method based on systems thinking as a process of group inquiry which supports participative group learning. The following theoretical assumptions underly the IIP as a problem-solving method:

- Problem solving requires a mind shift which is a prerequisite for transformation.
- Learning requires a cyclic inquiry process with problem solving also following a process of inquiry.
- Implementation of inquiry requires a shared mental model for participants.
- Group learning provides for shared understanding.
- Problem-solving should be participative group inquiry based on a learning process.
- Systems thinking provides a shared mental model that can facilitate mind shifts (Strümpher 1994-1997: 9).

2.4.2 Intended outcome

The IIP is described by Strümpher(1994 - 1997:10) as an outline of a "participative process of finding out what should be done to improve a particular situation. The purpose of the IIP is described as a way

"To establish which systems need to be managed, what their respective performance measures need to be, and which actions need to be taken to improve these systems" (Strümpher 1994 1997: 11).

The primary outcome of the IIP is to identify interventions to improve the overall functioning of the organisation. The secondary outcomes could include:

- Shared understanding of problems.
- Understanding of dysfunction of systems' processes.
- Developing alignment about objectives and measurements of success.
- A shared understanding of the cyclic influence of factors on the system.
- Understanding and agreement on actions (Strümpher 1994 - 1997: 11).

Problem solving is a learning process and should follow the cyclical process which is similar to the action-research cycle of action/reflection.

2.4.3 **Steps in the intervention identification process**

The following steps in the intervention identification process is described (Strümpher 1994 - 1997: 13 - 59):

- **Group formation** - The group should be a cross section of experience and insight.
- **Group facilitation** should enhance goal achievement through active participation and reflection.
- **Problem analysis** - The underlying questions/problems are determined as widely as possible by means of brainstorming and the Affinity technique. An understanding of the mutual cyclic causality can be gained through the fishbone technique. The

primary or driving problems can be identified by analysing the interrelationship through the Digraph technique.

- Selecting the system(s) in focus - Determine the system(s) which contains a whole cluster of problems as the system(s) in focus.
- Stakeholder analysis and rating - Identify those persons, groups or organisation with an interest in what you do. Describe their expectations as the organisational effectiveness is the extent to which these expectations are met.
- Rating of stakeholders to indicate their importance is based on power (the ability to force you to act in a certain manner); satisfaction (degree to which their expectations could be met in future); certainty (basis of certainty regarding the accuracy of the description of stakeholder behaviour); impact (degree of potential impact of stakeholder behaviour) and influence (the ability to influence and change the thinking and expectations of the stakeholder).
- Multiple viewpoint description of system - Develop descriptions of the system from the perspective of the stakeholder.
- Key performance measures selection - Generate measures of performance as required by the stakeholders based on efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness. Select the appropriate measures of performance for the system in focus.
- Systems Dynamics Modelling - Determine primary co-producers of measures of performance. Develop a causal loop diagram to indicate the interaction and influences, which can be directly in the same direction or in the opposite direction.

- **Determine Intervention - Determine high leverage (second order) interventions that will change the system in focus. Explain how this change can lead to improvement.**

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter the theoretical paradigm for the research was discussed. It focussed briefly on the eco-systemic perspective model and how it describes transformation or change. It further focussed on the concept of a learning organisation and organisations as learning systems with the core themes of “embracing error” for continual improvement and the co-evolvement of learning. It provided the theoretical necessity for an organisation like the DSW, which is a part or subsystem of a larger organisation, the DOD, to find the “goodness of fit”.

It then described the link between participatory research and action research. It provided a theoretical comparison between the components of research; underlying assumptions, the role of the researcher, the research methodology and the intended outcome. It attempted to integrate these concepts into a theoretical description of participative action research as it was utilised in this research.

The chapter also provided a brief overview on the IIP, which was applied in the research, as a systems approach to organisational problem-solving to mobilise transformation in the organisation.

CHAPTER 3

**TRANSFORMATION/CHANGE OF THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT IN
GAUTENG MEDICAL COMMAND****3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the initiator provides the research findings linked to each of the phases as described in chapter 2. The main focus will, however, be a punctuation of three action-reflection cycles in the process of problem definition and analysis, systems dynamics modelling in the data analysis phase and finally the identifying and planning of interventions.

3.2 PROCESS

The process will be described according to the integrated phases of participatory action research and the IIP as a model for cooperative inquiry and problem solving as presented in table 2.1. Throughout the phases the action-reflection cycles within the larger reflection-action cycle of participatory research based on understanding and action will be illustrated.

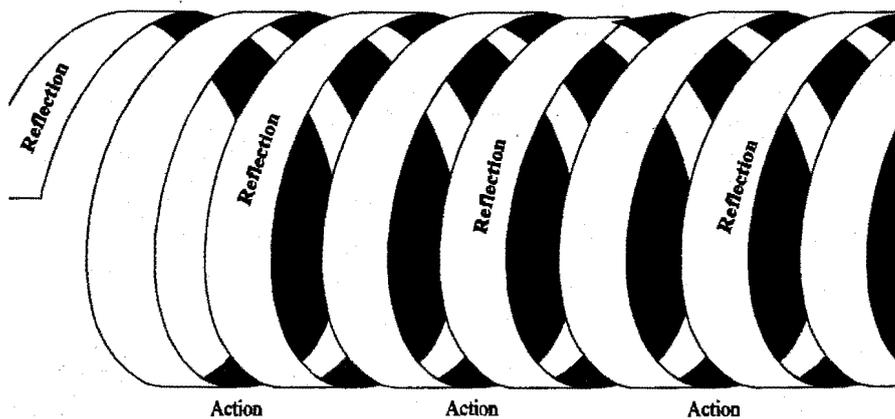


Figure 3.1 The action-reflection cycles

3.2.1 Entry and group formation

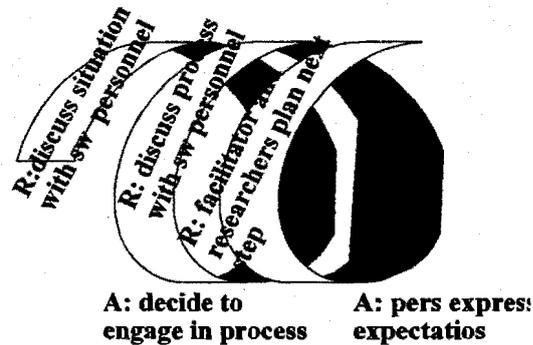


Figure 3.2 The action-reflection cycles for the entry and group formation phase

The point of entry for this research is punctuated from where the researcher and the social workers engaged in reflective thinking and discussion on their observations of the “fit” between the services of the DSW and the changing DOD and the changing client system. In preparation it was discussed with the Director Social Work. A reflective discussion was also held with the personnel developer, who was contracted as the facilitator. The IIP method had already been selected as the model to guide the process due to its “fit” with systems thinking which was the shared mental model, as well as with the learning organisation that the department claimed to be. It also aligned with the participative management style.

It was important to engage in this process while it was still possible to engage the social workers in a participative manner. The transformation process in the SANDF usually followed a top-down approach, which is disempowering. It was an opportunity to proactively engage in a process to find our “fit” with our environment. The initiator’s role as co-researcher was important because of the management role she fulfilled. Another facilitator, a member of the social work personnel, levelled the playing field so that the initiator became a participant on equal footing with the other participants.

The involvement of social work personnel started in May 1997 at a general personnel meeting. The 29 social workers attending the meeting were challenged to embark on a process where they could determine the direction of the department and thereby alleviate their own discomfort with the existing situation.

The social workers were divided in four groups, based on representivity. The representivity was based on years of experience and functional post levels in the department. Each group consisted of 7 - 8 social workers. They were provided with an opportunity to express their expectations and requirements for working together.

The main focus of these activities was to motivate all personnel to participate in the process as it was felt essential to involve the whole group in the initial phase to ensure commitment and create a common understanding of the process. The participation of the whole group was essential as a way of recognizing that their knowledge plays an important role in participative action research. Another goal with the participation was the start of an empowering process whereby the ownership for the process was given to the participants who could develop the process according to the group needs.

3.2.2 Problem definition and analysis

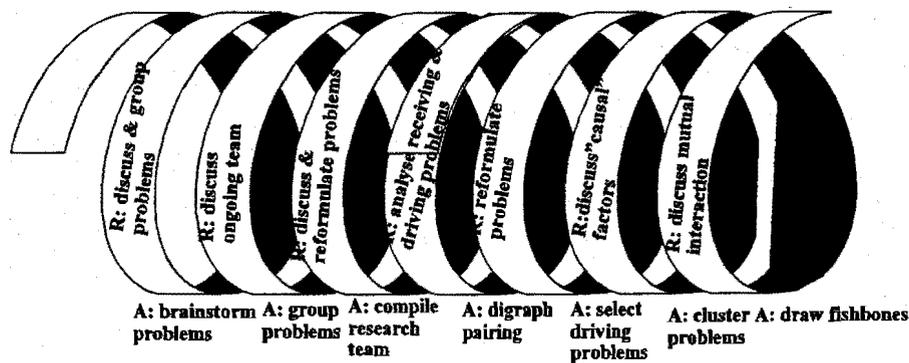


Figure 3.3 Action-reflection cycles for the problem definition and analysis phase

The first action was brainstorming through which the group could identify as wide a range possible of issues/problems influencing the social work service. Each member was asked to formulate seven problems that they experienced in rendering a social work service. This resulted in 204 problems. Through reflection which involved group discussion the group could group and re-describe 21 groups of themes. The reformulation had to include all the aspects of the individual problems and provide a clear description of each category.

In the next reflection-action cycle the group discussed the composition of the research group to proceed. The group was decreased to a voluntary participation according to the initial criteria of representivity.

The group then engaged in four reflection-action cycles as what could be termed the analysis phase. In the first cycle they engaged in reflective discussions on the relationships among identified problems which culminated in the Interrelation Digraph to illustrate the interrelationships of the problems. Each of the problems were compared pair- wise with the others to select the primary or driving problems and to drop the consequential or receiving problems. Already at this stage "new knowledge" was gained by the group in terms of the process and techniques used in the IIP. Further learning took place in gaining an understanding on how issues/problems were perceived by the social work personnel.

The second cycle culminated in the selection of eight driving problems that would be the focus of further attention. The rationale was that when driving problems are diminished, the receiving/resulting problems will diminish automatically. In the follow-up cycle they rephrased the driving problems through a process of consensus to eight clusters of problems using the affinity technique.

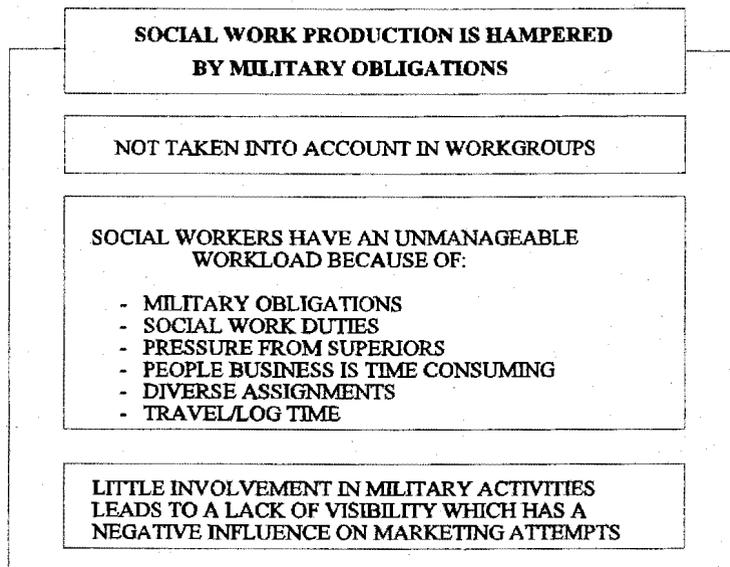


Figure 3.4 Affinity diagram of driving problem 1 with its group of problems

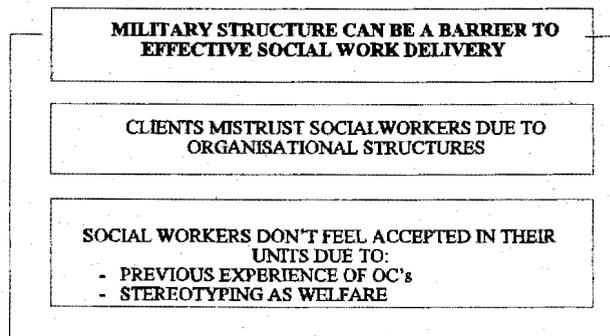


Figure 3.5 Affinity diagram of driving problem 2 with its group of problems

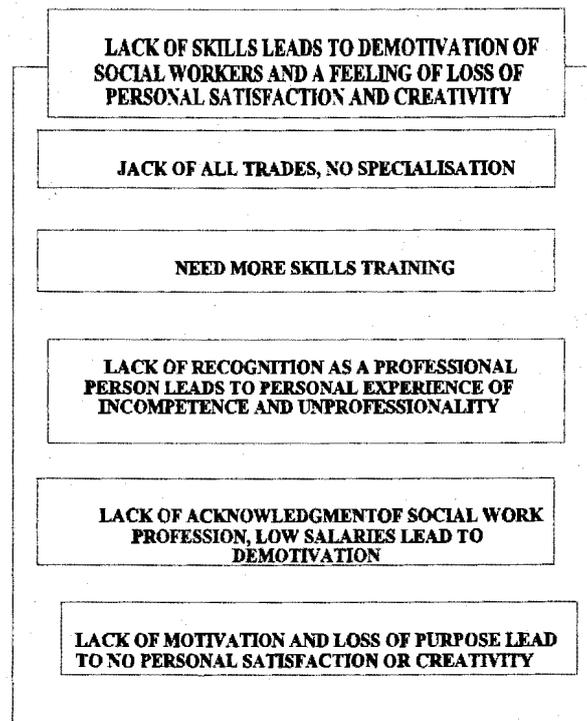


Figure 3.6 Affinity diagram of driving problem 3 with its group of problems

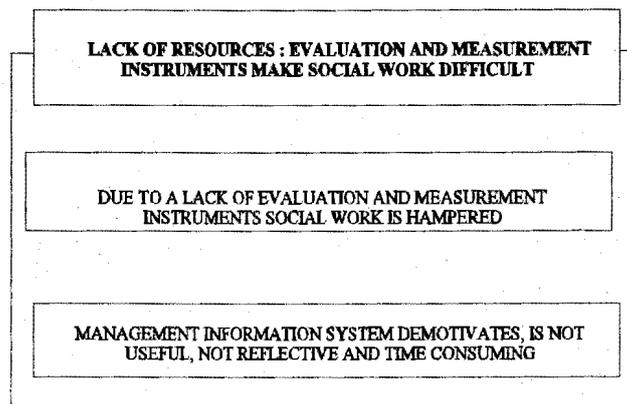


Figure 3.7 Affinity diagram of driving problem 4 with its group of problems

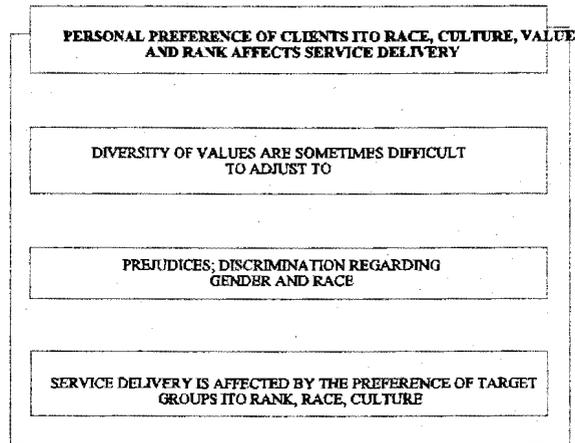


Figure 3.8 Affinity diagram of driving problem 5 with its group of problems

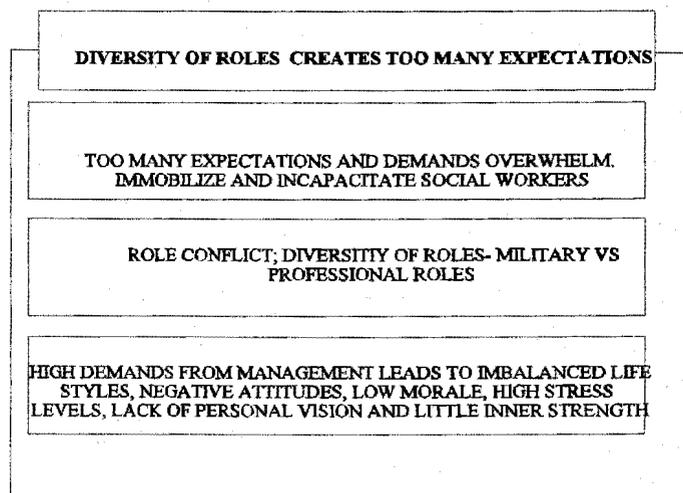


Figure 3.9 Affinity diagram of driving problem 6 with its group of problems

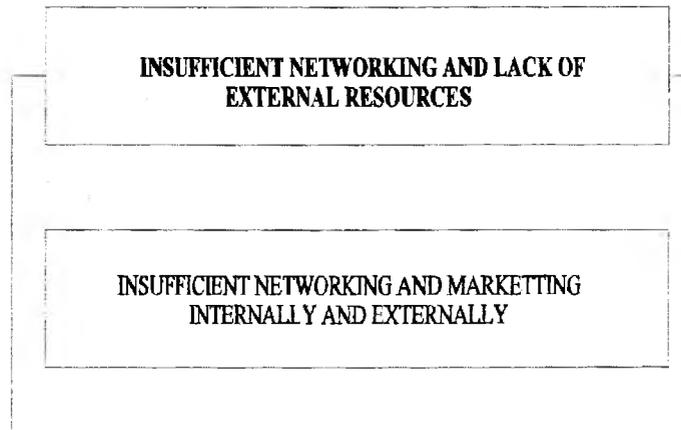


Figure 3.10 Affinity diagram of driving problem 7 with its group of problems

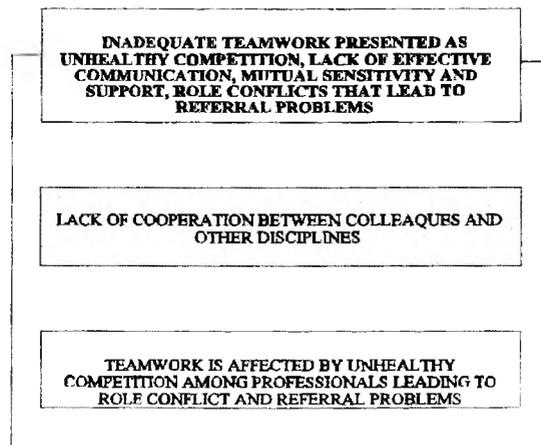


Figure 3.11 Affinity diagram of driving problem 8 with its group of problems

The punctuation of the interrelationship and the categorising of driving and receiving problems were merely a punctuation to provide a workable direction. This was, however, in line with the principle of equifinality, according to which the solution to a problem can start at any punctuation. These punctuations thus provided a basic point of departure for further exploration. It was important to constantly remind the research group of the circular causality as part of the systems mental model. Mutual interactions/influences had to be considered to maintain a picture of the whole.

The group was then divided into two sub-groups for a reflection on the “causal factors” of these problems. They then illustrated the analysis of four problems by means of the Fishbone technique in order to look at the causal factors of the problems. This also created an understanding of the interrelationships and mutual interactions between the problems.

PRODUCTIVITY

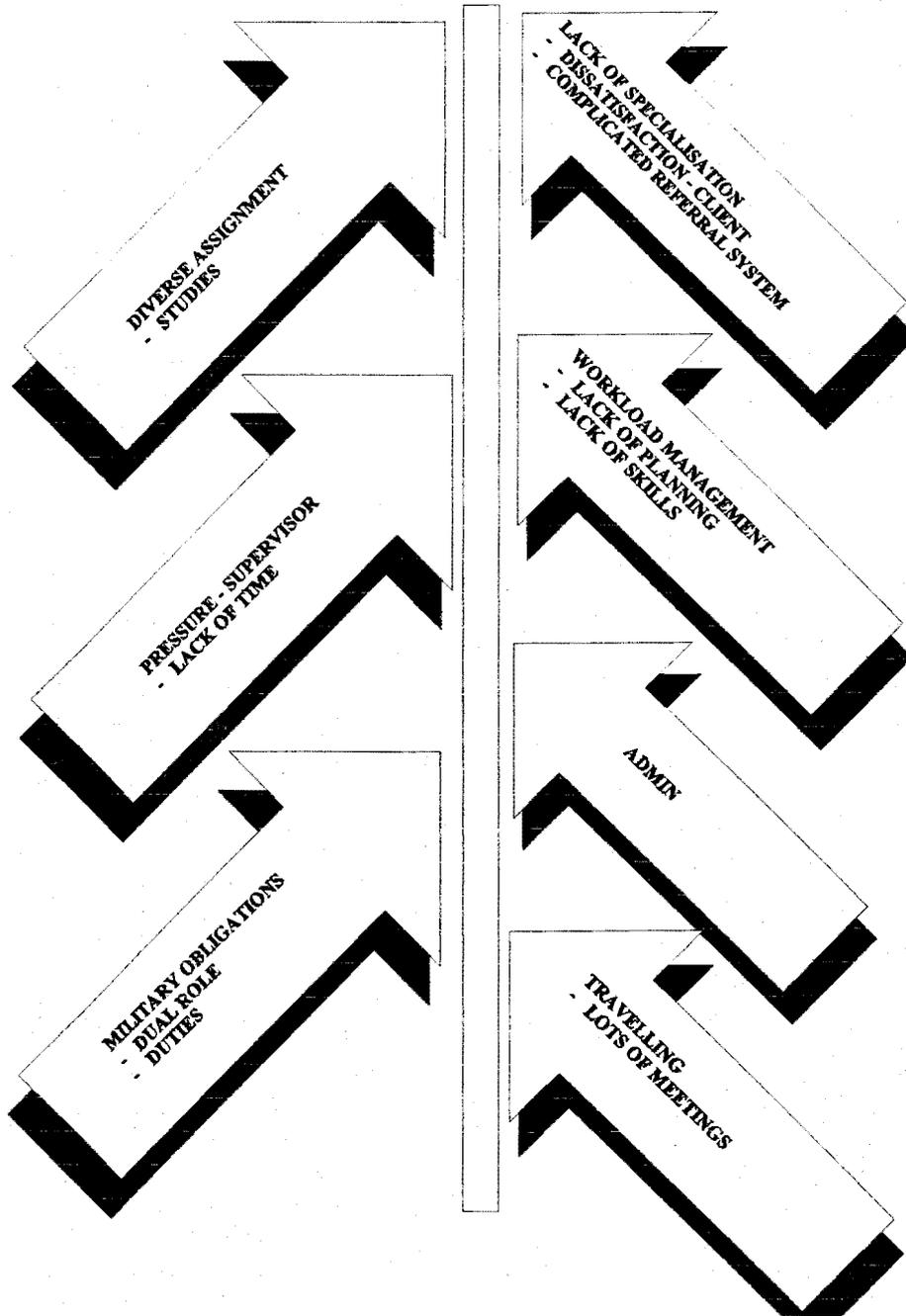


Figure 3.12 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 1

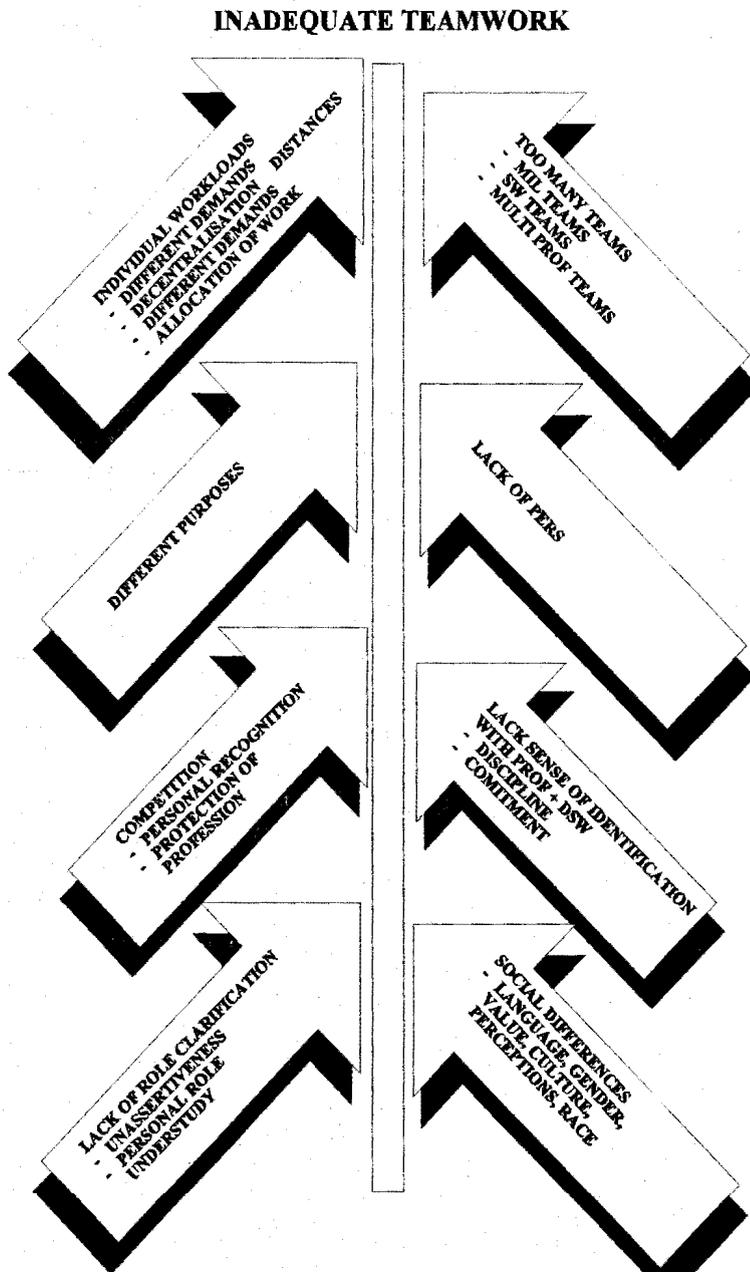
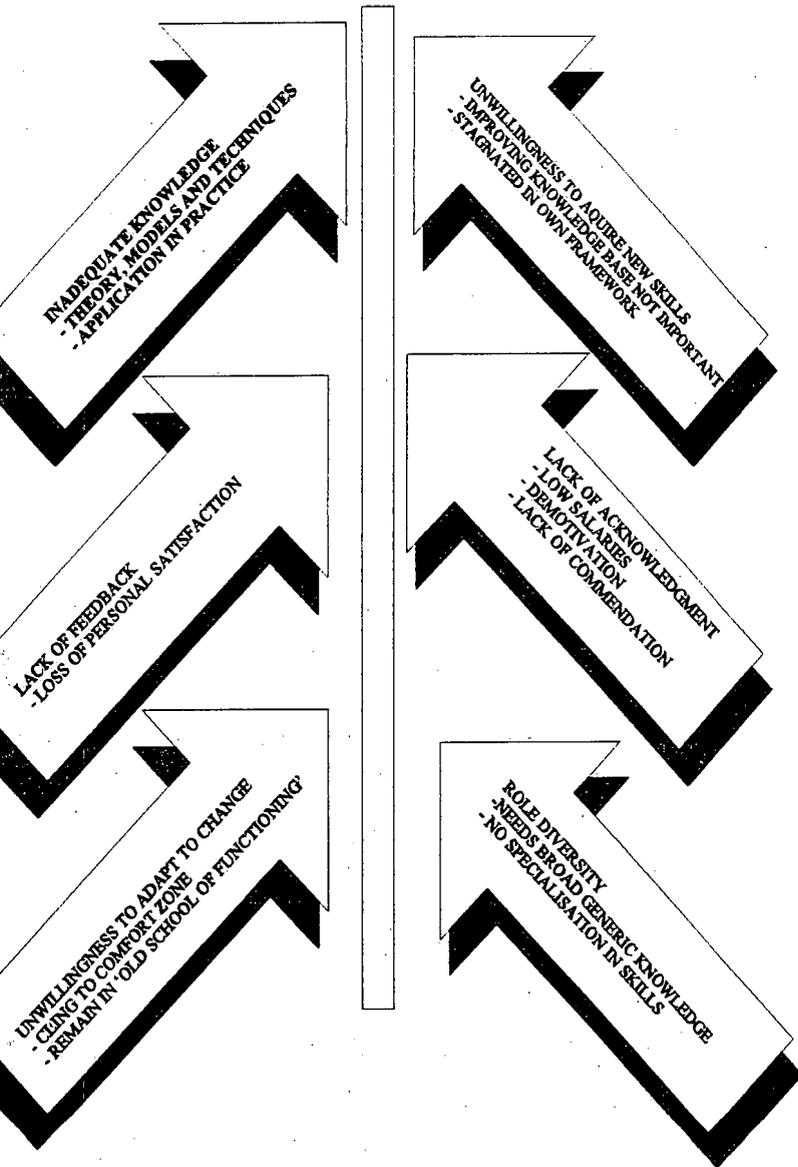


Figure 3.13 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 2

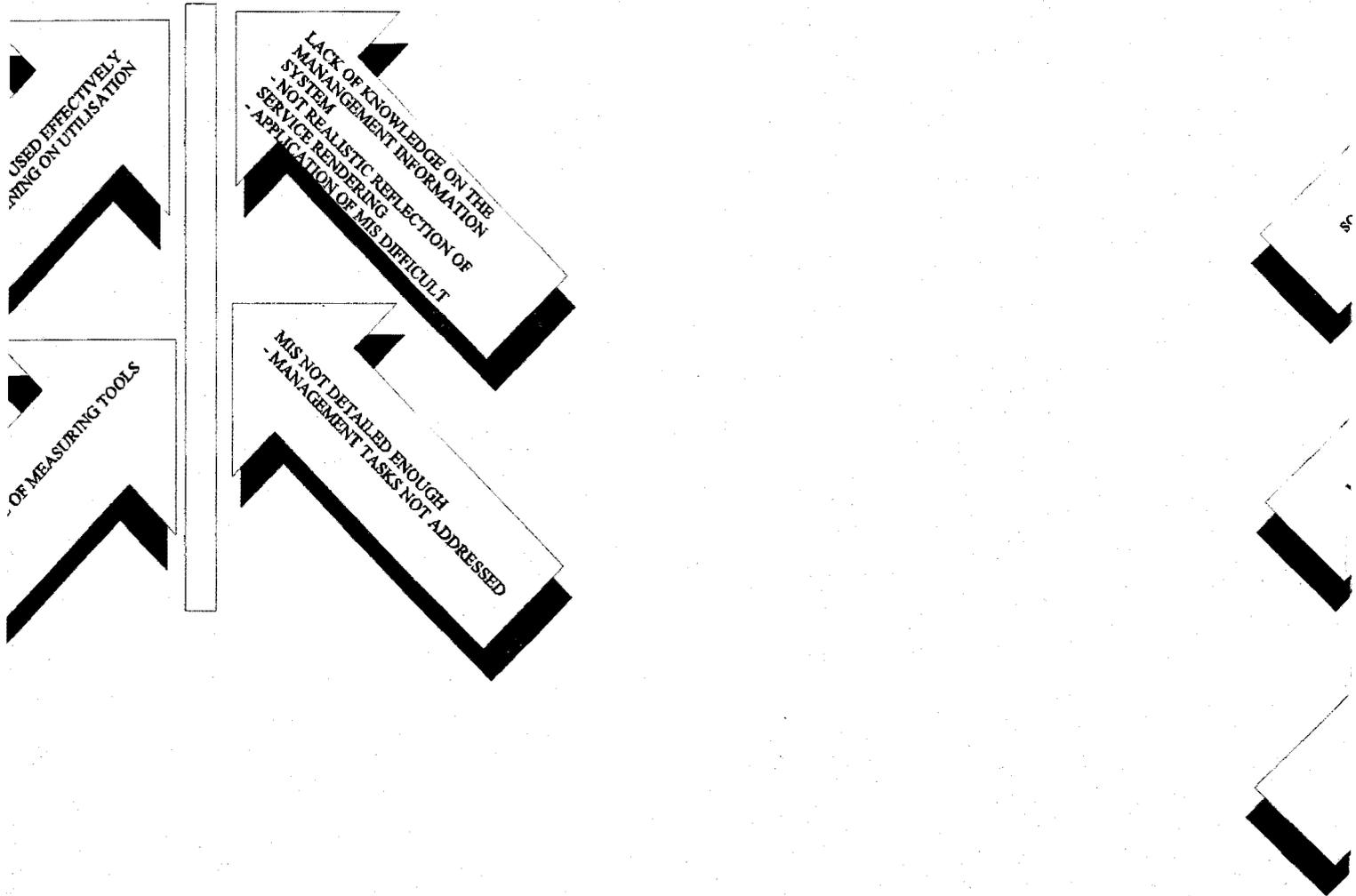
LACK OF SKILLS - DEMOTIVATION



fishbone diagram for driving problem 3

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT RESOURCES

MILI



ram for driving problem 4

Figure 3.16 Fishbone

MILITARY STRUCTURE A BARRIER TO SERVICE RENDERING

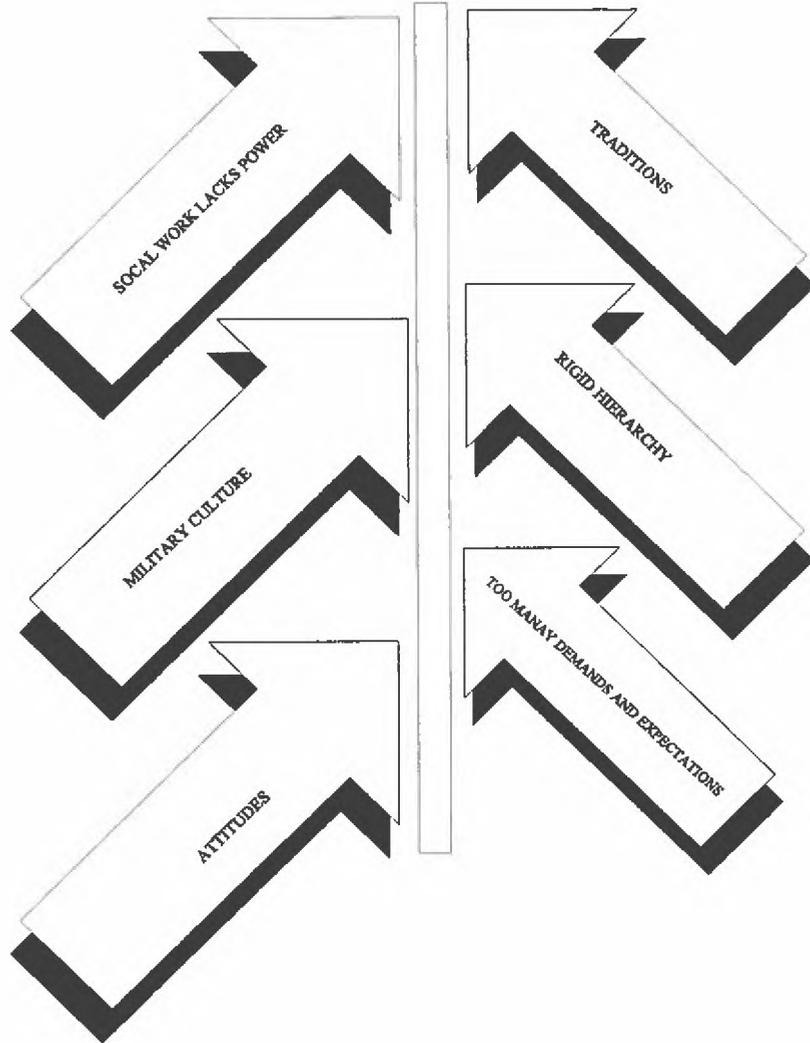


Figure 3.16 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 5

INSUFFICIENT NETWORKING AND RESOURCES

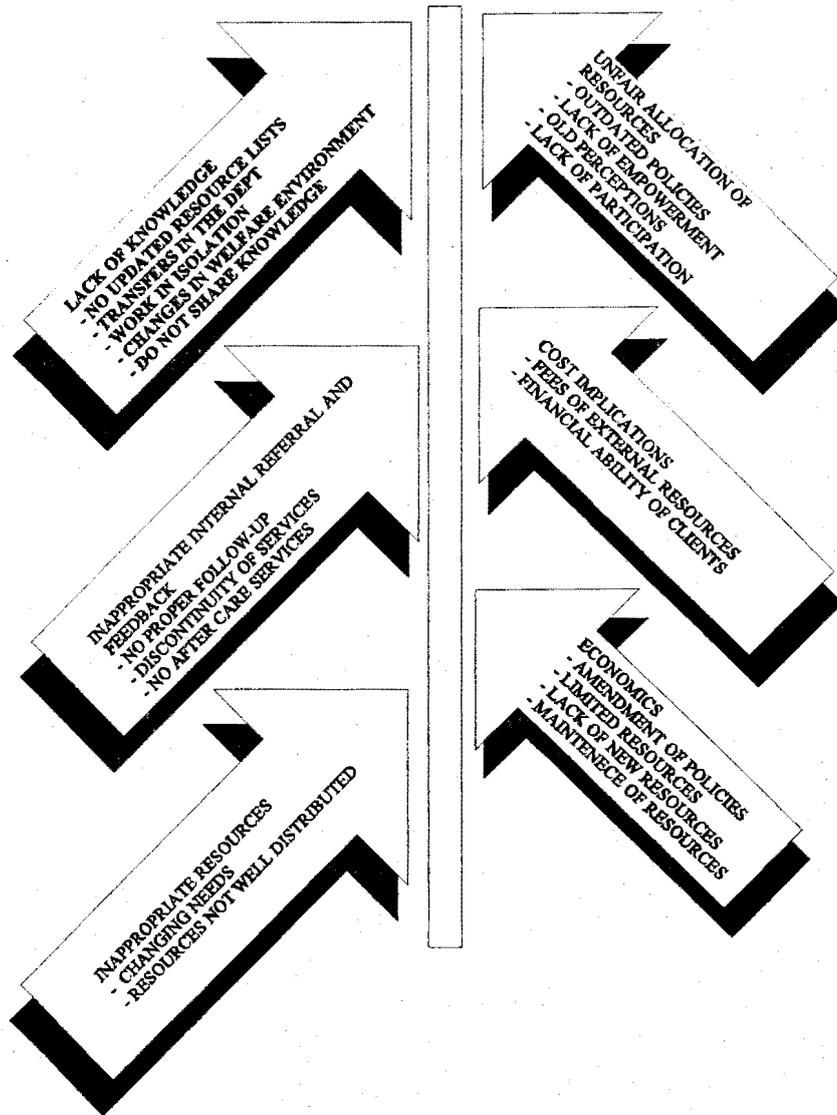


Figure 3.17 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 6

PERSONAL PREFERENCES OF CLIENT ITO RACE, CULTURE, VALUE AND RANK AFFECT SERVICES

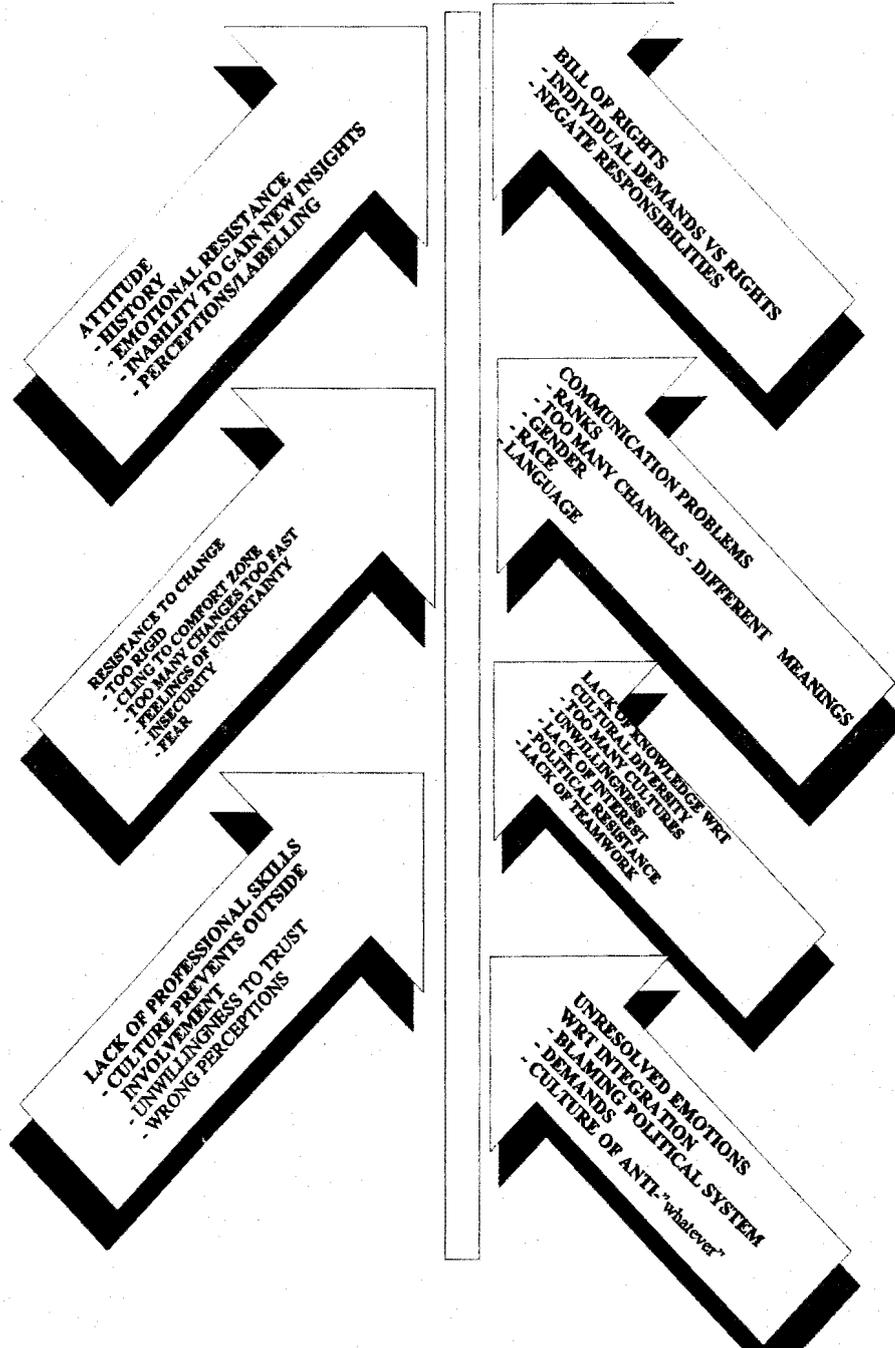


Figure 3.18 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 7

DIVERSITY OF ROLES - INCONSISTENCY OF SERVICE DELIVERY

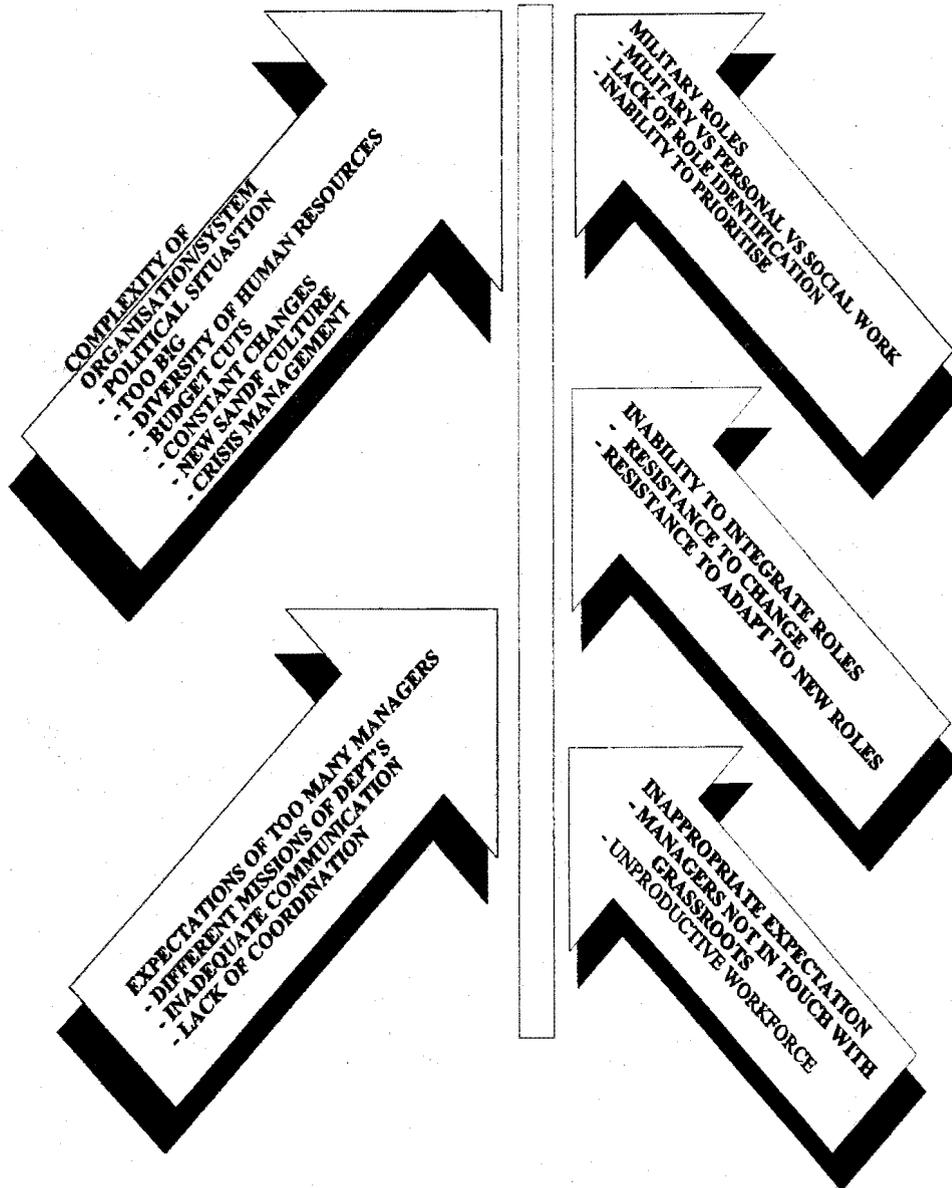


Figure 3.19 Fishbone diagram for driving problem 8

The process of problem analysis was detailed and ensured a clear understanding of the problem. It also provided for creating consensual meaning and problem description. The group was now totally involved and committed to the research process, which enhanced the creativity of the alternatives.

The application of systems thinking in the IIP was becoming clearer through the application of the techniques and although the techniques identified causality, it became visually clear that the causality was mutual and circular.

3.2.3 Data analysis through multiple descriptions

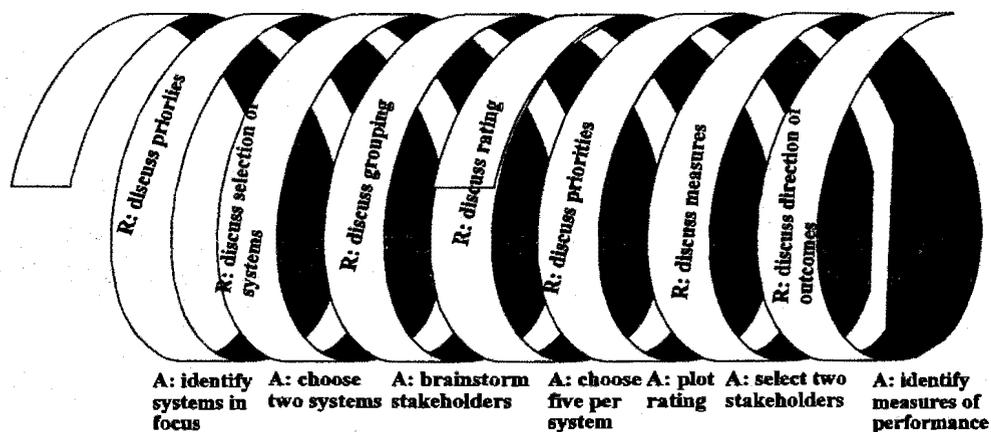


Figure 3.20 Action-reflection cycles for the data analysis phase

3.2.3.1 Identify systems in focus

During the first cycle the research group discussed their needs and priorities for change based on all the data collected through their participation. They were then able to identify the system(s) that contain complete sets of problem clusters. These identified systems became the system(s) in focus. The rationale was that messy/unbounded problems cannot

be solved, but only managed. The only way to diminish such problems is to improve the functioning of the system that contains them. The research team finalised a choice of two systems for immediate focus based on their expectation of which systems could impact the most on the others or could ensure the expected outcomes.

The following systems in focus were identified:

- *Performance management system.*
- *System that reconciles professional and military roles.*
- *Training and development system.*
- *Service delivery system.*
- *Co-ordinating and networking system of multi-professional teams.*
- *Management information system.*

Two systems selected for continued process :

- *Performance management system, including management information system.*
- *Service delivery system.*

This process correlated with the definition of double-loop learning. It did not only address the problem, but the structures and viewpoints underlying the organisational functioning. This phase was still part of the analysis but also started the phase of action planning as it indicated the further focus of attention.

3.2.3.2 Stakeholder analysis

During the next action-reflection cycle the groups listed all possible stakeholders of the two selected systems in focus by means of brainstorming. These stakeholders were grouped together and reduced after discussion to not more than five per system.

A stakeholder rating was done after reflection on the relative importance of stakeholders in terms of power, satisfaction, impact and influence. This resulted in the selection of the two most important stakeholders for each system in focus.

Identified stakeholders by means of brainstorming and rating based on power, satisfaction, impact and influence:

- ***Stakeholders for performance management: DSW and SANDF (transformation and finance).***
- ***Stakeholders for service delivery system: Unit target groups and Social work management.***

During this phase the focus shifted to the direction of the planning of interventions. A learning organisation must consider its environment and the stakeholders in that environment. The organisation must find alignment with this environment, especially in a service-rendering organisation where the primary question should be what the needs of the stakeholder are and how these needs can be met.

3.2.3.3 Selection of key performance measures

The group commenced with a discussion of the probable measures of performance, (success) which each of the identified stakeholders would utilize, to rate the system in

focus. Each group finally had to identify 2-3 measures of performance for each stakeholder.

Through reflection on these measures of performance the group came to the conclusion that the same measures of performance were applicable to stakeholders of both systems. This resulted in the selection of two measures of performance per system.

The key measures of performance provided a definite guideline to an end state. It built in criteria to evaluate the success of interventions to be planned. It ensured that the planning of the intervention or action plan focussed on the requirements and expectations of the stakeholders.

3.2.3.4 System dynamics modelling

The group developed a list of co-producers (contributing factors) for each chosen measure of performance. They first had to brainstorm a list of factors, through discussion reflect on these factors and then cluster them into no more than five contributing factors for each measure of performance linked with the selected systems in focus.

Table 3.1 Key measures of performance and contributing factors for each system in focus

System in focus	Key measure of performance	Contributing factors
Performance management	Effective management information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper MIS • Effective management of time • Accurate recording • Positive attitude towards MIS • Utilization of the MIS by stakeholders

System in focus	Key measure of performance	Contributing factors
	Happy and well functioning social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good training • Sources of appreciation • Use of knowledge and expertise • Esprit de Corps • Sense of purpose
Service delivery system	Contribution towards organisational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Resources • Partnership • Skills • Attitude
	Level of outcome achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management skills • Client satisfaction • Diversity of roles • Involvement • Cost effectiveness

They then arranged the factors into a simple flow model explaining how these factors could influence the outcome of the respective performance measure. This was done by prioritising factors in terms of importance by deciding which factors most directly influence the measure of performance, which second, etc. A simple causal loop diagram was developed for each set of co-producers and measures of performance showing how these factors interact to produce the specific result.

They also completed loops by defining tangible and intangible consequences deriving from the improvement in the measure of performance. They had to identify connections between identified consequences and causal factors.

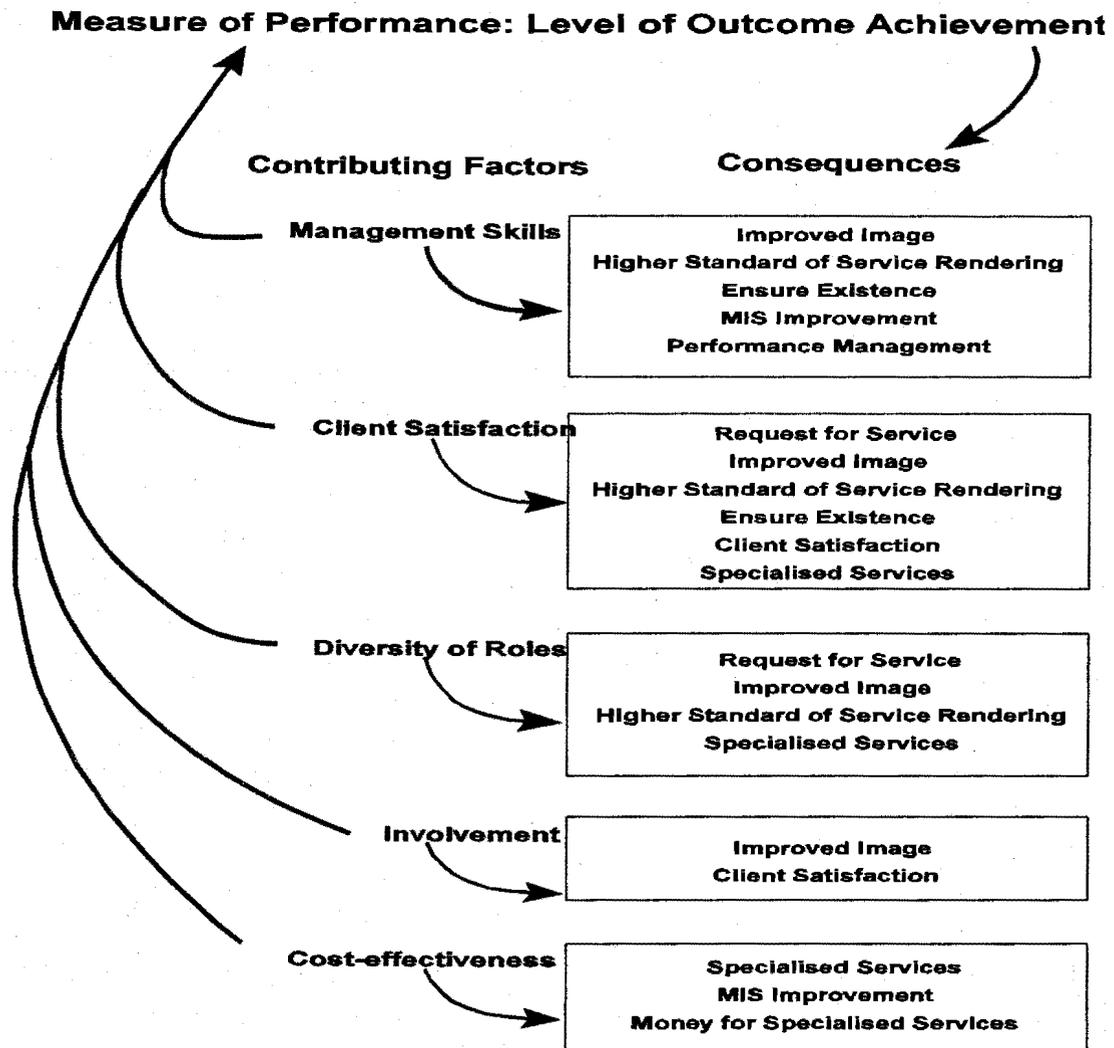


Figure 3.21 Interconnections between causal factors, measures of performance and consequences

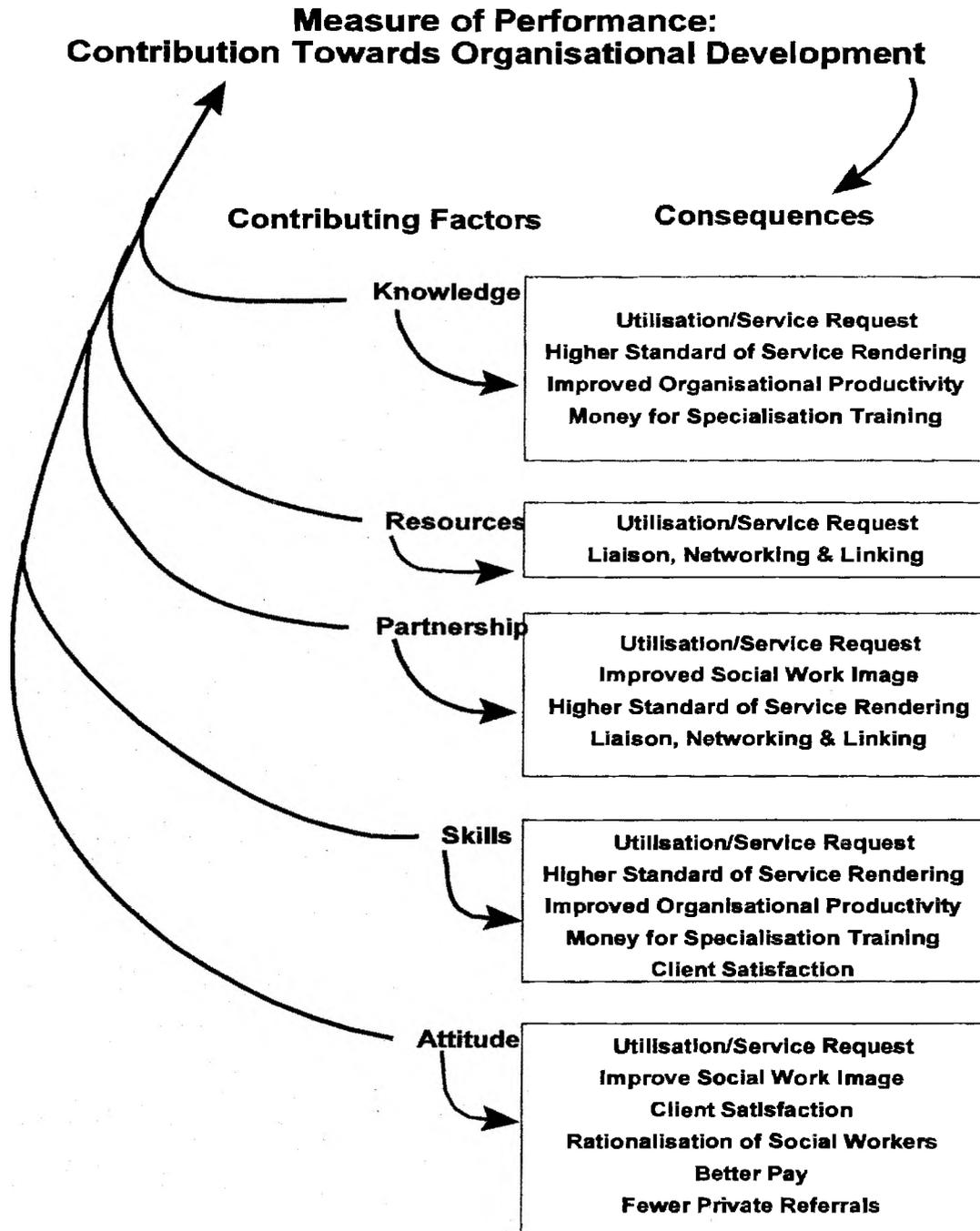


Figure 3.22 Interconnections between causal factors, measures of performance and consequences

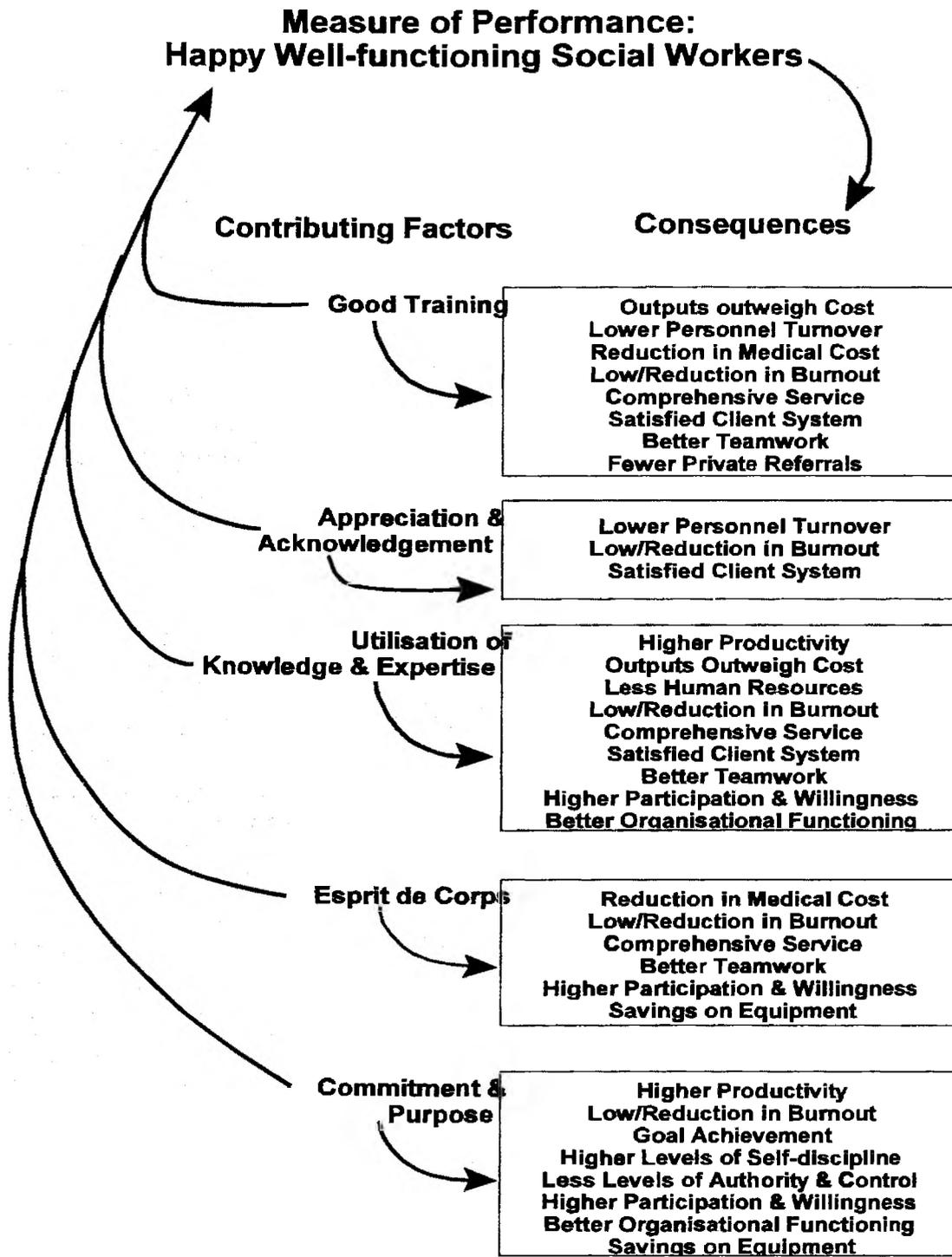


Figure 3.23 Interconnections between causal factors, measures of performance and consequences

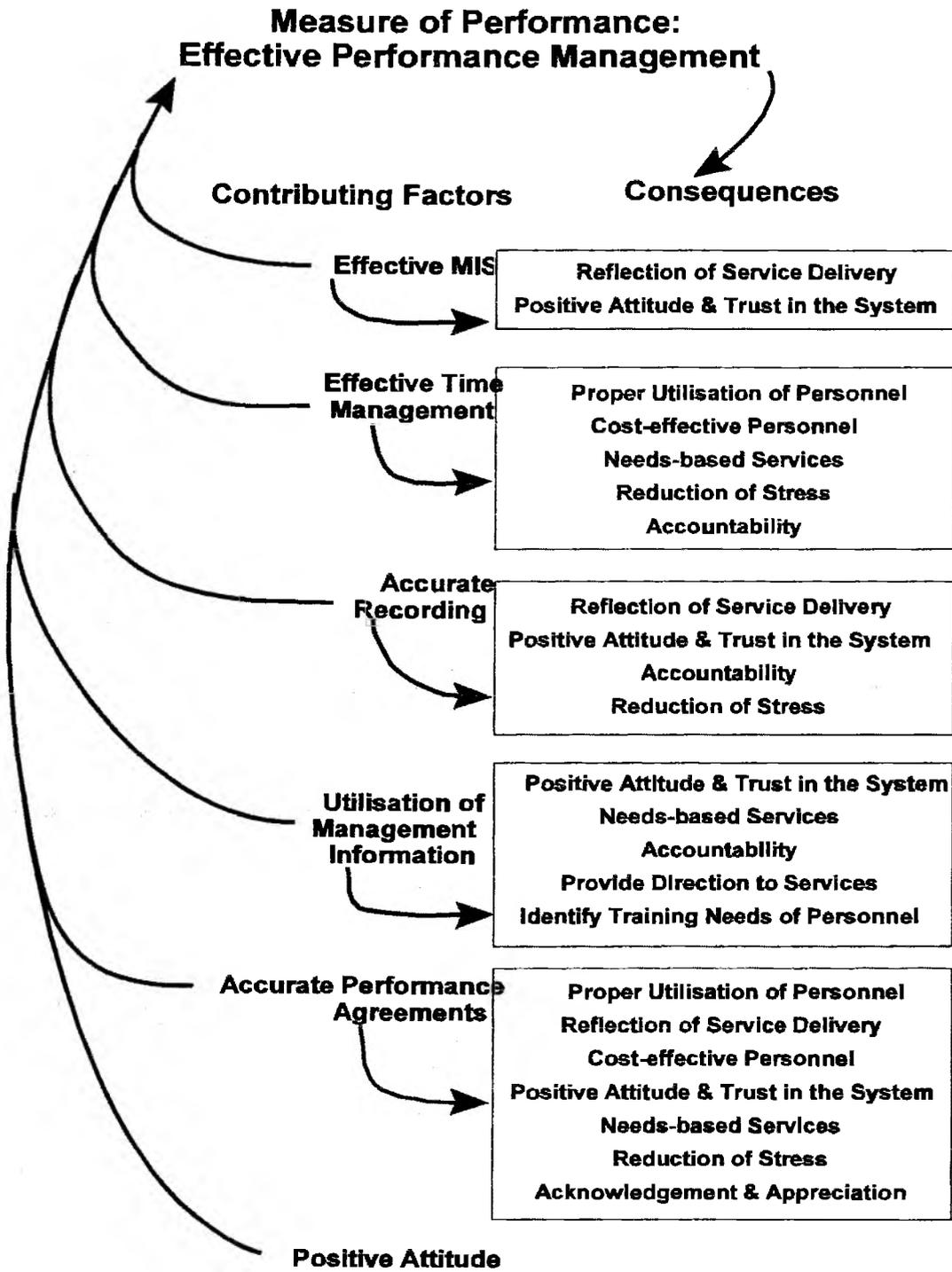


Figure 3.24 Interconnections between causal factors, measures of performance and consequences

The link among the measures of performance were then indicated by integrating the flow diagrams.

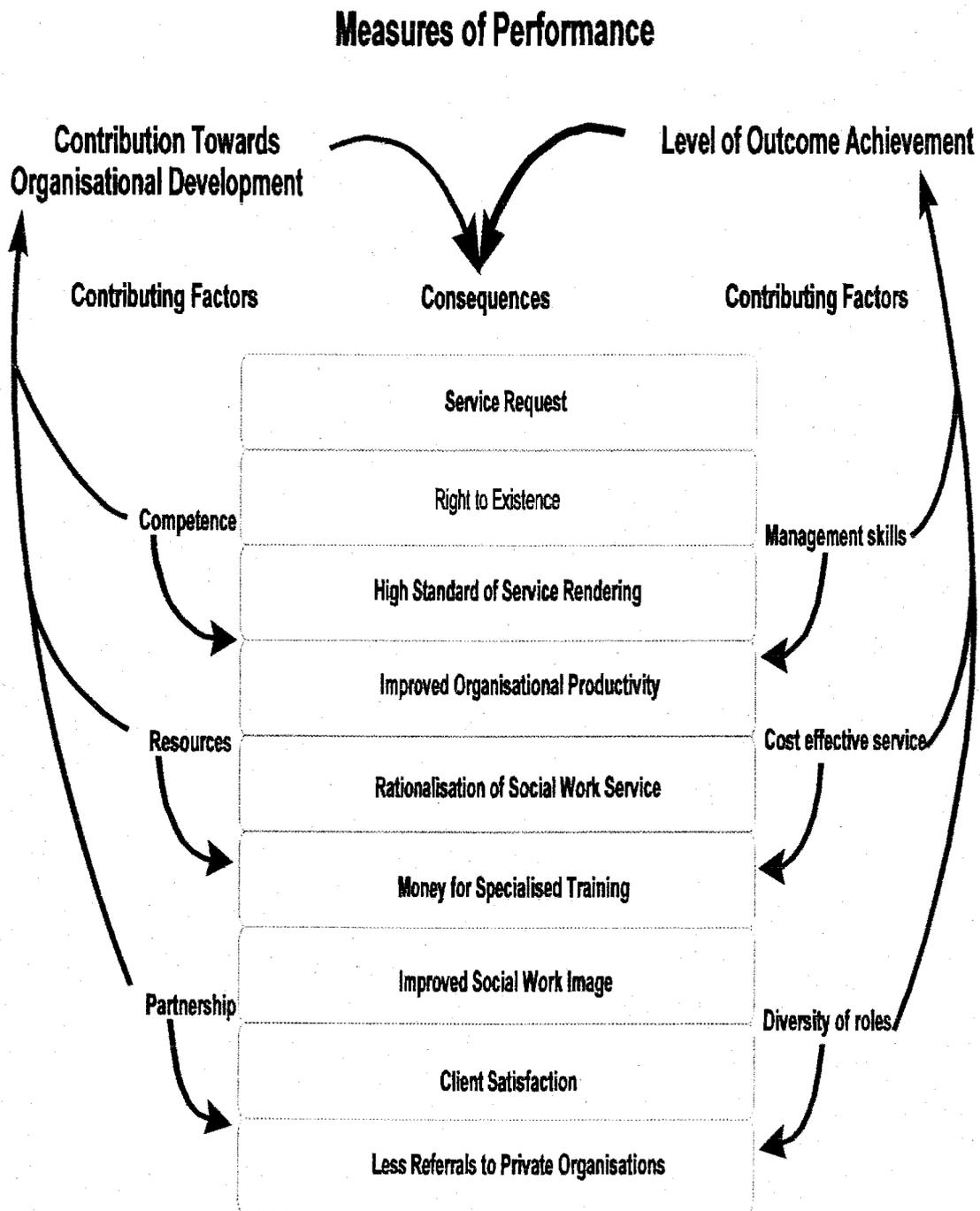


Figure 3.25 Interconnections between contribution to organisational development and levels of outcome achievement as measures of performance

Measures of Performance

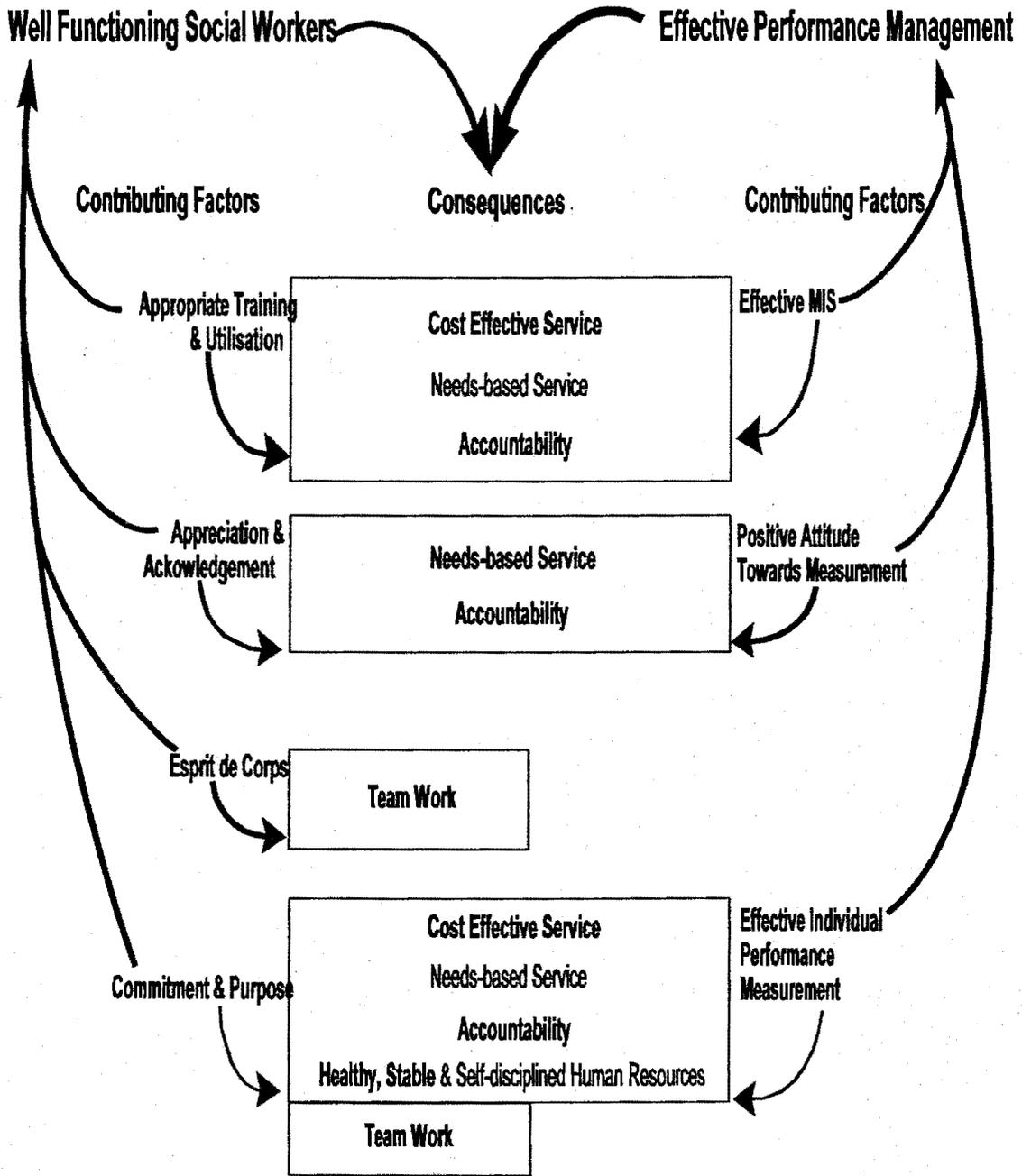


Figure 3.26 Interconnections between happy well functioning social workers and effective performance management as measures of performance.

This was the phase where the causal explanations of the systems and the interconnectedness of systems and sub-systems were most clearly illustrated. It is a tool that can help building the mental model of systems thinking in organisations.

3.2.4 Identification and planning of intervention.

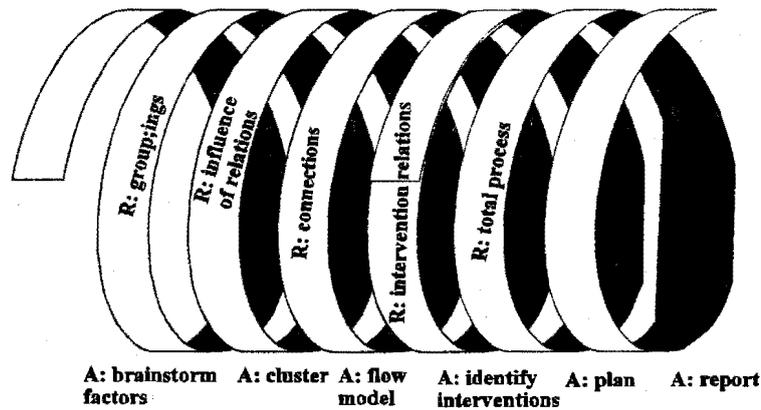


Figure 3.27 *The action-reflection cycles for the identification and planning of intervention phase*

The reflection of the group on the connections displayed by the flow diagrams, enabled them to determine 2-3 high leverage interventions that could change the performance of the system in focus by using the system dynamics model developed in the previous stage. They had to motivate their interventions by explaining, using the systems dynamics model developed, how these interventions would lead to an improvement in the measures of performance they selected.

Interventions determined:**● *Performance management system:***

- ◆ *Effective personal performance and work satisfaction measurement.*
- ◆ *Effective management information system.*

● *Service delivery system:*

- ◆ *Model for team functioning linked with interest and capabilities of social workers.*
- ◆ *Military practice model.*
- ◆ *Training/personnel development model.*

The model for team functioning linked with the interest and capabilities of social workers was selected as the first intervention strategy to address the service delivery system.

The implementation plan was discussed with the whole group of social work personnel of the SWD at GT Med Comd to get commitment and permission to proceed. It was also discussed with the Director Social Work, the Officer Commanding GT Med Comd and other stakeholders. All information was distributed to the other Social Work departments in the other Commands.

The planning confirmed the notion of equifinality. Although it was decided to start with one intervention, several processes developed concurrently so that ultimately the

service delivery system, the performance measurement system, the training and development system, the management information system and the co-ordinating and networking of multi-professional teams were addressed simultaneously.

3.2.5 Intervention implementation

3.2.5.1 Service delivery system

- *Model for team functioning.* The total group of social work personnel embarked on a process of determining the needs for social work teams in different regions and the requirements to which they must adhere. This was followed by a process of linking the capabilities and preferences of the social work personnel to the needs of specific teams and units. The teams were established through a process of job rotation and job enhancement. A team coordinator was allocated to each team. This process was finalised by December 1997.
- *Military Practice Model.* A workgroup of social worker supervisors, trained at a supervisor's course of the DSW, was tasked to develop a military social work practice model. This model was taught to all SWO's and their feedback was integrated in a revised model. The model is now an integral part of social work practice in the D SW and forms part of the criteria for evaluating individual and team performance.
- *Training/personnel development model.* A proposed model was developed by supervisors and managers to integrate all elements of personnel development. The promulgation of the new Code of Remuneration for Social Service personnel and the development of the Personnel Management Code for Military Social Work personnel that was promulgated in the DOD in July 2001 provides the guidelines for such a model which has clear guidelines for training and development.

3.2.5.2 Performance management system

- *Management information system (MIS)*. The existing system frustrated most social workers as it did not incorporate the occupational social work approach or the military social work practice model. A workgroup, consisting of representatives from the SWD, GT Med Comd and other units, engaged in the development of a MIS which would address the needs of both social work and management regarding management information. This team was pulled into a larger project to develop the social work MIS as an element of the total Health Informatics Programme of the SAMHS. This project is still ongoing. The Social Work transitional MIS was, however, developed and implemented by the end of 2000 to bridge the identified gaps.
- *Personal performance management system*. Personal performance measurement was addressed through a performance management cycle which include individual performance, team performance agreement and regular performance reviews linked with performance evaluations.

The performance management system was developed concurrently as a way to provide direction and ensure evaluation and feedback. The social work personnel were trained in the performance management cycle and facilitated in the development of performance agreements. The first individual and group performance agreements were developed from December 1997.

Except for the model for team functioning all the other identified intervention strategies became part of the strategy of the larger D SW and not only that of the SW Dept of Gauteng Med Comd.

3.2.6 Evaluation and feedback on interventions

Members of the research group who are still in the SWD at GT Med Comd were requested to evaluate and provide feedback on each of the interventions.

3.2.6.1 Service delivery system

- Model for team functioning.
 - It was decided by the research group that the model for team functioning would be evaluated through the individual and team performance reviews. These reviews would take place on quarterly and yearly basis respectively.
 - It would further be evaluated through structured feedback by the stakeholders on the level of outcome achievement and the contribution of the team towards organisational development. This feedback must still be obtained.
 - Initially the idea was that the team approach would allow social work officers (swo's) to be involved in joint projects and to stand in for one another in case of absence due to leave and courses as well as an opportunity for specialisation in terms of the sw methods. Although the first two aspects materialised, the last never materialised due to practical problems of which the most prominent was the fact that suitable offices which could be shared by teams could not be located.
 - The teams started to function more autonomously under the guidance of a sw area manager, who was considered to be more of a team coordinator fulfilling certain functions. The team functioning allowed for more interaction amongst swo's and more opportunities to share information.

- At the end of 1998 the teams gave their first group presentations which served as a group review and in 1999 their second. Due to a huge staff turnover and vacant posts which had existed for a long time it was decided not to have group presentations at the end of 2000.

- At the beginning of 2001 a new centralised approach was started around the delivery of certain programs, i.e. family and workplace violence, financial management, resilience, cultural competency, HIV/Aids, prevention of substance abuse and comprehensive health assessments. Teams were formed around the research, design and delivery of programmes.

- **Military Practice Model**
 - The model that was developed in 1998 is currently accepted by the whole directorate as a useful model for military social work practitioners to plan, explain, market and justify their services. As such it is included in the approach of the DSW. The model also provides a framework for training and development.

- **Training/Personnel development model**
 - A workgroup is currently developing the curriculum for the training and development of military social workers based on the guidelines in the Personnel Management Code for Military Social Work personnel.

3.2.6.2 Performance management system

- **Management Information System**
 - Linked to performance management, the need for a new, more applicable MIS system was identified. Although a workgroup around the formulation of a new sw MIS system existed prior to the IIP process, it was suscitated in 1998. A number of swo's of Gauteng were included in the workgroup.
 - The DSW instituted a new MIS which was piloted in 1999. An MIS training course was developed and presented in May/June 1999 coinciding with the Performance Management Training course. At the end of 2000 the need for a transitional MIS was identified and implemented. Although still in the process of development it has already been found to be useful in terms of giving appropriate info to swo's to use in the planning of their services.

- **Personal performance management system**
 - The performance management model would be evaluated by its contribution to changes in performance by individuals and teams. The feedback from social workers and social work managers on the effect of the performance model would serve as another criteria for evaluation.
 - This process was implemented at the end of 1997 with the orientation and training of the sw department, Gauteng and the formulation of the first group agreements. The first individual agreements were formulated towards the end of March 1998.

- Three cycles have already been completed, consisting of group agreements, individual agreements, individual reviews and group reviews, namely for the year 1997-1998, 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. The department is currently busy with its fourth cycle.
- Since then the process was extended to include the whole social work directorate. The process and models were formalised in the formulation of a performance management SWP and a formal training course for performance management trainers and facilitators. The first course was run in May/June 1999 for the DSW.
- An action-reflection-process has been followed throughout the implementation of the system in which feedback has been given after each completed cycle and suggested improvements incorporated in the following cycles.
- Currently the whole DOD is busy adopting a performance management system, which necessitates a re-look at the current models, proforms and process being utilized up till now. Although the process is found to be complex and difficult to apprehend at first, it definitely leads to more appropriate service delivery and acceptance of mutual responsibility for the management of performance.

3.2.6.3 The research process.

A formal evaluation by means of a questionnaire was completed to determine the extent to which the process outcomes were reached during the research process. (See appendix F). Seven of the nine team members completed the questionnaire. A summary of the results are:

Question 1: Did you experience any learning during this process?

All participants indicated that they had a learning experience. Themes of learning which were identified, were:

- ▶ Work ability of a team (participatory) approach by five participants.
- ▶ Techniques, not identified, by two participants.
- ▶ The process of identifying problems and problem solving by one participant.
- ▶ One participant did not identify a specific theme.

Question 2: Did you experience that your involvement in the process, rendered you more or less empowered?

All participants indicated a feeling of empowerment due to their involvement in the process. They attributed it to the following:

- ▶ Four participants indicated that increased knowledge contributed to the feeling of empowerment.
- ▶ Two participants indicated that teamwork contributed to this experience.
- ▶ One participant indicated that participation and a sense of ownership in the process contributed to a feeling of empowerment.

Question 3: Did you experience the process as problem solving if you refer to the issues?

All participants were in agreement.

QUESTION 4: Do you think the process contributed to knowledge building in the Directorate?

Six of the seven participants agreed, whilst one was unsure. They identified the following themes of knowledge:

- ▶ Three participants identified the team approach.
- ▶ Two participants identified the problem solving process.
- ▶ One participant identified performance management.

Question 5: Did the process contribute to a better understanding of the dilemmas and problems in the department?

Five participants agreed, one agreed to a certain degree and one did not agree, but did not provide a reason.

Question 6: Were you able to identify problems areas and the consequences of them?

All participants agreed.

Question 7: Did the process contribute to an understanding and agreement regarding priority interventions/actions?

Six participants answered yes and one answered no.

3.2.7 Report writing

The final report writing evolved in a action/reflection cycle. The final action was the

actual writing of the report and the reflection, the process of thinking, linking and phrasing of the information.

Throughout the research process, members of the research group rotated the responsibility to take confirmatory notes after each two-weekly work session. These reports were studied and reflected on for the final report by the initiator and the members of the team who provided the information on evaluation and feedback.

It was through these reflections that the initiator could draw the connections between literature and practice and between the various processes integrated in the research process.

The challenge for the initiator is to expand this kind of experience of learning and participation throughout the D SW. This report could play an important role in cultivating the ground for participation and learning in other commands. Although the writing of the final report was not a participatory activity, inputs were provided from team members on the implementation and evaluation phase. The draft report was also presented to a group representing the research team.

3.3 SUMMARY

This chapter describes the implementation of participative action research. It further highlights the findings of each action/reflection cycle throughout the integrated phases of the IIP problem solving process and participative action research.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher stepped back and reflected on the whole process and the findings to draw conclusions from the research. The conclusions will lead to specific recommendations for the D SW. The problems were clearly identified in the process as described in chapter 3.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

The research group embarked on a participatory action research process seeking answers/solutions to the research questions posed by the research group, namely:

“What are the problems/issues that the SWD are facing which may impact upon the efficiency of service rendering and what are the possible solutions to address these problems?” The participatory research process utilising the IIP as a problem-solving model facilitated transformation.

- For the first part of the research question the research group took a broad angle scan when identifying and describing problems considering a range as wide as possible. The multiple viewpoints ensured that problems/issues were identified from the frames of reference of the social workers as service deliverers, but also from the perception of sw's on the issues experience by sw managers and client systems. The eight clusters of problems identified and described as driving problems, were still within this broad angle scan, but also provided some focus. The problems identified were clearly described by the research group.

- In the data analysis phase, the interconnectedness and circularity of systems and subsystems became evident through the flow diagrams. This technique entrenched the mental model of systems thinking among the group.
- The systems in focus identified by the research group were systems within their sphere of influence. This indicated a sense of ownership and responsibility for change. The focus on a system rather than a problem or issues emphasised the principle of double-loop learning, whereby the structures and viewpoints underlying the organisational functioning become the focus of intervention.
- By defining the stakeholders and the key measures of performance, the research group ensured the possibility of effective evaluation and feedback for any intervention.
- The second part of the research question asks what possible solutions could address the identified problems. The group answered this question by identifying high leverage interventions aimed at changing the systems in focus which contain the identified problems.

The purpose of the research was to embark pro-actively on an internal transformation process, which would allow participation of representatives of social workers on all levels in the department, in order to improve efficiency of the SWD of GT Med Comd.

- It is assumed that through the implementation of the identified interventions an internal transformation process will evolve further. The participation in the research process was already the beginning of this process. The evaluation and feedback after four years from the research team participants provide a definite indication of the transformation of the SWD as well as the evolution of these processes into the larger directorate.

- The process outcomes based on the group participation were fully achieved as indicated by the questionnaire completed by participants.
 - ▶ It can thus be concluded that Participatory Action Research (PAR) enables participants to experience group learning, this learning being about the problems in the organisation, the PAR process, the IIP as a problem-solving model and teamwork.
 - ▶ It secondly created a sense of empowerment through learning and acquiring of knowledge, as well as through participation which created a sense of ownership. The process gave the team an experience of problem-solving through different techniques and as part of a team.
 - ▶ The process also built the knowledge base in the D SW on how the problems are defined, possible solutions and processes that could provide the solutions. The usefulness and application value of the PAR process does not only lie in the identification of problems and the development of solutions, but ultimately also in the process outcomes.
 - ▶ In evaluation the PAR process can be useful in a bureaucracy such as the SANDF.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, I make the following recommendations:

- That the D SW and in particular the SWD and GT Med Comd implement all the interventions identified.

- That the SWD in ongoing PAR evaluate both whether the purpose of the research process is being achieved and the efficiency of services improved by feedback from SW, clients and other stakeholders.
- That the D SW encourages the concept of a learning organisation through the use of PAR.
- That social workers are trained in the IIP as a problem solving model to solve “messy” problems.
- That the D SW integrates action/reflection cycles in all processes as a way of entrenching a learning organisation and ensuring continuous improvement.
- That the DOD and D SW utilize these processes as a way to empower members of the organisation and to create a sense of ownership in the solving of organisational problems.

4.4 SUMMARY

The concept of systems being self-regulatory and self-referential encourage our understanding that transformation or change of living systems is the result of change that is generated internally. It is not merely an adaptation for survival but a way to determine its own future. By utilising PAR and the underlying objectives, assumptions and values of a participative and developmental paradigm a process started that evolved in transformation of a service organisation. It is through this process of evolution (cocooning) that the SWD of GT Med Comd and any other system can change from “Stripe, the caterpillar” to the colourful butterfly.

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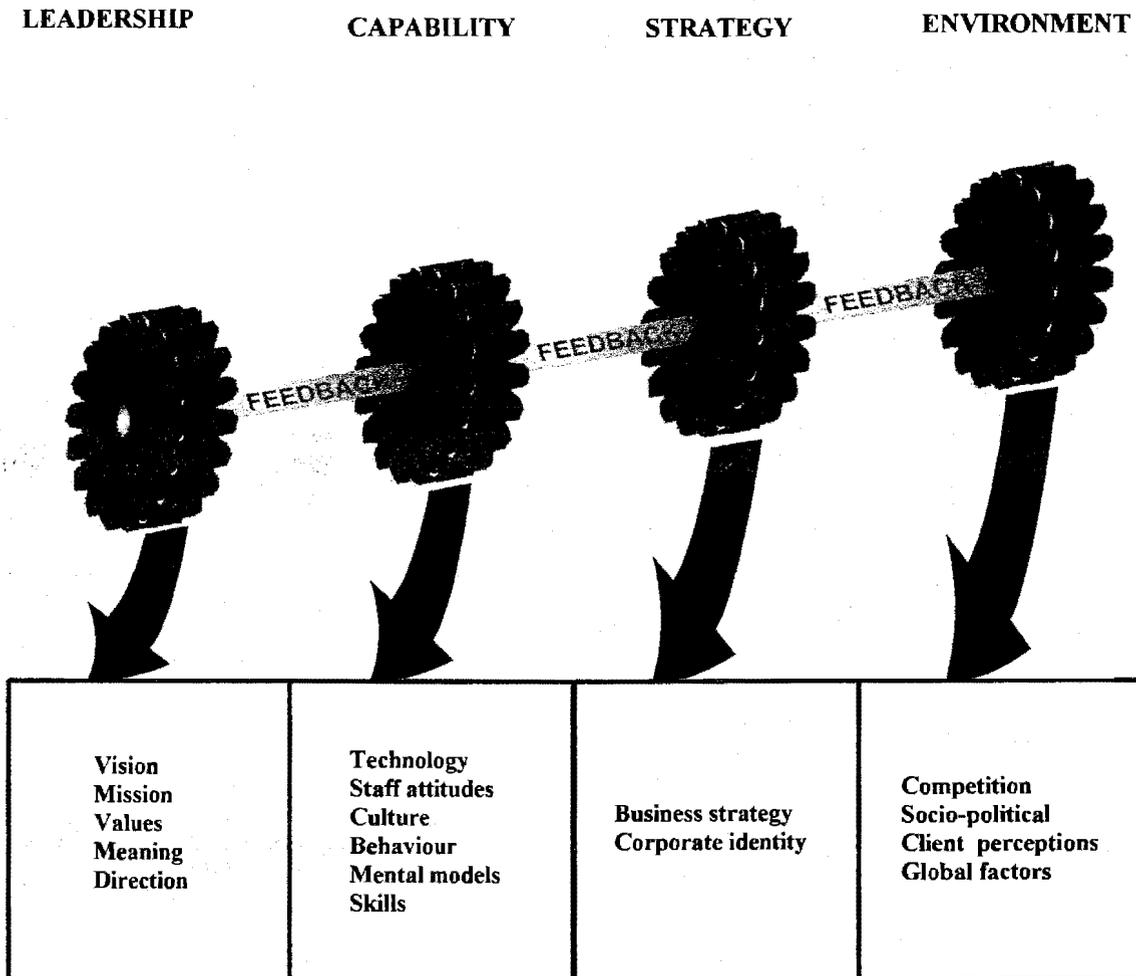
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Appendix A: Graphical illustration of alignment model



Systems are aligned to the extent that they have found and implemented answers to the following questions:

What is going on in the environment?

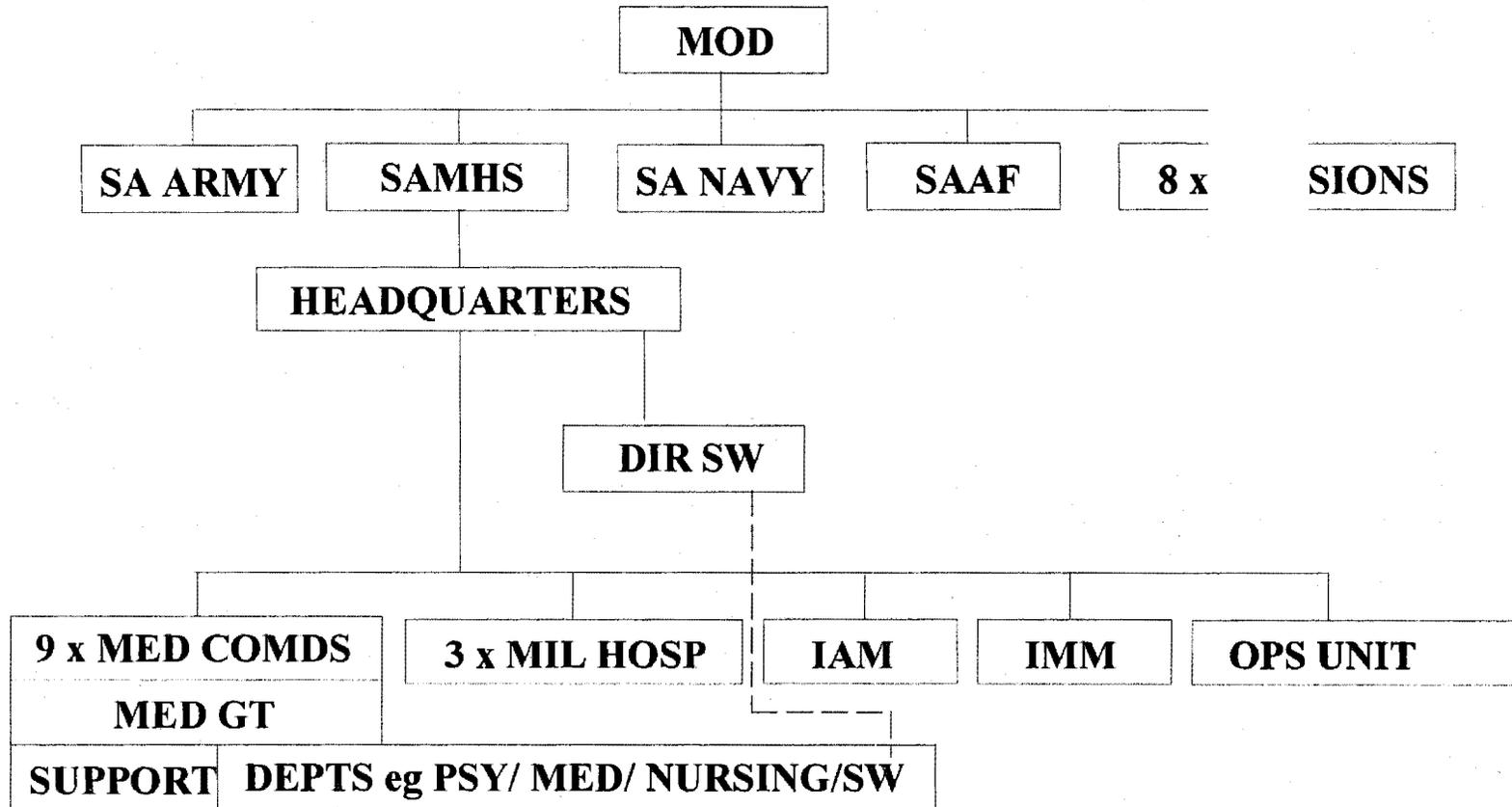
What are we going to do - Strategy?

Can we do it - Capability?

Who will drive the process - Leadership?

(Morgan 1986: 62 -63)

Appendix B: Hierarchical structure of D SW and SAMHS



Appendix C: Affinity diagram - gathering and grouping of ideas

Goal

To allow a team to creatively generate a large number of ideas/issues and then organise and summarize natural groupings among them in order to understand the essence of a problem and breakthrough solutions.

Process

- a. Describe the issue under discussion in a full sentence.
- b. Brainstorm at least twenty ideas, note each one as a phrase on post-its and put it up.
- c. Sort the alternatives into five to ten related groupings without discussion; each participant may move the post-it notes until they are comfortable with the groupings.
- d. Create a summary of header cards based on consensus.

Appendix D: Interrelationship Digraph (looking for drivers and outcomes)Goal

To allow a team to systematically identify, analyse and classify the cause and effect relationships that exist among all critical issues so that key drivers or outcomes can become the heart of an effective solution.

Process

- a. Agree on the issue/problem statement.
- b. Identify an appropriate team to address these issues.
- c. Lay out all the ideas in a circular manner.
- d. Look for “cause”/influence relationships between all the ideas and draw relationship arrows. (An outgoing arrow indicates a stronger influence).
- e. Review and revise the first round.
- f. Count the number of incoming and outgoing arrows and select key items for further planning. The highest number of outgoing arrows indicates driver/root causes and the highest number of incoming arrows indicates key outcomes.
- g. Draw the final Interrelationship digraph.

Appendix E: Cause and Effect Fishbone Diagram

Goal

To identify the root cause(s) of a problem by identifying and displaying graphically all possible causes.

Process

- a. Select the most appropriate cause and effect format.
- b. Generate the causes to build a Cause and Effect Diagram by means of brainstorming.
- c. Construct the cause and effect diagram. Place the problem statement in a box on the right-hand side of the writing surface. Place the brainstormed causes in a fishbone format.
- d. Ask repeatedly of each cause - Why does it happen? What could happen?
- e. Interpret or test for root causes by means of one or more of the following:
 - * Look for causes that appear repeatedly within or across major cause categories.
 - * Select through either an unstructured consensus process or one that is structured, such as Nominal Group Technique or Multivoting.
 - * Group data through check sheets to determine the relative frequencies of the different causes.

Appendix F: Questionnaire on the Participatory Action Research Process

- a. Did you experience any learning during this process? If yes, can you indicate some learning themes?
- b. Did you experience that your involvement in the process, rendered you more empowered or less empowered? Substantiate.
- c. Did you experience the process as problem solving if you refer back to the issues initially identified?
- d. Do you think the process contributed to knowledge building in the Directorate? If so, can you identify some themes?
- e. Did the process contribute to a better understanding of the dilemmas and problems in your department?
- f. Were you able to identify problem areas and the consequences of them?
- g. Did the process contribute to an understanding and agreement of priority actions/interventions?