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EDITORIAL

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This first edition in 2023 of *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* offers themes that centre on social work with persons affected by substance use disorders, on environmental social work and social work with children. The latter theme focuses on specialist areas concerning parents of children suffering from hearing loss, social assistance to orphaned children, foster care, ethical guidelines for adoption, grandparent-grandchildren care and child participation.

The first article presents a qualitative study that was conducted to explore the factors influencing relapse in individuals with substance use disorders. The findings revealed that various factors play a role in relapse at different levels, described within the ambit of an ecological perspective. The authors in particular seek an answer to the research question: What are the views of social workers employed at treatment centres on factors influencing relapse in substance use? This contrasts with most research, which was focused on the views of service users themselves on the factors that influence relapse, or which explored how individuals recovering from a substance use disorder, experience and sustain their recovery. The article records the experiences of social workers in treatment centres, where they play a significant role in the treatment and support of substance abusers. The research findings contribute to the development of strategies to combat relapse and may assist in formulating relapse prevention programmes.

The second article highlights the multiple needs of parents of children with hearing loss. These complex needs include the necessity for parents to have access to information, be connected with social support networks, consider communication options and have collaborative partnerships with professionals. This article reports in particular on the final phase of a study, which was a consensus workshop. The consensus workshop approach allowed for greater participation, interaction and discussion in the decision-making process in the co-development of a framework to support parents. This can be considered a valuable tool for multidisciplinary engagement to assist parents of children with hearing loss.

The current crisis in foster care in South Africa is discussed in the third article. The child protection system is utilised to meet the needs of orphaned children for social assistance. The new parallel system in South Africa in the form of an extended child support grant system would enable children in the care of relatives to have access to an appropriate grant without having to go through a time-consuming and resource-intensive statutory process. This article outlines the challenges in the South African foster care system, discusses the reasons for introducing the extended child support grant system and explains how it will be implemented. The authors conclude that a policy shift towards an extended child support grant could ensure that the majority of orphans have access to adequate social protection. It would free up the formal child protection system, enabling a quicker social work response to cases of child abuse, maltreatment and neglect.

Despite the challenging conditions that social workers face in South Africa, they have to continue to make considered decisions to place children in foster care. This is the theme of the fourth article, in which the authors assert that there is a lack of research on the decision-making processes available to social workers rendering foster care services. The authors found in their research that most social workers in South Africa make decisions based on a mix of intuition and empirical evidence, justifying the child's best interest as the basis for their decisions. The authors furthermore propose measures that may enable social workers to be fully aware of their own decision-making processes during all the phases of rendering foster care services, facilitating transparent decision-making, with the best outcome for the foster child and his/her biological and foster family.

As part of child protection services, the authors of the fifth article concur that the adoption process involves dealing with legal and ethical complexities, competing rights and addressing the long-term implications for those involved. They however found that no ethical guidelines are in place to address South African adoption practices, and the article focuses on the findings of a rapid review of relevant national and international ethics documents and adoption guidelines. The Delphi method was used to identify the challenges in adoption-related practices, as well as to develop and refine ethical guidelines for social workers at South African adoption organisations. These guidelines are to be included in the South African Council for Social Service Professions Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and the Rules for Social Workers.

In the context of child protection, the authors of the sixth article contend that there appears to be a paradigm shift in South Africa, where the majority of children are cared for by their grandparents. This paper explores the levels of reciprocity existing in grandparent-grandchildren care in Mdlankomo location, Libode, in the Eastern Cape. Findings of this research reveal that grandparents manifest love for their grandchildren, who do reciprocate the gesture. However, delinquent behaviours of grandchildren exasperate the grandparents; and conflict between grandparents and grandchildren ensue when children suspect the abuse of their grandparents. The authors urge the South African Department of Social Development and NGOs working in the children's domain to strengthen programmes ensuring the wellbeing of older persons and children.

The seventh article in this edition emphasises that worldwide, children in the care of the state constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in society. They are often not heard, or their views are not respected in matters concerning them. This is incongruent with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Guided by a conceptual framework of child participation theory, the research team analyse South African legislation and policies to determine how and when child participation is being promoted. Findings indicate that providing information to children on how to participate meaningfully is the key to effective child participation, and it is recommended that practical guidelines be developed.

The authors of the final article in this edition conclude that it is well known that the effects of climate change and especially environmental inequality are amplified for people who live in poverty or who are marginalised. Social workers worldwide are therefore becoming duty-bound to engage with the issue of environmental social work. The findings of the research reported on in this article indicate that social work educators perceived environmental social work as important and relevant, and suggest that ways of integrating it into the social work curriculum should be explored further.

The articles in this issue pertaining to social work with individuals suffering from substance use disorders, social work with children and environmental social work, are all based on recent research outputs, and will surely contribute to the body of theory and practice in both the South African and global social work discipline.

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Editor in Chief
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