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THE SCOPE OF OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The understanding in the literature of what occupational social work is has evolved and become highly complex and nuanced. Notions of the work community, of interface and goodness-of-fit, of multiple client systems and of person-in-environment have become central to our conceptualisation of this field. A key implication of this rich understanding is a comprehensive and holistic approach to practice. This paper seeks to evaluate contemporary occupational social work practice in light of these understandings. Based on a quantitative-qualitative survey of 44 occupational social workers in Gauteng province, the author assesses current understandings of occupational social work by those who practise it. Furthermore, the author describes the scope of contemporary occupational social work practice. Adopting a critical stance, the author makes several proposals for enhancing the quality and depth of occupational social work practice.

Key words: occupational social work, person in environment, goodness of fit, work community, interface, macro practice

INTRODUCTION

Occupational social work (OSW) in South Africa, as a field of practice within social work, traces its roots back to the mid-1930s, when the railways employed a social worker to provide social services to employees (Du Plessis, 1994). Since then OSW has continued to grow both in the number of social workers employed in occupational settings and in its conceptualisation of OSW practice. By the late 1980s, Rankin (1992) traced 69 occupational social workers, while Du Plessis (1994) found a total of 140 (excluding the Defence Force).

Angela du Plessis' 1994 doctoral thesis explored the evolvement of OSW in South Africa. This seminal work, based on data collected from 1988 to 1990, has served as the benchmark for our understanding of the scope of OSW in this country until now. In the 20 years since then, there has been no comprehensive assessment of the scope of OSW in South Africa.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the current scope of OSW practice in South Africa, based on a survey of occupational social workers working in Gauteng province. This survey was not a replication of Du Plessis' (1994) study; thus attempts to compare current data with her data are limited. In particular, I am interested to see how contemporary occupational social workers understand the term 'OSW' and what their daily work entails. Through this, priorities for further development of the field are identified.

WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK?

Akabas (1995:1779) conceptualised OSW as, "Policies and services, delivered through the auspices of employers and trade unions, to workers and those who seek entry into the workplace." This is similar to Barker's (2003:141) definition of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), "Services offered by employers to their employees to help them overcome problems that may negatively affect job satisfaction or productivity." These definitions foreground employees as the sole client system. In essence, OSW becomes the provision of services to people who have jobs. Furthermore, OSW becomes indistinguishable from EAP. This view, however, is not universally accepted; indeed, it has been increasingly challenged in recent years.

Others have emphasised social work's long commitment to the person-in-environment (PIE) as a central principle of practice (Hollis and Woods, 1981). Definitions of OSW based on the PIE principle emphasise the reciprocal relationship between the workforce and the workplace. Kurzman

(1993:388), for example, argues that the growth of OSW requires us to expand our focus from service provision to employees to include the broader theme of "progressive social change." This involves changing the social context in which people live, or in this instance, the work context in which employees work. In this way, occupational social workers stand in the gap between workforce and workplace, seeking to facilitate a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between them. This shift is not a call for the mere addition of the workplace as a client to the existing employee as client (Akabas and Kurzman, 2005). Rather it is a call to focus on the interface or goodness-of-fit between employees/families/communities and the workplace/organisation/corporation.

Googins and Godfrey (1987:5) have, in a similar vein, defined OSW as, "A field of practice in which social workers attend to the human and social needs of the work community by designing and executing appropriate interventions to insure healthier individuals and environment." This definition introduces the notion of a "work community" as the focus of intervention, which integrates the dual commitment to employees and the organisation. The work community is an inclusive, complex and holistic way of conceptualising who the client is in OSW.

Googins and Godfrey's (1987) definition has the further advantage of linking with the community work method of social work and the broader body of literature on 'community,' which is a vital part of the social work tradition (Hardcastle, Powers and Wenocur, 2004). In community work practice, we are concerned with ideals of "participatory democracy, equalitarian citizenship and access, community building … diminished racism and sexism … [and] social, economic, and political justice" (Fisher, 2005:51). These ideals hold equal primacy in OSW practice. Furthermore, the disjuncture between the employee and organisation in OSW is not evident in community work, where the goal is the betterment of the entire community – individually and collectively (Weil, 2005).

Mor Barak (2000:205) has taken this still further and suggested that OSW needs to move away from being defined by the location of practice or setting (the place of work) and rather centre on "its practice mission, that is focusing on work issues and work-related practice." Employed adults spend about half of their waking hours at work during the workweek. Working is thus an activity that consumes considerable attention and energy. Social identity is in many ways shaped by the experience of working (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow and Van Knippenberg, 2003). Social work, with its commitment to ecosystems thinking and the social environment of people, can therefore not

neglect the sphere of work (Akabas and Kurzman, 2005). Mor Barak (2000:205) thus concludes that OSW should be positioned "at the focal point between the realities of the workplace and the needs of the workforce."

A key implication of these various perspectives on OSW is the need to address a range of client systems in the workplace. Comprehensive OSW practice requires an integrative approach to all these client systems, held together in balance (Du Plessis, 1992). First, attention should be given to the *employee-as-person* (Du Plessis, 2001), where we are concerned with the personal needs of employees as individuals, parents or community members. Second, attention should be given to the *person-as-employee* (Du Plessis, 2001). Here we are concerned with the occupational needs of employees as employees, such as their ability cope with work-related stress, interpersonal conflict in the workplace and the negative spillover of work stress into the family. Third, there has been a call to give attention to the *organisation-as-client* (Googins and Davidson, 1993). Here we are concerned with facilitating a work system or community that is characterised by justice, equity and human dignity. Later in this issue, Carapinha will argue that we should add a fourth client system, namely the *employee-as-citizen*. Here we would be concerned with facilitating the social well-being of the communities in which employees live and in which organisations operate, through corporate social investment.

In light of all of this, we return to a definition of OSW. What is it that occupational social workers endeavour to do in the workplace? What is the purpose and goal of this field of practice? Straussner (1990:2) has presented what I view as a solid definition: OSW is "a specialised field of social work practice which addresses the human and social needs of the work community through a variety of interventions which aim to foster optimal adaptation between individuals and their environments." This definition foregrounds the 'work community', a term that is inclusive of employees, their families and the workplace itself, as well as other stakeholders (e.g. clients and shareholders). The definition also emphasises the PIE principle by stressing the importance of 'optimal adaptation' between different systems within the work community, thereby focusing our attention on the points of interface between systems.

In this paper, I wish to hold up this theoretical understanding of OSW against the views and practices of occupational social workers in Gauteng. In particular, I focus on their own definitions of the term 'occupational social work' to assess the degree to which occupational social workers have conceptualised their discipline in a way that is consistent with theory.

Secondly, I describe the scope of practice of occupational social workers to assess to what extent they give expression to the holistic understanding of OSW that has evolved in the literature.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

Study Design

Using a descriptive approach, this study aimed to describe the current state of OSW in South Africa. Several specific areas were of interest, though not all are reported in this paper: the contexts in which occupational social workers practice, the scope of OSW practice, the contribution of OSW to the triple bottom line, challenges faced in practice, and the alignment of OSW with Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and developmental social welfare. The study was conducted in partnership with the South African Occupational Social Workers' Association (SAOSWA).

Data Collection Tool and Method

In collaboration with SAOSWA, I designed a nine-page data collection tool to address these various areas, using a combination of fixed-choice questions and open (short paragraph) questions. The instrument underwent several revisions, including a review by the Employee Assistance Professionals Association South Africa (EAPA-SA). It was also pilot-tested by several members of SAOSWA working in different contexts. Participants could complete the instrument in MS Word (it was loaded on SAOSWA's website) and email it back to the researcher, or complete it in pen and fax or mail it back – most opted for the latter method.

Population

The population was defined as social workers, registered with the SA Council for Social Service Professions, who were currently practising in an occupational setting. The definition included not only those who define themselves as an 'occupational social worker' but also those who practice in workplace contexts, such as in the EAP sector. Although there are theoretical differences between OSW and EAP, both groups were included because it was not clear whether there were substantive differences in actual practice.

Recruitment of Participants

The intention was to survey the entire population, thus sampling was not performed. There is no list of the population thus I endeavoured to recruit participants through various means. Several organisations were requested to

invite their members to participate in the study, including a number of EAP service providers (such as ICAS), the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), SA Police Service (SAPS), Department of Correctional Services (DCS), the SA Association of Social Workers in Private Practice, EAPA-SA and SAOSWA.

For the purposes of this paper, only the social workers located in Gauteng were used. A total of 44 occupational social workers participated in the study over the period October 2008 to March 2009. Because the population size and profile is unknown, it is not possible to determine how representative this group is of the population. This is compounded by the dearth of recent literature on OSW and EAP in South Africa. Nevertheless, since a diverse range of mechanisms was used to recruit all members of the population, it seems likely that reasonable representation has been achieved.

Profile of Participants

All of the participants worked full time and 42 worked on the organisation's premises. Respondents were employed in a variety of sectors, including SANDF (n=17), SAPS (n=23), private practice (n=2) and the employee assistance sector (n=1). No participants from the mining sector responded to the recruitment, in contrast with Du Plessis' (1994:125) study, where 29% of participants were employed by the gold mines. Du Plessis (personal correspondence, 16 July 2009) suggests that this is because the mining industry has outsourced social work to EAP service providers.

The majority of participants (n=21) reported being located in the health/-wellness division of their organisation, but others were located in human resources (n=10) or an EAP (n=4). These findings may be explained by the location of SANDF social workers in the SA Military Health Service wing of the SANDF and SAPS social workers in the employee assistance service, which in turn falls under human resources.

On average, participants had worked for 11.5 years as a social worker (*SD*=8.0) and had worked for 7.5 years as an occupational social worker (*SD*=5.3). The majority of respondents (n=38) had spent all of their years as an occupational social worker in the same organisation. This may be a reflection of the relatively stable nature of employment in the public service (SANDF and SAPS) and is consistent with Du Plessis' (1994:125) findings.

If these participants are indeed representative of the population, it seems that the majority of occupational social workers are employed in formal, public

service settings – notably SANDF and SAPS. Private companies appear to have moved from in-house OSW services to off-site EAP providers.

WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK?

The first substantive question in the survey was, "What is your understanding of the term occupational social work?" Forty-three of the 44 participants provided a response to this item.

The most common response, provided by 22 participants, was that OSW entails services rendered to employees. Some expanded this to include the families of employees. None of these participants included any other client groups (such as the organisation as client) in their answer: "Provide social services to employees" and "In-house model where social workers address the needs of the employees of the organisation". Five of these 22 participants were explicit that the services to employees were in the interests of the organisation, without mentioning that the services might benefit employees: "To render services to the employees regarding social problems or needs that they may experience, so they can be productive at work" and "Social workers address the needs of the employees of the organisation to benefit the organisation".

Eleven participants indicated that OSW entailed rendering services to both employees and the organisation: "It is service rendering to clientele including person as well as the organisation" and "The social work service focuses on the interests of both individual and the organisation". Four of these participants also made reference to OSW's interest in the interface between employees and the organisation, or the work community: "Looking at both the needs/challenges from client as person, client as the organisation and the interface thereof" and "Social work services aimed at assisting members and an organisation to best fit the demands so as to maintain a balance".

Finally, a further ten participants explained OSW as a social work service defined by its setting, viz. the workplace. They defined OSW exclusively by setting, with no indication of client groups or the purpose of the service: "Social work in a workplace setting" and "Social work related to issues at the workplace, eg mining, corporate services, etc".

Overall, these understandings of OSW are out of alignment with the literature on OSW, and suggest a truncated understanding of OSW. Less than a quarter of participants, most of whom define themselves as occupational social workers, understand their client system to include employees/families and the organisation and the interface between them. It is concerning that half the

participants focused entirely on service provision to employees, a quarter of whom regard these services as being to enhance organisational productivity. Much of what makes OSW unique, according to OSW theory, has not been adopted by occupational social workers surveyed in this study.

A further comparison was made of the two main employers of participants in this study, viz. SAPS and SANDF. Three quarters (76%) of SAPS social workers regarded OSW as exclusively involving services to employees, compared with 32% of SANDF social workers. This striking difference may be a result of a different organisational mandate, or perhaps also due to different approaches to policy formulation and training opportunities for social workers. Either way, it is concerning that only 12% of SAPS social workers and 32% of SANDF social workers understand their mandate as providing services to both employees and the organisation, particularly given that this has for many years been regarded in the literature as the centre of OSW.

WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS DO?

Using the OSW Practice Model (Kruger and Van Breda, 2001), described and critiqued by Van Breda and Du Plessis in this issue, participants were asked to describe the nature of their day-to-day job. The model comprises four positions of practice: (1) *restorative interventions*, focused on the employee-as-person, aimed at resolving personal problems; (2) *promotive interventions*, also focused on the employee-as-person, but aimed at prevention, education and development; (3) *work-person interventions*, focused on the person-as-employee, aimed at assisting employees and their families in adjusting to the demands of the workplace; and (4) *workplace interventions*, focused on the organisation-as-client, aimed at assisting organisations to adjust to the needs of the workforce.

Participants had some difficulties deciding in which position to locate specific interventions. There were a number of instances in which the same intervention was located in two or three different positions by different respondents. In such instances, I located the interventions in the more appropriate position, according to the criteria of the model (Kruger and Van Breda, 2001).

Spread of Work

Participants were asked what percentage of their working time was spent in each of these four activities (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of working time

Activity	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Category 1: Restorative interventions	36.7	19.4	0	97.4
Category 2: Promotive interventions	29.4	14.8	0	66.7
Category 3: Work-Person interventions	18.8	11.4	0	45.0
Category 4: Workplace interventions	15.2	15.5	0	84.2

It can be seen that restorative (largely therapeutic) interventions continue to occupy the largest portion of occupational social workers' attention (36.7%), followed by promotive interventions (29.4%). These two categories combined, reflecting a focus on the employee-as-person (Kruger and Van Breda, 2001), account for two thirds (66.1%) of the workload of occupational social workers.

Less time (18.8%) is invested in work-person interventions, focused on the person-as-employee, thus on the individual in her or his work-related roles. Still less time (15.2%) is allocated to workplace interventions, focused on the organisation-as-client (Googins and Davidson, 1993; Kruger and Van Breda, 2001). Together, one third (33.9%) of work time is directed at the employee-workplace interface.

Restorative Interventions

Participants listed a range of case work problems that are common to generic social work settings: marriage, family and other relationships, including family violence; children and childcare, including child abuse and neglect; alcohol and drug abuse; finances; HIV and AIDS; crisis intervention; bereavement; emotional conditions, such as depression; and referrals of individuals for specialised psychosocial services.

The majority of responses in this category focused on micro client systems (individual, couple and family), however a number of participants also mentioned meso/group and macro/community interventions.

At the meso level, one participant mentioned, "Mostly casework and on rare occasions a session of group work will be included in the therapeutic process," while another said "If the clients are willing, at times a group is

formed." Very few participants mentioned group work at all, and a number stated that they ran no groups. Most participants who did mention running groups described interventions that are not restorative but rather promotive interventions (such as life skills development and empowerment groups) or work-person interventions (such as groups to manage interpersonal conflict in the workplace). A few, however, reported running group debriefing sessions for people exposed to a similar traumatic incident or running therapeutic groups. It seems that group work is not a frequently used method of social work to address the restorative needs of the workforce.

Macro interventions also were not frequently mentioned. Some participants mentioned running projects to address violence against women and children, sexual harassment and discrimination, and financial management interventions. One participant wrote, "I used a lot of community processes to address collective biopsychosocial problems." In several instances, projects that addressed problems in the community were located under promotive interventions, as many participants seem to have associated promotion with macro projects.

In summary, it seems that the majority of restorative interventions, which occupy a little over a third of their time, are focused at the micro level. Given that employees often work in the same facility, it is disappointing that therapeutic group work is not used more often. Perhaps employees perceive participating in therapeutic processes with their colleagues as exposing, preferring the anonymity of individual therapy or external referrals. These findings suggest that Du Plessis' (1994) concern that occupational social workers were trapped in case work practice remains true in 2008/9.

Promotive Interventions

Whereas restorative interventions were predominantly at the micro level, the promotive interventions described by participants were primarily at the meso level, and to a lesser degree at macro level. Here participants indicated implementing interventions on HIV training and education; financial health/literacy; gender equity; substance abuse prevention; stress management; resilience building workshops; career planning; life skills training; study skills; gardening projects; and the marketing of OSW services. Numerous participants mentioned running projects that were aligned with the various national days, such as Women's Day and Condom Week.

It seems from the responses that many of these interventions are standardised courses, such as the Financial Health Course, Be Money Wise, Gender

Equity Programme or HIV Peer Educators Training. There was little indication that social workers ran community development processes, in which development activities were driven by the community's needs rather than by standardised courses. SAPS social workers referred to structured programmes as 'proactive' and needs-based programmes as 'reactive', reflecting a negative connotation that may imply that needs-based programmes are less desirable. The risk here is that standardised interventions could be imposed on work communities without sufficient regard for the unique context of each community.

The large investment of time in promotive interventions is significant in light of Du Plessis' (1994:195) findings. She identified involvement in preventive activities (which are roughly equivalent to promotive interventions) as associated with social workers whose practice had evolved towards what she defined as a well-developed OSW practice. The relatively high level of involvement by contemporary occupational social workers in promotive interventions (approaching a third of their workload) points towards an evolving profession.

In summary, the majority of promotive interventions are implemented at the meso/group level. A wide range of community needs, mostly related to the needs of employees-as-people, are addressed through these interventions. There are limited indications that some of these interventions are available not only to employees, but also to their families.

Work-Person Interventions

There was some blurring between work-person and workplace interventions. The former places emphasis on the *people* in the workplace, while the latter emphasises the *workplace* itself. The supervisory training programme (which trains managers in the identification, referral and management of 'troubled' or 'at-risk' employees) was one such intervention that some participants categorised as work-person (because it is a person-centred intervention) while others categorised it as workplace (because it involves changing the working environment, which is influenced by the way managers view employees who have personal difficulties). Either view could be correct, though the supervisory training programme is probably more a workplace intervention than work-person.

Commonly reported work-person interventions include training or programmes to develop the resilience of employees and families to cope with the demands of the workplace (such as the demands of military deployments on SANDF soldiers and families); programmes addressing worker morale

and motivation; interventions focusing on cultural sensitivity and diversity issues; interventions to mediate or resolve conflict between workers or between employees and their managers; team building interventions; debriefing of work-related critical incidents; and presenting and interpreting policies to employees (eg sexual harassment).

Most work-person interventions appear to be run in small groups (meso level). One participant said, "These would almost always be in groups." No participants explicitly referred to macro interventions, although one has the sense from the responses that meso interventions are often part of a macro process. In other words, occupational social workers seem to run an ongoing community development process with their work systems, punctuated by various meso projects. For example, some occupational social workers appear to regard their ongoing work in the workplace (maintaining relationships with employees and managers, walking around and visiting people in the workplace, sitting in management meetings and conducting or reviewing climate surveys) as community development. From time to time, within that broader process, they present specific courses or standardised interventions to address particular needs of the work community.

Several participants mentioned that they do micro interventions focused on individual work-related challenges, such as conflict in the workplace, worker dissatisfaction, anger management, dissatisfaction over career advancement, salary problems and transfer requests.

Du Plessis (1994:172-174) found that some occupational social workers twenty years ago did not believe that occupational social workers should intervene in the work-related problems of employees – for example, only 55% of participants believed they should intervene in conflicts between supervisors and subordinates. As a result, only 43% of her participants actually intervened in supervisor-subordinate conflicts. The data from the current study, by contrast, indicate that virtually all participants were involved in addressing work-related issues. Du Plessis (1994:195) also found that social workers whose practice had evolved towards comprehensive OSW were much more likely to engage in these kinds of work-related problems than social workers who were entrenched in case work interventions (86% versus 57% involvement in supervisor/subordinate conflict, respectively).

In summary, occupational social workers appear to run an interesting range of interventions, largely at the meso level, focused on the work-related needs of employees and, to a lesser extent, their families. Participants invested approximately one fifth of their time in work-person interventions.

Contemporary occupational social workers appear to have embraced their mandate to intervene in work-person problems, regarding these as within the scope of OSW practice.

Workplace Interventions

We saw earlier that little time is spent on workplace interventions. By definition, these are interventions targeting the workplace itself – changing the working environment, structure, system or processes, so as to fit better with the needs and dynamics of the workforce. Some participants mentioned providing inputs to the organisation for new or revised policies and strategies. These inputs, if incorporated into policy, could change the way things are done in the workplace resulting in a changed working experience for employees.

Most mentioned their participation in the supervisory training programme, management training programmes, or employee/workplace wellness committees. These committees (such as the SANDF's Military Community Development Committee) are focused on tracking, responding to and promoting the biopsychosocial functioning of the work community (including both the workers and the workplace). These committees, located in the local workplace, seem to be the key forum for social workers, on a regular basis, to advocate for workers.

A number of participants discussed their involvement in consulting or advising management about workplace challenges or in implementing organisational development processes. One participant said, "Advising management on the needs of the people on the ground so as to make the organisational policies sensitive to the members." One or two also mentioned participating in the organisation's strategic and business planning sessions, which gave them a platform to shape organisational culture and priorities.

One participant discussed adopting a 'watchdog' or advocacy role, by highlighting to management instances in which policies were not being adhered to, thereby ensuring that best practice procedures were followed. It is unfortunate that only two participants mentioned the term 'advocacy', because this is essentially what a workplace intervention is about – advocating for organisational change in partnership with or on behalf of employees.

In summary, occupational social workers do appear to be engaged in at least some workplace interventions, making inroads into the management

structures of their workplaces, in such a way that they have the opportunity to influence business practices. The investment of time is, however, limited (only 15% of their workload) and most interventions seem targeted at attempting to train managers in the handling of at-risk employees. There is little indication of efforts to facilitate organisational change.

Summary

Case work, which appears to comprise the bulk of restorative interventions, continues to dominate the workload of occupational social workers, using about a third of work time. This is unfortunate, given the hoped for evolvement of OSW practice over the past ten to twenty years. Du Plessis (2001; 1992) has been raising her concerns about the preponderance of case work for many years. Perhaps her findings as to why occupational social workers are so invested in micro practice are still true for today: social workers feel more equipped for micro interventions than meso and macro interventions; organisations and employees want case work interventions; organisations do not recognise occupational social workers as organisational change agents; and case work maintains the status quo, reducing potential conflict with the organisation (Du Plessis, 1992).

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

This study has highlighted a number of crucial limitations in the current scope of OSW practice in South Africa. The results are, in a number of respects, similar to those of Du Plessis (1994), based on data collected twenty years ago. The OSW community in South Africa would, no doubt, have hoped to see the field of practice evolving in the way that Du Plessis envisaged twenty years ago. Unfortunately, it appears that little progress has been made. OSW seems to be more isolated than before, with the majority of occupational social workers working in SAPS and SANDF, and other social workers in the workplace being located in EAPs.

The centre of a response to these results must lie in attention to the definition and conceptualisation of OSW. It appears that the American micro model EAP (Du Plessis, 1992) has become predominant in OSW thinking in South Africa. Indeed, there is little distinction in most social workers' understanding between OSW and EAP. As a result, the rich developments in OSW thinking, as outlined in the beginning of this paper, have been lost.

South African occupational social workers need, therefore, to grapple with a more dynamic understanding of OSW. They should draw on the wealth of

theory and literature that can inform and expand this understanding. This includes person in environment theory, ecological and ecosystems theory, community development and macro practice theory, goodness of fit theory and work-life theory. All of these provide conceptual tools that can facilitate a more expansive understanding of the scope of OSW and the possibilities inherent in social work practice in the workplace.

I argue that social work in the workplace is not social work at all if we focus exclusively on individuals or micro practice. The South African history of institutionalised discrimination and marginalisation of the majority of citizens has taught us that, as much as micro practice is good and necessary, it must be balanced with macro practice. Furthermore, social work values of social justice and human rights require that we are alert and responsive to instances of injustice and human rights violations (even subtle violations) in the workplace.

Perhaps we would benefit from thinking about the workplace as a community, and narrowing the distinction between community work and occupational social work. Were we to regard 'occupational' as merely one particular instance of 'community' we could draw on the rich knowledge and skill in macro practice. We could, for example, apply the gentler macro approaches of community development and community education, as well as the tougher approach of social action (Weyers, 2001).

Out of this, education in the occupational social practice model (Kruger and Van Breda, 2001) could help to open up broader possibilities for an expanded repertoire of practice. This would first entail balancing the ratio of micro, meso and macro practice. All three are important and valid parts of practice – none should be neglected. Second, this would entail the application of "binocular vision" (Kruger and Van Breda, 2001:498), which focuses on employees with the one eye and the organisation with the other eye. Good OSW practice requires keeping both eyes open simultaneously, to give effect to the social work principle of person-in-environment.

Merely telling occupational social workers to expand their repertoire of practice is, however, like telling parents to love their children enough to talk about sex. While we may, in principle, agree, putting this into practice is another matter! Therefore, there needs to be training for occupational social workers to develop the knowledge and skills required for macro practice – the facet of comprehensive OSW practice that seems to be most lacking. Bouwer addresses this issue in accessible and practical terms later in this

issue. Capacity building by employers and by SAOSWA is essential if we are to see an evolvement in OSW in the next decade.

Finally, all of this would become more possible if we genuinely bought into the themes that informed the conceptualisation of developmental social welfare in South Africa (Patel, 2005:98) and adapted them for OSW: the cherishing and advancement of human rights; the recognition that economic and social development go hand in hand; the insistence on broad-based participation in the shaping of social life; welfare pluralism, which appreciates that we have to work in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders; and the bridging of the micro-macro divide by embracing a holistic and comprehensive approach to practice.

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THE NEXUS OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE, OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the interface and debates between developmental social welfare, occupational social work and social security. The discourse in social security and developmental social welfare has been devoted mainly to the impact of social grants and its developmental outcomes on poverty. The other pillar of social security, social insurance, is particularly relevant for occupational social work, but has not received much attention in developmental social welfare literature. Sectors of workers who are particularly at risk and marginalised are discussed. Suggestions are entertained about the domain of occupational social work with respect to multi-modal practice within a developmental welfare paradigm.

Key words: developmental social welfare, occupational social work, social security, multi-modal practice