

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK – THE MOTIVATIONS, PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES, IDEALS AND EXPECTATIONS OF PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY-MAKERS¹⁸

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ABSTRACT

Child and youth care work is a newly recognised service deliverer in the field of social welfare. Qualitative research was done to identify the motivations, personal perspectives, ideals and expectations of the practitioners in this occupation, as well as the unique contribution of child and youth care work to social welfare. The main characteristics distinguishing child and youth care work from other service deliverers in the field of social welfare are the fact that child and youth care workers work in the life space of children and of families with children, and the long hours they spend with the children. The expectations and personal perspectives of the child and youth care workers and the policy-makers regarding professionalisation, better working conditions and the formal training of child and youth care workers were determined. Although the personal perspectives, ideals and expectations of child and youth care workers could be realised through the developed qualification, the impact of the professionalisation of child and youth care work has not been carefully thought through.

1. INTRODUCTION

Child and youth care workers, previously known as child carers or child minders, have been rendering services to abandoned and at-risk children since the late 1800s. They were categorised under the same occupation as carers or caretakers within the field of social services. They took care of children, where the others would take care of the disabled or the elderly. The White Paper for Social Welfare Services (South Africa 1997:32) was the first policy document to acknowledge child and youth care work as a separate category of welfare personnel contributing to the field of social welfare. The White Paper (1997:35) recommends that training be provided for categories of personnel other than social workers, and specifically mentions categories “such as child and youth care workers”.

After August 1996 Technikon SA, in collaboration with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW), compiled a curriculum and developed a formal qualification for child and youth care workers. This qualification, introduced in January 1999, is the National Diploma and B Tech: Child and Youth Development: Child and Youth Care Work. During this time research was conducted to establish whether the N Dip and B Tech: Child and Youth Development satisfy the needs, personal perspectives, ideals and expectations of child and youth care workers or practitioners at grassroots level in practice.

The NACCW is one of the main policy-making organisations regarding the training and utilisation of child and youth care workers in South Africa. Therefore, key persons in the NACCW were identified and interviewed as policy-makers.

¹⁸ The research on which this paper is based formed part of a D.Litt. et Phil. thesis completed at the Rand Afrikaans University.

The research results were to be used as a basis for quantitative research to evaluate an education and training programme for child and youth care workers in South Africa. The intervention regarding the current training and utilisation of child and youth care workers required the opinions of the practitioners. Therefore, the expectations of the practitioners relating to their occupational group within the new welfare policy were essential for this research. It was also important to determine their aspirations and expectations in respect of their occupational group in practice and in the academic field. Qualitative research as a methodology was the most appropriate method for gathering the opinions, expectations and feelings of the practitioners. This research was inductive rather than deductive, as in a quantitative research study (Creswell 1994:45).

This article focuses on the qualitative research results of a study done in 1997 to determine the motivations, expectations, personal perspectives and ideals of child and youth care workers and policy-makers regarding their occupation. These practitioners and policy-makers had to identify the uniqueness of their occupation as opposed other categories of personnel working with the same target groups.

2. NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

In this study semi-structured questionnaires, and not focus groups, were used. The reason for this decision lay in the diversity of institutions utilising child and youth care workers from different cultural backgrounds. The use of focus groups would have been more cost effective, as two or three focus groups consisting of six to eight people could have been conducted. However, the use of focus groups would have limited the number of institutions and South African population groups that could be involved in the research. Although more expensive and time-consuming, the interviews involved a greater variety of employers and, as far as possible, representatives from most of the country's population groups.

To ensure the financial feasibility of the study, the interviews were limited to practitioners in Gauteng. However, to ensure that the policy-makers were representative, the interviews with them could not be limited to Gauteng. The interviews with the representatives of the National Association of Child and Youth Care Work (NACCW) were conducted in Cape Town and Durban. Although registration is not compulsory, the NACCW represents and registers practitioners and employers in child and youth care work.

To identify practitioners for the interviews, the addresses of registered employers of child and youth care workers were obtained from the NACCW. Given the size and geographical distribution of the research population group (51 employers of child and youth care workers in Gauteng), it would have been very demanding to conduct the research amongst the total research population group. Therefore, as is often the case in research, a sampling method had to be used. To ensure the representation of various South African population groups, while also preventing excessive costs, stratified proportional random sampling was used in the qualitative research process. The number of practitioners was determined by the proportional representation of the employers. Before conducting the interview, the semi-structured interview was tested in pilot interviews with three child and youth care workers (Creswell 1994:120; De Vos 1998:197; Rothman & Thomas 1994:34-35).

Miles and Huberman (1994:27) state that qualitative sampling should in the first instance be purposive rather than random to avoid a biased hand when a small number of cases are involved. In the second instance, it should be conceptually driven sequential sampling. Two actions take place in the process of sampling in qualitative research. Firstly, boundaries must be set and, secondly, a frame must be created within the study. Although stratified random selection in conducting the interviews was used, it was also purposive, because the purpose of the sampling was to include practitioners from as many working

environments and population groups as possible. The stratification process set the boundaries and the structures created the frame of the qualitative study. Within this process within-case sampling was used (Miles & Huberman 1994:19).

Given that the registration of child and youth care workers is not compulsory, it was necessary to ensure common ground for the functioning and knowledge gained by the child and youth care worker interviews. To ensure this the stratification element was that they had to have done a course with the NACCW. This resulted in a sample size of 14 child and youth care workers. To ensure that the practitioners represented as many population groups and organisations as possible, 14 interviews were conducted with child and youth care workers. Owing to the saturation of data, a total of 13 of the 14 interviews with the child and youth care workers was used in the analysis of the data.

The samples from the different employers were randomly selected as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Sample size of employers

PROPORTIONAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS	SAMPLE SIZE
1 - 4	1
5 - 8	2
9 - 12	3
13 - 16	4
17 - 20	5
21 - 24	6

Table 2.2 illustrates the details of the employers of child and youth care workers in Gauteng, the sample selected and the interviews conducted.

Table 2.2
Sampling for the interviews

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE									
Nature of employer	Number of institutions	Sample size	Number of interviews conducted	Gender*			Population group of interviewees**		
				M	F	W	C	A	B
Children's homes: Afrikaans	7	1	1		1	1			
Children's homes: English	16	4	5	1	4	2			3
Children's homes: Other	14	4	3		3		1		2
Places of safety: Traditionally white	3	1	1		1	1			
Places of safety: Other	3	1	1		1				1
Secure care	2	1	1	1					1
Street children	6	2	2	1	1				2
TOTAL	51	14	14	3	11	4	1	0	9

Gender* M: Male F: Female
Interviewees** W: White C: Coloured A: Asian B: Black

The above table shows that a sample of 14 was drawn from 51 employers in Gauteng. The employers' organisations were contacted to arrange for interviews with the child and youth care workers. Two criteria applied for the selection of the people interviewed. Firstly, they had to be able to express themselves in either English or Afrikaans, as an interpreter was not used. Secondly, to ensure that the child and youth care workers interviewed had some basic knowledge of child and youth care work, they were required to have done a course through the NACCW. Although there were seven Afrikaans children's homes in Gauteng, only one employed child and youth care workers who had done a course through the NACCW. Therefore the sample size could not be 2, as indicated in Table 2.1. From these 14 employers, 14 child and youth care workers or practitioners were interviewed. Of these 14 respondents, 3 were male and 11 female. Four of the practitioners were white, one was Coloured and 9 were black. There were no Indian respondents selected under the criteria in Gauteng.

Apart from the interviews with the 14 practitioners, interviews were also conducted with those at the helm of current training. The selection criteria for the policy-makers were the following:

- a) Representation of gender
- b) Representation of the population groups in South Africa
- c) High level of involvement as child and youth care workers.

The sample size of the policy-makers consisted of 4 child and youth care workers. Table 2.3 shows the representation of the selected policy-makers.

Table 2.3
Policy-Makers: Interviews

EMPLOYER	LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING	GENDER		POPULATION GROUP			
		M	F	A	B	C	W
NACCW	Professional staff		1				1
NACCW	Professional staff	1					1
NACCW	Professional staff		1	1			
NACCW	Professional staff		1		1		
TOTAL		1	3	1	1	0	2

All the policy-makers were from the NACCW. Two were situated in the Western Cape and two in KwaZulu-Natal. They represented both genders and 3 of the 4 main South African population groups.

The aim of the qualitative study was to gauge the expectations, ideals, motivations, personal perspectives and feelings of child and youth care workers regarding their occupational group. The following questions were put to the respondents:

- “Why did you decide to become a child and youth care worker?” or “What motivated you to become a child and youth care worker?”
- “From your experience, what makes child and youth care work different from other occupations and professions also working with the same clients?” or “What makes child and youth care work unique?”

- “From your experience as a child and youth care worker, what kind of knowledge is important for the child and youth care worker?” or “What does the child and youth care worker need to know to be able to do his/her job well?”
- “How do you, as a child and youth care worker, see your occupation within 10 to 15 years?” This question was changed to: “You know what child and youth care work looks like now. What are your dreams, hopes, expectations and ideals for your occupation within the next 10 to 15 years?”

After conducting the pilot interviews, the structure of the last question was changed to make it clearer for the respondents. Within their capacity as policy-makers, they were also asked to respond to the outcomes or skills the practitioners needed to acquire to do their job properly.

Before the questions were put to the practitioners and policy-makers, the motivation for the research was explained, as well as the importance of the input of practitioners and policy-makers to gain more knowledge about their experiences, feelings and expectations in this field (Holstein & Gubrium 1995:42). During the interviews respondents were given no indication of what other respondents had said. The field notes were written down after the specific interview was conducted. The interviews were then personally transcribed and analysed. The eight steps of Tesch (Creswell 1994:155) were followed in analysing the transcriptions:

- The transcriptions were read through carefully. Some ideas that sprang to mind were jotted down. These ideas centred on the themes of the questions, namely motivations, expectations, knowledge and the uniqueness of child and youth care work.
- The longest interview was then selected. The transcription was scrutinised, asking what it was about and what the meaning was of what the respondent had said. These thoughts were written in the margins and were related to internal and external motivations, the various groups of knowledge and positive and negative remarks about child and youth care work.
- After completing this task for all the interviews with child and youth care practitioners, similar topics were clustered together and sorted as major topics, unique topics and leftovers.
- Using this list, the transcribed interviews were re-examined and codes were allocated appropriately next to the segments of the text. As new topics and codes emerged, the data were re-organised.
- The appropriate or most descriptive wording was then sorted and put into categories. Categories relating to one another were grouped together to limit the number of categories.
- The categories were finalised and arranged in alphabetical order.
- The data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis was carried out of the categories and the respondents' direct quotes in each category.
- After checking the data again and receiving the feedback from the independent qualitative analyst, the analysis was finalised (also see Strauss & Corbin 1990:65-73).

Although the various practitioners and policy-makers were asked the same questions and the analysed categories were the same, the verbal responses of the respondents differed.

The transcriptions of the interviews with the practitioners were analysed first, followed by those of the policy-makers. The data reported contains the opinions of two and more respondents. It is indicated whenever only one respondent had a certain expectation or viewpoint.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS: CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK

The analysis of the qualitative research results revealed two main categories within the occupational group of child and youth care work, namely characteristics and motivation. Motivational factors were divided into two subcategories, namely external and internal motivational factors. The characteristics of child and youth care work were divided into six subcategories, namely knowledge, skills, future expectations, limitations, status and strengths. The subcategory "knowledge" revealed five sub-subcategories:

- Human development, functions and needs
- Interpersonal and inner personal knowledge
- Management of behaviour or problems
- Multidisciplinary functioning and networking
- Other.

Although only four questions were posed to the respondents, the analysis of the questions generated vast amounts of data. The opinions of the practitioners and policy-makers regarding these subcategories sometimes differed. The report on the data analysis describes these differences. The categories and subcategories are tabulated in Table 3.1. The research results are then substantiated by the verbatim responses of the respondents and the results of the literature study. Table 3.1 shows the categories and subcategories identified in the analysis of the responses by child and youth care workers.

3.1 Category 1: Motivational factors contributing to child and youth care work as a career

The *internal factors* motivating the practitioners to become child and youth care workers were expressed in terms of their own beliefs and attitudes by responses such as "...because I love children", "...because I am a Christian", "to contribute to the children's lives from my experience", "to help children", "as a volunteer I became interested to work with children", "I can be helpful to children in trouble", "ek meen uit my onderwyservaring van 18 jaar sou ek 'n bydrae kon maak", "ek wil graag vir die Here werk" and "ek is lief vir kinders". Maier (1990:10) stresses the fact that "basic to all child care is the formation of a solid interpersonal relationship between care giver and care receiver".

A person who does not feel attached to children and who does not have a passion for children cannot form such a relationship. Beukes and Gannon (1996:5) stress the fact that "people who are responsible adults, who have a helping, teaching or guiding interest in children, and who have positive skills and talents to offer to the children and families, are usually considered for child care posts".

Economic advantage was one of the *external factors* that motivated practitioners to become child and youth care workers. This was expressed in the following ways: "my own financial advantage", "...om ekonomiese redes", "my beste oplossing gaan wees om 'n plek te kry waar ek inwoon" and "dat ek bedags my kinders by die werk kon gehad het". The other external factor that played a role was personal circumstances or work opportunities that exposed practitioners to children and helped them to decide to work with children. One of these responses was: "I started as a chef, ... then I started to work with the children ... they trained me ... now it is like my daily meal".

3.2 Category 2: Characteristics of child and youth care work as an occupational group

The last three questions posed to respondents formed the second category, which focused on the characteristics of child and youth care work as an occupational group. The practitioners were asked what they thought made child and youth care work unique and what their expectations were for the occupation. An analysis of their responses revealed their opinions on characteristics such as the status and limitations of child and youth care work as an occupational group. They were also asked what essential knowledge distinguished child and youth care work from other professions dealing with the same target group. The article focused on the respondents' verbal responses to the different subcategories as identified in the analysis of the data and the relevant literature.

Subcategory: The strengths of child and youth care work as an occupational group

The practitioners expressed the strengths that distinguished child and youth care work from other occupations and professions also involving working with children as follows: "23/24 hours available for the child", "involvement with the development of children", "you become deeply involved with the children", "our experience with the child is more intense and not so superficial as the others", "working within the life space of the child", "verskriklike lang ure", "jy is onmiddellik beskikbaar", "omdat jy saam met hom leef" and "probeer om hulle verantwoordelike hede te leer". Practitioners felt that the focus in child and youth care work was on the following: "development and not on the pathology", "external factors, such as time constraints, come into play with social work or psychologists and not with the child care worker" and "the social worker is responsible for the report to the court, spends less time with the child and communicates with external social workers, we teach the children basic things like hygiene, eating habits, responsibility, how to utilise their energy positively and discipline them".

Although the policy-makers confirmed the strengths identified by the practitioners, they did not mention aspects such as "to become deeply involved with the children". They strongly emphasised their work within the "life space" of the child and families. Beukes (1990:38) confirms the importance of the strength of the relationship within child and youth care work. Anglin (1993:3-5; 1995:10-11), Van der Ven (1991:15-16) as well as Van Weezel & Waaldijk (1997:12-13) stress the uniqueness of child and youth care workers who function within the life space of the child and focus on the developmental and non-pathological approach.

Subcategory: Essential knowledge for child and youth care workers

As shown in Table 3.1, the subcategory of essential knowledge was divided into five themes:

- Human development, functions and needs
- Management of behaviour of problems
- The multidisciplinary functioning and networking
- Interpersonal and inner personal knowledge
- Other.

From their experience, respondents stated that child and youth care workers needed the following as part of their knowledge base: "human development", "child development", "how to bath a child", "how to feed a child", "physical care of the child", "needs of children", "must know the children", "how to motivate children", "how to understand human motivation of behaviour", "kindersielkunde", "kennis van toiletafrigting" and "tipe kinders".

**TABLE 3.1
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK**

MOTIVATING FACTORS		CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE AS OCCUPATIONAL GROUP									
Internal factors	External factors	Essential Knowledge*					Basic Skills	Strengths	Future Expectations	Status	Limitations
		HDFN	MBP	MDFN	IIP	O					
1. Christianity	For the own benefit of the person	Developmental stages	The management of behavior	Team functioning	Relationship with self	Hands-on training	Expectations about the practical skills of the practitioner	Views on what make this occupation different from others	Expectations dreams ideals for the future of the profession	The recognition given to the group	Aspects that limits the service of the practitioner at the moment
2. Love for children		Needs	Management of problems	Networking with others	Relationship with others	Basic medical aid		Advantages of the occupation			
3. To help children		Functions				Organisational systems					
4. Development of care for children											

Essential Knowledge*

HDFN : Human development, functions and needs

MBP : Management of behavior or problems

MDFN : The multi disciplinary functioning and networking

IIP : Inter and inner personal knowledge

O : Other

The views of the policy-makers within child and youth care work in this regard correlated with those of the practitioners. They also added knowledge such as *“psychological theory and concepts”*, *“family systems”* and *“family dysfunction”* (Dimotoff 1997:2-3; Ferry 1996:10-11; Gaffley 1996:15-16; Anonymous 1996:10-11). It was important for the child and youth care workers to know what they could expect from children in their different developmental stages, to work effectively with children and to assist them in achieving their goals (Beukes & Gannon 1996:29; De Bord & Sawyers 1996:8; Garfat 1997:5; Maier *et al.* 1995:270-271). Beukes and Gannon (1996:43-44) list the following essential tasks for child and youth care workers:

- planning a warm and stimulating living environment for the group;
- planning and using daily routines which help children to achieve developmental goals;
- providing varied and purposeful activities which promote personal, social, educational and cultural growth;
- recognising individual children's blocks and shortcomings and providing special opportunities to overcome these.

With regard to the need to acquire knowledge about psychological theory and concepts, family systems, dynamics and pathologies as mentioned by the policy-makers, Kuehne and Leone (1994:330-341, Dimotoff 1997:19) refer to third-year students at the University of Victoria (Canada) who study the theory and practice of child and youth care work in depth. These students have to analyse and apply the developmental theories and psychotherapy in the practice of child and youth care work. They analyse and use models of the management of case load, assessment and intervention techniques. They also complete a one-year placement in practice in their third year of study. Beukes (1990:71,73) stresses the importance of this knowledge for child and youth care workers even at a lower level of training.

Practitioners felt that child and youth care workers also required knowledge on the management of children's behaviour and the problems children experience. They made comments such as "*the problems children are experiencing*", "*problem solving*", "*to manage children's behaviour or problem behaviour*", "*behaviour management*", "*assessment of the child*" and "*onderrig word met die probleme wat die kinders het*". The views of the policy-makers correspond with those of the practitioners. Literature on child and youth care as a profession clearly indicates the importance of this knowledge for child care workers in their daily work with children (Beukes 1990:3, 73-75; Beukes & Gannon 1996:43-50; Thumbadoo 1997:19; Veeran 1990:35,37).

The child and youth care workers (practitioners) felt that they deal with people (professionals) other than children and required knowledge about teamwork. They stated that it was important to know "*how to work in a multidisciplinary team*" and mentioned "*spanwerk*" and "*span samewerking*". They also stressed that it was important to deal with information confidentially.

The policy-makers agreed with the opinions expressed by the practitioners. Child and youth care workers were the people who spent the most time with the children. It was important for them to have a close relationship with the child and to be involved with the child therapeutically. The policy-makers also said that child and youth care workers worked with other people as well and that they needed to work together with other professionals involved in the treatment of the child (Browning 1992:12; Krueger 1990:123-129; Samakoskey 1997:6-7; Veeran 1990:33). Beukes (1990:40,42) refers to the child care worker's "involvement in the treatment team" as one of the four major categories of child and youth care work.

Practitioners also identified knowledge about interpersonal relationships and one's inner self as important. They mentioned the following in this regard: "*how to communicate with a child*", to be a "*role model for the children*", "*counselling*", "*self-awareness*", "*to observe the children*", "*to keep information confidential*", "*how to control your temper/emotions*" and "*kommunikasie*". Kuehne and Leone (1994:339-341) stress the importance of knowledge about interpersonal communication, helping relationships and theories related to self-awareness. Many authors, such as Fewster (1990:25-38), Krueger (1997:154-158), Maier *et al.* (1995:272-276), Mitchell (1995:10-11) and Young (1992:54), have stressed the importance of these knowledge components for child and youth care workers.

Other knowledge which practitioners identified as being important for child care workers was "*first aid*", "*how to plan activities that suit the individual child*", "*disciplinary training such as in the South African Police Services or in the Correctional Services*", "*opleiding in noodhulp*" and "*kinders kan stimuleer met aktiwiteite*". None of the policy-makers identified first aid as being necessary for child and youth care workers. However, they added aspects such as the functioning of "*the social welfare system*", being able "*to manage programmes and the environment*" and knowledge about "*the basis of violence and aggression*".

Subcategory : Basic skills for child and youth care workers

While conducting the interviews with the child and youth care workers, it was noted that the practitioners had difficulty in identifying the content of the knowledge that was important for child and youth care workers. The analysis of the data collected also showed that they were inclined to identify the skills required for child and youth care work more easily. They could identify what child and youth care workers had to be able to do, but did not always realise that specific knowledge was needed to practise those skills. The practitioners identified the following skills pertaining to child and youth care work: "we are sort of role models here", "communication skills", "to be empathetic", "self-control", "observation skills", "assessing the child", "train them, like sewing, cooking, and so on", "problem-solving", "to motivate", "managing children's behaviour", "onvoorwaardelik te aanvaar", "leer om jou van hulle te distansieer" and "hanteringsvaardighede". The policy-makers agreed on the skills identified by the practitioners and added skills such as "mediation", "group work skills", "supervision and teaching skills" (Maier 1987:195-198; Phelan 1990:135-136), "conflict resolution", "team building skills", "violence prevention skills" and "to be able to use the moment in dealing with children". Fitzgerald (1995:11-13) stresses the importance of child care workers being able to do on-the-spot counselling by establishing a good relationship and by using interactive learning and active engagement with the children (Garfat 1997:4). Crone (1984:55-131) emphasises the above skills in his identification of important skills for child and youth care workers:

- Supervision of children and the development of a routine for the child
- Management of children and their behaviour
- Supportive counselling of children, including the skill of listening and understanding
- Management of crisis intervention
- Planning of daily activities successfully
- The ability to operate within a team.

Child and youth care work entails not only the physical day-to-day care of children, but also requires theoretical knowledge and research in practice. Pence (1990:237-238) lists the following steps in research and practice as important for child and youth care workers:

1. The ability to accurately *observe* and report observational data concerning human behaviour.
2. The ability to *interpret* observational data in light of *theoretical* constructs or perspectives (the ability to place specific observational data into a theoretical context).
3. The ability to *plan* an appropriate intervention in that observed behaviour sequence in order to effect a change in the specified behaviour.
4. The ability to *implement* a plan and guide it through the host of unforeseen circumstances that can ensue.
5. The ability to *evaluate* if the planned intervention had the desired impact and, if not, to introduce corrective measures into the intervention.
6. The ability to *communicate* orally and in writing the above processes in a professional manner such that the above steps are replaceable by other professionals.

The emphasis practitioners placed on the skills of child and youth care workers confirms the importance of the integration of theory and practice in child and youth care work. Gannon

(1990:7-9) acknowledges the need for background knowledge for child and youth care workers, but views skills as the most important component. The integration of theory and practice is also emphasised by VanderVen (1993:266-275) and Walton (1996:8). VanderVen states that "The nature of child and youth care work – embodying technical knowledge *and* artistry and intuition – makes its training and education an ideal system in which to do this".

Subcategory: Future expectations for child and youth care work as an occupation

The practitioners and policy-makers were very positive in their expectations for child and youth care work as an occupational group and especially in being "*professionals*" (Tomlinson 1995:13-14). Their expectations were expressed as follows: "*more training*", "*advanced courses*", "*a degree in child and youth care*", "*be recognised*", "*have a career path*", "*higher tertiary education*", "*to work less in institutional settings*", "*to do away with residential care settings*", "*to strengthen the families*", "*to be involved in family preservation*", "*to teach parents parental skills*", "*work in the life-space of the family*", "*minimise children being removed from their family*", "*dat 'n mens opleiding moet kry*", "*opleiding moet van dag een verpligtend wees*", "*nog 'n trappie waarop ek kan trap*" and "*voor promosie*". The practitioners also expressed the need "*for in-service training*", "*to relate with other institutions*", "*to have shorter working hours, better salaries, and less children in a home*", to be allowed "*to take our own children to the hospital*", "*minder kinders per huis*", "*huisouers meer vryheid gee*" and advantages such as "*skoftoelatings*" and "*gevaartoelatings*".

These research results correlate with research done by Beukes (1990:30) and Veeran (1990:105-106), who also identify the need for "*support in how you deal with burnout and how you deal with stress*". Nightingale (1993:5) indicates that ways of dealing with burnout and stress are specifically covered in the training programme of the Ethelbert Training Centre. One child and youth care worker experienced the need "*so die bewaarders hulle opleiding kry*". This child and youth care worker, who worked in a secure care centre to which juvenile delinquents were referred, might have experienced needs different from those of other child and youth care workers.

The policy-makers were adamant about the expectation to "*contribute to the mental health and human services field*" and "*operate in different settings such as the school, communities, teaching and others*". They also stressed the importance of "*a career path with different positions*" and the ability "*to move horizontally and vertically*".

The recognition of child and youth care work as a profession to be practised in different settings is very important in South Africa (Veeran 1990:51). The functioning of child and youth care workers in settings other than child care institutions, and their involvement with families are realities in the United States of America, Canada and countries in Europe (Denholm 1990:350-351; Anonymous 1996:10-11; Wilson 1992:3). According to Lawson (1965:31), child and youth care workers are involved in adoptions, juvenile courts, the co-ordinating of committees and the provision of services at approved child care centres as child care officers. Child and youth care workers are also involved in screening and placing children in foster care and in writing reports to courts when the child is placed in the care of a children's committee. Child care officers educate the community about child development the rights and the education of children. Michael (1993:14-5) lists the different roles of a child and youth care worker as those of a teacher/educator, counsellor, friend, model, mediator, manager, leader, researcher, crisis-intervenor and custodian. None of the child and youth care practitioners identified themselves in a specific field or setting other than institutional care. Some did voice their concern that more preventive work should be undertaken by the child and youth care worker, but did not identify themselves with child and youth care work in other settings such as schools.

Kuehne and Leone (1994:339-341) state that the fourth-year students in child and youth care at the University of Victoria, Canada, are introduced to the process of research and can choose between other courses according to their interest. These courses include areas such as child life work and advanced techniques in working with individuals and groups.

Subcategory: The status of child and youth care work as an occupation in South Africa

Both practitioners and policy-makers were concerned about the status of child and youth care workers. The practitioners stated that the mere fact that "domestic workers" and "cleaners" could be promoted to be child and youth care workers was to the detriment of the occupational group. They also said that it was essential that these workers have higher levels of education than is currently the case. However, they said that to employ better-qualified people, better salaries were needed. This is confirmed by the research done by Beukes (1990:54). Both the practitioners and policy-makers pleaded for the "recognition of child and youth care work as a profession" as it is elsewhere in the world. Christiansen (1996:307-309) emphasises the importance of the education and training (theory and practice) of child and youth care workers, as well as the recognition of the profession along with social workers, teachers and nurses.

Both practitioners and policy-makers agreed that child and youth care workers should be supervised by child and youth care practitioners and should not be accountable to social workers. Child and youth care workers are definitely *not* social auxiliary workers. Beukes and Gannon (1996:1-2) mention that because child and youth care work has for so long had the status of "charity work", which is not considered a priority, child and youth care practice is not well-developed. Veeran (1990:39) states that the transition from house parent (substitute parent) to that of trained child and youth care worker provides more opportunity and responsibility (Beukes 1990:55).

Subcategory: The limitations of child and youth care work as an occupational group

Practitioners felt that child and youth care as an occupational group experienced certain limitations. "We deal with the child, we don't know where he is coming from – you don't know the action plan", "their knowledge regarding the child's circumstances are less than that of the social worker". This resulted in ignorance and an inability to work constructively and positively with the child. Other aspects limiting the growth of the occupational group involved the following: "the more male people can be involved in child care the better", "more in-service training", "a promotional structure or career path", "the road forward is limited, it frustrates me", "screening of child and youth care workers" and "less children" under the care of a child and youth care worker. "Poor salaries" not only limit the growth of the occupational group, but also contribute to its poor status (Ferguson 1993:253; Anonymous 1996:9). Expressing concern and a need for compulsory training to "limit secondary abuse of children in institutions" indicated not only a limitation for the occupational group, but contributed to the lack of recognition and poor status of the occupation.

Limitations that the policy-makers identified were the "boundaries" in which child and youth care workers function at present, the "lack of education" and the "average turnover of 2.9 years" of the child and youth care personnel. As far back as 1991 Richardson (1991:8) said that the turnover of personnel could be lowered by better selection of personnel. Eight years ago Beukes (1990:49) came to the conclusion that the major drawback for child and youth care as a profession was the way in which the personnel had been treated. He (1990:33-34) also expressed concern about the negative influence of the rapid turnover of personnel on the children and the profession. Christiansen (1996:306-307) emphasises that the view of direct care and custodianship (in other words as carer or care taker) contributes to a high turnover rate and a lack of status for child and youth care workers, which limits the profession. In her research Veeran (1990:32) found that child

care workers are traditionally seen as substitute parents. This limits the functioning of child care workers and they are therefore excluded from the multidisciplinary team in the institution.

4. DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

The responses of the respondents clearly indicate an expectation or ideal of professionalisation of child and youth care work. Not only do child and youth care workers want better working conditions and salaries, but they also identified the need for formal training and recognition as a professional member of the multidisciplinary team, contributing more than custodianship for the child.

In their task description of a child and youth care worker Woldsun (1991:8-10) and Vos (1995:5-6) clearly state that the child and youth care worker is more than a custodian to the child and is responsible for the emotional, social, educational and spiritual care and growth of the children in his or her care. Veeran (1990:32) states in her research findings that the available training for child care workers as presented by the NACCW, Technikon SA and Technikon Natal is insufficient. She also states that the fact that training is not a prerequisite in the appointment of personnel has a limiting effect on child and youth care work as an occupation. Beukes (1990:36) concludes that, in addition to more training and compulsory training, aspects such as the following would contribute to a lower turnover of child and youth care personnel:

- Recognition of child and youth care workers as full team members in the treatment programme of a child;
- A clearly defined job description;
- A performance-based evaluation system;
- A ladder or career path in child and youth care;
- The empowerment of child and youth care workers by the organisation within the decision-making process .

Authors such as Beukes and Veeran refer to child and youth care work as a profession and discuss the limitations of the profession. In the last three subcategories the call for the recognition of child and youth care work as a profession by the practitioners, policy-makers or authors is evident. In its definition of child and youth care work, the International Child and Youth Training Consortium refers to "professional child and youth care practice". The assertion by child and youth care workers that they are professionals is questioned.

For the purpose of this article, it is accepted that *the degree to which the five critical attributes of professions, as identified by Greenwood (in Morales & Sheafor 1992 :46-47), are reached determines the degree of professionalism reached by any occupational group. A profession, therefore, needs to have the following features:*

1. A systematic body of theory
2. Professional authority
3. Sanction of the community
4. A regulatory code of ethics
5. A professional culture.

In evaluating child and youth care work against the criteria for a profession, the question may be asked whether child and youth care work has its own knowledge base. Child and youth care workers have no professional authority, they have limited sanction of the community, they do have

a code of ethics, but they still lack a professional culture. Registration as child and youth care workers is voluntary and there is no restricted access to child and youth care work as an occupational group.

In the past, the lack of minimum requirements and the absence of a promotional system which meant that cleaners could be promoted to carers, who today call themselves child care workers, resulted in child and youth care work being viewed as merely a job. The promotional work done by the NACCW resulted in the recognition that child and youth care workers need to have certain skills and knowledge. They claim a certain identity and have to apply certain values in their daily functioning. This recognises that child and youth care work is an occupational group and not just another job. This is the start of development towards professional status for the group.

It is important to differentiate, on the basis of accepted definitions, between an occupation and a profession. It is clear that a profession develops over a number of years or decades and not merely through the introduction of a formal qualification or the adoption of a code of ethics. The recognition of child and youth care work as a profession in other countries does not mean that it is an accepted profession in South Africa. To be accepted as a profession, it must meet the requirements of a profession.

The two main characteristics that distinguish child and youth care work from other occupations are the involvement of the workers (long hours) with the children and the fact that they deal with children in their own life space. The writer is of the opinion that the de-institutionalisation of child and youth care work will result in the absence of both these characteristics. Child and youth care workers will not be able to spend such long hours with the children and will not function in the life space of the child. Foster care, probation work and court work are the responsibility of social workers in South Africa. Child and youth care workers can probably be called to testify in court, but not in the same capacity as social workers. In South Africa child and youth care workers function mainly within institutional settings. The functioning of child and youth care workers in other settings may be a reality in other countries, but it is necessary to look at the needs and realities in South Africa to render relevant services. If the theoretical education and training of child and youth care workers does not meet the needs of practice, these workers will encounter the same difficulties as social workers as professionals in South Africa.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The interviews with the child and youth care workers were an eye-opening experience. The interviewees were nervous about the interviews, because they had not prepared anything. However, they were more at ease after the nature of the research was explained, especially that it was their experiences and views that were important and there was no evaluation of right or wrong responses.

The interviews conducted in English as the respondents' second language were difficult and took longer than those conducted in the respondents' home language. The respondents sometimes had difficulty understanding the questions, which needed to be rephrased without leading or influencing the respondents. The respondents also had trouble expressing themselves. These experiences applied to the practitioners as well as to the policy-makers.

On evaluating the research findings on child and youth care work, it was found that the practitioners were motivated more by internal than external factors. The workers chose the career either on humanistic or religious grounds. The respondents were direct and clear in their identification of the uniqueness of the occupation and could differentiate clearly between their contribution to child care and those of other human science occupations and professions. Child and

youth care work involving "the other 23 hours" care of the child took place within the life space of the child and from a developmental perspective. The research findings provided a clear indication of the knowledge base and skills required in the practice of child and youth care work. The respondents were clear regarding their future expectations and their frustrations with the limitations of the occupational group.

The recognition of child and youth care work as a separate occupational group with a definite contribution to social welfare services through the White Paper for Social Welfare was a benchmark for the occupation. In the past these workers were seen only as caretakers and the fact that the research findings in 1997 correlated with research results of 1990 showed that child and youth care work has been neglected, despite recommendations made seven years ago. Hopefully, the White Paper and the current development of a National Child and Youth Care Policy will make a difference in child and youth care work in South Africa so that research done in five years time will not result in the same findings again.

In evaluating child and youth care work against the criteria for professions, it is clear that this work merely meets the requirements for an occupation. In the case of professionalisation, child and youth care work risks losing two of its main characteristics, namely the functioning of these workers within the life space of the child and their close relationship with the child. Other settings, such as foster care, working with families and probation work, undoubtedly raise the question: "What differentiates child and youth care work from social work?"

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